

Recreational Fishers See Over-Reaction in Dolphin Issue

Recreational fishers consider a total set netting ban to save the Hector Dolphins to be unjustified and impractical. Lloyd Hanson, president of the Marlborough Recreational Fishers' Association said that recreational set nets currently were limited to one person and to a length of 60 metres.

Around Marlborough flounder, moki and butterfish were the two species most commonly caught by set netting.

"In fact, generally moki and butterfish can only be taken by set netting and are only rarely caught on a hook and line," said Mr. Hanson.

Since both species are caught within 50 metres of the rocks, which is not Hector dolphin territory.

Under proposals Cloudy Bay would be completely shut off to netting. That would mean the netting will be forced to fish elsewhere putting pressure on other areas.

Mr. Hanson said members of the association with both former commercial and recreational netting experience had never seen or heard of a Hector Dolphin being caught in a set net. Research has disclosed only two known incidents of Hector dolphin entanglement from 1970 to 2006 in Cloudy Bay and adjoining coastline.

"It's draconian and it's political for government to be seen as green," he said.

Mr. Hanson was critical of the massive 300-page document that was "full of impractical, worthless regulation and bogus data that would do nothing to help increase numbers of dolphins."

"Most Kiwis are green conscious but not to the extent of being off the planet. We want to help Hector dolphins but this 300 page document isn't the way."

Aggravating the threat to normal recreational fishing were plans to bring in a domination by marine protected areas.