WELLINGTON
RECREATIONAL MARINE FISHERS'
ASSOCIATION (Inc)

WE RECOGNISE MANAGED FISHERIES

24 October 2007

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Newlands
WELLINGTON

The Manager
TMP Submissions
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Dear Sir

Submission to: **Draft Hectors dolphin Threat Management Plan (TMP).**

As a responsible organisation representing the region's recreational marine fishers the Committee of the Wellington Recreational Marine Fishers Association offer the following observations to assist those who, by their decisions or lack of them, will be ultimately responsible for the extinction or recovery of the Maui Dolphin specie. It is of extreme concern that senior policy advisors from both the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Fisheries could not come up with an overall plan that identified all the threats to these Maui dolphins. By not identifying the food source of dolphins and then discussed ways of protecting their food source from man's environmental madness, this omission has reflected the lack of practical marine knowledge within this working group.

We have attached our submission to the Ministry of Fisheries Initial position paper - proposed interim measures for Hectors Dolphins. However, since then we have learnt that a number of Maui dolphins are carrying the human disease Brucellosis and now we have proven from where they have obtained this disease.

It was not until I was briefing the Department of Conservation Non Government Organisation (DOCNGO) forum on how dolphins and kahawai work together to bring yellow eyed mullet and other small fish together so that they can both feed that I realised senior management in both DOC policy team, the Hector Dolphin working group, and the Forest and Bird Society, had no idea what dolphins eat. When the Forest and Bird representative interrupted and informed the meeting that Maui dolphins could be getting infected by eating shellfish and crustaceans I knew they had no idea as to what they eat. I challenged them to provide the source of this misinformation, as this view was also supported by the chair of the DOC NGO forum and by silence from the Hector Dolphin DOC working group representative. If this is what the Hector Dolphin working group believe then

these dolphins are is serious trouble and my prediction that they will be all gone by 2020 will need revising to an earlier date.

Previously I had taken a number of photos as we watched a pod of dolphins feeding on the surface off Island Bay and had sent a selection around by e mail. It was then I discovered that there are scientists who had studied dolphins for fifteen years but never realised how they feed. To me it is fairly basic as I have seen them feeding many times and I knew that the massive school of bait fish we had anchored over off Island Bay would attract something sooner or later. After a while we started catching and releasing kahawai as we consider them a by-catch. Then as the kahawai began driving the bait fish to the surface we could see a pod of dolphins working the area and they started coming towards us. When feeding, dolphins create a net of air bubbles that small bait fish on the surface will not swim through, and kahawai and dolphins can be seen feeding together on the small bait fish. The over fishing of kahawai would also be impacting on dolphins as these are the working dogs of the sea.

The lack of understanding by Government science providers about what dolphins eat was made still more obvious when the Forest and Bird Society supplied me with a poster from a presentation from the Otago University dolphin research team. The poster is a shocking piece of misinformation. When I received an email from a DOC marine scientist describing how dolphins may flush shellfish out or catch paddle crabs in mid-water or eat crayfish while on the march it further proves this draft Hectors dolphin Threat Management Plan (TMP) has been based on misinformation. In an about to be released ten year scientific study on what dolphins eat the research will confirm what we already know, they eat primarily yellow eyed mullet and other small fish.

Now that their food source has been recognised as primarily yellow eyed mullet it is easy to see from where the dolphins are eating the contaminated food. After proving that yellow eyed mullet spawn up rivers and streams (contrary to what is described in the Mfish Plenary and the NIWA website) other DOC NGO representatives sought the help of the past Director General of DOC, Hugh Logan. He introduced me to Ian West the DOC Marine Science Manager and with the help of another scientist, Alan Heath, we co wrote a science paper that for the first time identified that the life in beach cast seaweed provides a food source for yellow eyed mullet. The first paper described how yellow eyed mullet were captured with a gut full of kelp fly maggots and we intended to write other papers describing how they were also captured with their gut full of sand hoppers. Other papers planned were to describe how they graze on algae but unfortunately, although this was the only science study ever made of what yellow eyed mullet eat, we discovered that due to a conflict of interest within the NZ Royal Society management and those involved in the publication of marine scientific discoveries in their publication the New Zealand Journal of Marine and Freshwater Research, they refused to publish the paper. We had also recorded other work that could have been used for a number of masters thesis by students, as very little is known about the inter tidal zone, but that can not now take place.

Unfortunately our discovery was only made in 2006 as in 2003 while attending the resource consent hearing to allow the Wellington City Council to continue to dump sewage into Lyall Bay, both the DOC scientist and myself were condemned by two of the chairs for raising concerns about how the chemically enriched polluted fresh waters would be killing marine life. The chemical slick lies on the surface for miles, and photos prove it travels right through the about to be opened marine reserve on Wellington's south coast, destroying the algae and marine life in the inter-tidal zone. A class of school boys described they had made a study of the rock pools in Princess Bay and found little marine life. The DOC scientist also described how dolphins would only have to come in contact with human diseases to be contaminated.

