

HECTOR'S AND MAUI'S DOLPHIN THREAT MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

I would like to submit on the above in relation to the Manukau harbour, which is the only area I can comment on with any personal knowledge, on behalf of Titirangi R.S.A. Fishing Club and local fishers.

There has been a huge amount of emotive press releases from stretched facts to outright lies from high sources in our local authorities to extremists in Forest and Bird. I feel convinced these people on average have no hands on knowledge of fishing whatsoever. We have quotes of 78% of fatalities of Maui's is due to set nets yet according to DOC incident data base only two deaths can be attributed to entanglement since 1921. Set netting has been a traditional way of fishing for over 100 years on the Manukau harbour and most amateur fishers only want a decent feed for the family. Shallow water set nets are the most practical ways of catching flounder and mullet.

The extremists, of course, want set netting banned completely through the whole country. All the people I fish and socialise with have never seen a Maui dolphin in the harbour and we are talking about some with 50 – 60 years of fishing. The listening devices currently in the harbour that APPARENTLY hear dolphins is very unproven. Recently it was reported they "heard" dolphins on a clear and windless day. There was also a fishing contest on that day and, as usual, not one sighting.

There is still talk of moving the set net ban further up the harbour past Cornwallis. This would cause a lot of hardship as families set mullet and flounder nets on a regular basis while having picnics. Young kids have a lot of fun with this and it is their rightful heritage.

Of the proposals put forward by the ministry the most logical would be the status quo but if some compromise is required no night setting and staying with nets would be the option. All the recreational fishers I know stay with nets and only set in shallow water otherwise its goodbye nets.

Commercial fishers are in a different situation with much longer nets (up to 1 km, I believe) and do not stay with nets. Still with the commercial situation we have trawlers operating in the known habitat of the Maui which seems a bit strange but I have no personal information on this so cannot make informed comment.

Another option not mentioned is improved water quality. It is a known fact that pollution is still at unacceptable levels and councils would be better looking to solve that than worrying about set nets.

To finalise, I would refer to the recent Kahawai challenge result from Justice Harrison. There is an obligation on the Minister of Fisheries to manage fisheries sustainably in order to enable people to provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing and that everyone has a right in common law to fish to provide for their needs.

Dave Lawrence

On behalf of Titirangi R.S.A. Fishing Club and local fishers.