
North Island Maui's Dolphin

Summary of Draft Threat Management Plan Proposals



What's the problem?

- Maui's are the world's smallest and rarest dolphin;
- Total population is estimated at 111 dolphins;
- Maui's have a very slow reproduction rate and the population is unlikely to survive if there is even one death per year caused by human activities;
- 4 found dead (3 from apparent natural causes, 1 uncertain), last summer;
- Review of reported mortalities of Maui's dolphins indicate that entanglement in set nets poses the greatest risk of human-induced mortality to the dolphins;
- Trawling and drift netting are the other fishing methods that are also potential threats; and
- Other potential (non fishing) threats include boat strike, various kinds of pollution, marine debris and projects such as offshore mining.

The draft Threat Management Plan

Many people and the government are clearly concerned about the impact that human activities have had on regional populations of Hector's (South Island) and Maui's dolphin. In response the Ministry of Fisheries and Department of Conservation have prepared a draft Threat Management Plan that:

- describes the nature and extent of threats to the dolphins;
- outlines strategies (some with options) to reduce or eliminate threats caused by human activities; and
- is in three parts. The first outlines the problem and general threats facing the dolphins. The second focuses on the fishing-related threats of set netting, drift netting and trawling, with options for managing these threats. The third outlines proposals for Marine Mammal sanctuaries, including one on the North Island west coast, and for further research and monitoring.

Assessment of fishing-related threats

The plan outlines what we currently know about the two critical kinds of information that determine the extent to which fishing activities represent a threat to Maui's dolphin.

They are:

- Dolphin distribution - it is essential to have accurate information on the distribution of the dolphins. Some fishing methods may represent a threat if used where there are dolphins, and no threat if used beyond the dolphins' range, or in ways that can't catch them; and
- Fishing information - the kind of fishing methods used, their intensity of use and their capability to accidentally catch Maui's dolphin, throughout the known range of the population.

Maui's dolphin west coast distribution



Important features of the distribution information are that:

- Most dolphins are in a "core area" between the Manukau Harbour and Port Waikato/Raglan;
- A combination of verified public sightings, strandings (dead dolphins found washed up), and aerial and boat-based sightings have been used to determine the dolphins' generally accepted range between the vicinity of Maunganui Bluff and Mokau;
- There is uncertainty about the southern and offshore extent of the dolphins' range and about both whether and the extent to which they may venture into each west coast harbour.

Proposed management options for fishing-related threats

For the North Island west coast the plan proposes management options for each fishing method. Options are:

Commercial and non-commercial set netting:

Status quo	No change - continued boat-based, aerial survey and acoustic POD research to determine dolphins' use of harbours and offshore beyond 4 nautical miles
Option 1	Set net bans at Kaipara Harbour entrance, beyond the Manukau entrance and in the lower Waikato River
Option 2	Set netters required to stay with their nets and no night setting in the Kaipara, Manukau, Raglan, Aotea and Kawhia harbours, and Port Waikato
Option 3	All set netting banned within 12nm of the coast between Maunganui Bluff and Cape Egmont, and in the Kaipara, Manukau, Raglan, Aotea and Kawhia harbours and Port Waikato

West Coast Trawling:

