



## Office of Hon Phil Heatley

MP for Whangarei  
Minister of Fisheries  
Minister of Housing

07 DEC 2009

PH0580

John Holdsworth  
[bluewater@igrin.co.nz](mailto:bluewater@igrin.co.nz)

Dear John

Thank you for your recent email on behalf of the Northland Non-commercial Fishing Forum regarding the observer coverage on foreign charter vessels (FCVs) in New Zealand fishing waters.

In 2008 the Ministry of Fisheries (the Ministry) consulted on a range of measures for the management of FCVs operating in New Zealand's EEZ. In June 2008 the Ministry's chief executive made a number of decisions relating to FCV management. One decision was the creation of a standard setting out the minimum acceptable level of food, accommodation and amenities that must be provided for observers on board all vessels over 46 metres in length, both domestic and foreign charter.

A second decision was to approve the implementation of a risk-based approach for observer coverage of FCVs. The chief executive considered that increased observer coverage of high risk vessels was the most effective way to ensure the activity of these vessels did not compromise the integrity of New Zealand's management regime.

The Ministry has an annual plan for observer coverage.<sup>1</sup> Almost all observer coverage covered by the plan is funded by cost recovery levies that are paid by quota owners. The costs of any additional observer coverage, for example coverage of high risk FCVs, are charged directly to the operator of the vessel in question. I am satisfied that this annual plan, together with the risk-based approach, means that the current level of observer coverage is adequate for the fisheries that the FCV fleet operates in. However, I can confirm that the Ministry is currently exploring the option of full observer coverage with deepwater quota owners

I would also note that current observer coverage in many of the fisheries that the FCV fleet operates in is high and it is not unusual for 30-40% of these fishing trips to be observed, particularly in the squid and jack mackerel fisheries. The level of coverage amongst the FCV fleet is considerably higher than the coverage in most of the inshore fisheries.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information please visit the Ministry's websites at:  
<http://www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/Commercial/Observer+Services/default.htm>

Thank you for taking the time to contact me on this important issue. Please be assured that we are working hard to ensure our valuable fisheries resources continue to be managed sustainably for the future benefit of all New Zealanders.

If you would like more information on any matter addressed in this letter please contact Dr John Taunton-Clark at the Ministry's Auckland office on 09 820 7687.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Phil Heatley', with a stylized, cursive script.

Hon Phil Heatley  
**Minister of Fisheries**