

Hokianga Accord Update #8

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Humour mixed with in-depth discussions has always been a feature of Hokianga Accord hui. The eleventh overnight hui held at Whakamaharatanga Marae, Hokianga, at the beginning of the month was no exception. Without doubt, having both Maori and non-Maori working together to achieve the best outcomes for our fisheries and environment is proving to be a successful recipe.

Initial discussions focused on the process to develop a meaningful working relationship between mid-north iwi and the Ministry of Fisheries. Both Ngapuhi and Ngati Whatua are committed to working through the Accord to achieve sustainable fisheries for all New Zealanders. Ngati Wai are supportive of the Accord but have decided their best approach for now is to work directly with MFish.

Jonathan Peacey, MFish' National Fisheries Operations Manager, and Carl Ross, the Customary Relationships Manager explained the Ministry's expectations and aspirations for the mid-north iwi fisheries forum. As expected, healthy debate followed these discussions and continued after Jonathan and Carl left the hui.

Similar to the last hui, another series of questions were put to MFish during their presentations and the Accord awaits their response with interest. This exchange of information will be recorded in the full hui report due next month. Previous reports are online at www.HokiangaAccord.co.nz.

On a lighter note the NZ Big Game Fishing Council advised they are working on an education programme with Mark and Chris de Lacy, aka 'the Minstrel'. Mark and Chris are devoted to improving the quality of information given to our tamariki and mokopuna about protecting our moana and the taonga (treasures) within the sea. The Minstrel visits most schools in the country at least once a year so the opportunity to reach more young people through funny songs, poems and dances is exciting.

A brief report of the first two planning meetings for the North Island's west coast fisheries was one of a number of updates given to the hui. Gazetting of rohe moana stirred intense debate generating a valuable opportunity for everyone to share their experiences and consider the best approach to future coastal management.

Having already committed to the collective goal of 'more fish in the water' it was appropriate to hear of the recent developments for improving soil carbon-density and sustainable land use. Improving the quality of run-off into freshwater and marine waterways has proven to be an effective measure to enhance life within our rivers and coastal areas.

Many people do not realise the serious environmental impacts from intensive, inshore finfish farming and aquaculture. Sustainable aquaculture is achievable and necessary given the significant investment involved. Balancing Maori's commercial and non-commercial future fishing interests may seem complex; thankfully the Hokianga Accord is an ideal forum to have these ongoing discussions.

Coinciding with the Accord's hui was the tangi for a local Ngapuhi kaumatua Buster Hancy. Hui participants went to Mataiaranui Marae to pay respects to Buster and be with his whanau. This was a new experience for many of the non-Maori at the hui and a special moment to remember.

Haere, Haere, Haere.