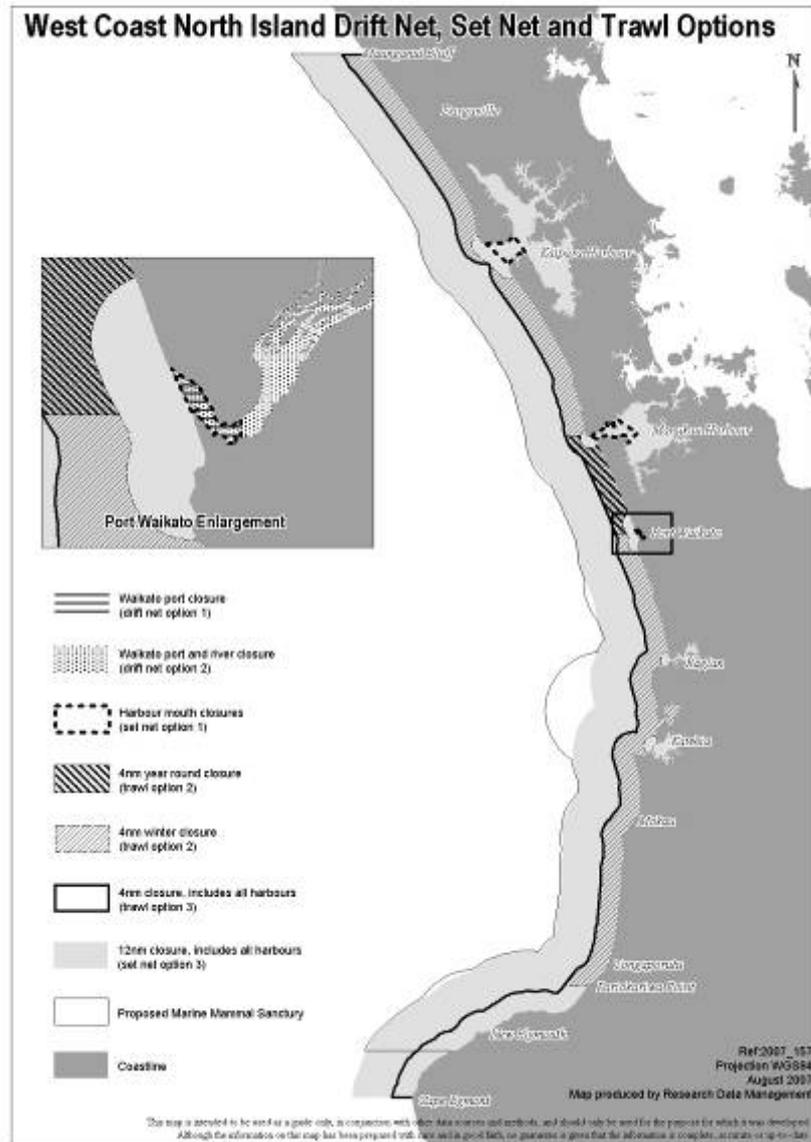
Status quo	No change - further aerial surveys of dolphin offshore distribution, continued observer monitoring
Option 1	Additional fisheries monitoring (observer coverage or electronic monitoring) to determine nature and extent of trawl/dolphin interactions inside 4nm from shore between Maunganui Bluff and Pariokariwa Point
Option 2	Trawl prohibition between Maunganui Bluff and Pariokariwa Point inside 4nm from shore between 1 June and 31 August; and trawl prohibition between Manukau Harbour and Port Waikato inside 4nm from shore year round
Option 3	Year round trawl prohibition inside 4nm from shore from Maunganui Bluff to Cape Egmont

Drift netting:

Status quo	No change - compliance focus on ensuring nets used carefully
Option 1	Prohibit drift netting in the lower reaches of the Waikato River
Option 2	Prohibit drift netting anywhere at Port Waikato

The management options for each fishing method range from least to most restriction on fishing activity - lesser restrictions having lesser impact on fishers but possibly also lower levels of protection for the dolphins. Stronger restrictions increase the levels of protection for the dolphins, while also increasingly impacting on fishers' fishing activities. Retaining the status quo - no change to current management (but further research) is also an option in view of uncertainties about distribution and interactions with trawlers.

Ultimately the Minister of Fisheries will have to decide what level of certainty he thinks is needed to protect the dolphins, bearing in mind the impacts there may be on both commercial and non-commercial fishers.



What happens next?

- The Threat management Plan has been released for public comment. **Submissions are due by 24 October 2007.** Send to: TMP Submissions, PO Box 11-146, WELLINGTON 6011, or Hectorstmp@biodiversity.govt.nz
- This is your opportunity to comment on the management options in the plan and to provide information on how they might affect you.
- In the next few weeks, MFish and DoC will be returning to west coast centres so people have an opportunity to obtain more information and to discuss the options in the plan. We will let you know the dates soon.
- In November MFish and DoC will prepare advice to Ministers using information from submissions, a socio-economic survey and other sources.
- The aim is to have any new measures in place by December 2007.

More information/contacts

- Full copies of the draft plan are at www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/Environmental/Hectors+Dolphins.htm
- If you would like hard copies of the plan or CDs contact Rachel Powell (09) 820 1990
- If you have questions about Maui's issues contact Richard Fanselow (09) 820 7693, or fanselowr@fish.govt.nz