The latest sewage discharge application also states that there is no provision to strip out the human diseases, petroleum chemicals, or any of the endocrine chemicals of which dolphins have no way of avoiding or ridding themselves. In fact, with nearly all sewage discharges into rivers, streams, harbours and bays, this is destroying the dolphin's primary food source. Now we find not only have the yellow eyed mullet spawning areas been destroyed or polluted but their food source living in beach cast sea weed is also being poisoned.

The latest resource consent application has also identified why the inter-tidal zone is being destroyed as we have found there are massive errors and misinformation coming from the Ministry of Environment in their book *Microbiological Water Quality Guidelines MFE 2003* which is just as useless as their *Managing Waterways on Farms* book. This book should have three chapters deleted or corrected as they are giving councils the impression that the inter-tidal zone has no value to marine specie and is describing how to destroy the spawning habitat of many marine specie which can be found up rivers or streams. Not once has this book described or named a native inter tidal wetland plant as having any value to marine specie and this omission is a major factor in describing the threat to any dolphin specie.

Yellowed mullet, along with many fish that spawn up rivers or streams, obtain their food source from the life found in beach cast seaweed or the algae in the inter-tidal zone. Now there lies a problem. Not only has the NZ Royal Society refused to publish the only scientific paper ever written describing this food source but we have forty eight councils grooming beaches and taking this important food source to the rubbish tips. Many beaches are groomed with heavy machinery so that what is not removed is crushed to death. In Wellington twenty nine beaches are groomed, while in other areas sand mining has removed the medium where this life lives, or turned once flowing streams into sink holes. Once there were major yellow eyed mullet spawning grounds in the Fitzroy and Pencarrow Lakes but these grounds have been destroyed through excessive sand mining at the lake outlets through the failure of the NZCPS and the Wellington Regional Coastal Plan to describe their value to marine and native fish species. Without the lakes outlets being given any value the regional council management have failed to ensure the resource consents have been complied with.

Now an even greater threat for dolphin's food source is around the corner as an eight hundred million dollar industry is being formed to employ local Iwi to remove all beach cast seaweed as it arrives on a beach, or to cut it down before it reaches a beach. A threat management plan without this information is a total waste of time and money.

The importance of beach cast seaweed to marine specie and the lack of marine knowledge from Government marine scientists could not have been more clearly demonstrated than when they could not raise a concern or describe the impact on marine life from fast ferries which had arrived in 1994. Travelling down through the Marlborough Sounds two fast ferries propulsion units blasted the silt from the sea bed covering the seaweed and then produced forty eight two-metre tidal waves a day washing the beach cast seaweed off the shore. This denied blue cod and dolphins a major food source as once there were many pilchard and yellow eyed mullet schools, of hundreds of tonnes each, but by the time the fast ferries had left there was only one five-tonne pilchard school remaining. The size and abundance of these bait fish schools, and how they provided a major food source to other marine specie, is contained in books and scientific masters papers.

It is disappointing to read through this draft Threat Management Plan of 298 pages to find that there is only twelve lines describing pollution as a factor, and not one word describing where dolphins obtain their food source from. Both DOC and the Ministry of Fisheries have a copy of the scientific paper describing the importance of beach cast seaweed to dolphins yet not once has the food source been named, let alone been described as having a bearing on their survival.

It is also hard to believe that DOC considers jet power craft tourist craft are eco friendly when they suck up the plankton rich surface waters where all marine life begins their life. There is even a study commissioned by DOC that describes dolphins veering way from these craft. Yet this TMP has not identified them as a threat and DOC allows them to continue operating as eco friendly tourist ventures.

This submission has been described in brief as we have made two lengthy submissions to the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS) where we identified over thirty five errors and omissions including discovering four of our eight national important databases carry major errors and omissions. We have also made a major submission to the Issues and Options Stage of the NZCPS. (Copies of these two submissions are attached.)

If the revised NZCPS fails to once again describe the value of the inter-tidal zone, and fails to set in place major reforms as to how councils manage the inter-tidal zone, then Maui dolphins are doomed and be well gone by 2020. Government could ban netting all around New Zealand but it would not alter the fact that the failings of the NZCPS and the regional coastal plans have been the single major contributing factor to why we are losing these dolphins. The misinformation in the NZCPS has destroyed the food source of Maui and other dolphins and denied marine specie a major food source.

The draft TMP requires a major overhaul by this working group as failing to include the marine environment and the dolphin's food source in a paper described as a threat management plan is totally unacceptable.

The findings in this Draft threat management plan lacks research.

Yours sincerely

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Attached
Submission to Ministry of Fisheries in response to the:
Initial position paper - proposed interim measures for Hectors Dolphins
Submission to the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement: NZCPS reviewA
Review comments from the NZCPS review: Summary of comments 05
Submission to the Issues and Options Stage of the NZCPS: Strategy and Policy Group NZCPS final.