

Shared Fisheries Detrimental To Maori Fisheries Agreement

Press Release by Te Ohu Kaimoana - The Maori Fisheries Trust.

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Government proposals for so-called "shared fisheries" could have a significant and detrimental effect on the Maori Commercial Fisheries Settlement, Te Ohu Kaimoana said today.

That's the message the Maori Fisheries Trust will be taking to iwi representatives at a hui to be held in Wellington on Friday 9 February at the James Cook Hotel Grand Chancellor.

This is the first public statement made by Te Ohu Kaimoana regarding the Government's proposals, which could have the effect of reducing the commercial fisheries catch and giving it to the recreational sector.

"There are some very real concerns among Maori commercial fishers about the proposal. Te Ohu Kaimoana believes that this will undermine the value of the settlement with the Crown, reduce individual iwis' share of quota and provide greater uncertainty throughout all fishing sectors," Chief Executive Peter Douglas said.

"There are very serious issues to sort through. There doesn't appear to be any good reason for this action, other than to give recreational fishers a greater catch at the expense of industry. Similarly, at a time when the public is calling for greater assurances of sustainability in New Zealand's fisheries, these proposals will mean a greater share of the overall catch will not be known because recreational fishers do not have to report their catch," Mr Douglas said.

New Zealand's total allowable catch (TAC) includes commercial, customary and recreational sectors.

In a number of fisheries, the recreational allowance is a significant portion of the TAC, such as in the Marlborough Sounds. Recreational take is limited by daily bag limits but recreational fishers have no responsibility to report catches. There is no annual reporting and estimates of take are made every few years by using questionnaires.

There is no organisation with a mandate to speak on behalf of all recreational fishers and ensure that the overall take by recreational fishers is within a sustainable limit.

"The lack of reporting creates difficulties in managing any fishery under stress."

Mr Douglas added that under the Fisheries Act 1996, the Minister cannot reduce the commercial share in a fishery and transfer part of that share to another sector without providing compensation to the industry. The only exception is for changes to protect sustainability.

"The Minister has assured us that there will be no transfer to another sector without generous compensation to the Maori commercial industry.

There are other serious issues to discuss and we think there'll be keen interest in these proposals from iwi at our meeting next week," Mr Douglas said.