

Hokianga Accord Update #21

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Hui dates and venue confirmed

Confirmed dates of the next Hokianga Accord hui are Thursday 11th and Friday 12th June. The hui will be at Whitiara marae, Te Tii, Kerikeri in the northern Bay of Islands. This is shaping to be an interesting hui and the Accord welcomes your attendance on one or both days.

Phil Heatley, the Minister of Fisheries, and Pita Sharples, the Minister of Maori Affairs will be at the hui on Thursday.

A panel discussion on the need to collect amateur catch information will be shared between Peter Douglas, Te Ohu Kaimoana, Daryl Sykes (SeaFIC), Barry Torkington, John Holdsworth and option4's Project Leader Paul Barnes. This session will undoubtedly highlight concerns about how many fish amateur fishers harvest in comparison to commercial take, management difficulties and whether current data is adequate to support sustainable use of important, inshore fisheries.

Local kaitiaki will provide an update on the MFish process to consult and implement Te Puna Mataitai application. Preceding this discussion will be a summary from the MFish Chief Executive on the recent announcement that the Ministry will not be promoting any further mataitai reserves or assisting tangata whenua to draft applications while a departmental review is underway.

Peter Douglas, TOKM's Chief Executive, will update the hui on the commercial fisheries assets allocation programme and the Commission's strategic direction.

MFish is scheduled to discuss the draft North Island west coast finfish Fisheries Plan. After reading the draft plan in March the Accord advised MFish the planning process was not adequate given the lack of input and participation by tangata whenua, Ngapuhi and Ngati Whatua's non-commercial fishing and environmental interests. The Accord invested a considerable amount of resources into this planning process in 2007 and 2008.

In mid-2008 the Accord's attention was diverted to addressing MFish's proposal to amend section 13 of the Fisheries Act 1996. After two joint submissions and a hearing with the Primary Production Select Committee the amendment was enacted on September 28th. The Accord still considers this amendment has the potential of putting sustainability of our fisheries at risk because, in broad terms, it will enable the Minister to use inadequate information to set the total allowable catch limit for a fishery.

Time and energy then went into assisting the legal team prepare for the appeal to the Supreme Court in the Kahawai Legal Challenge. The appeal hearing was held in Wellington on 12 February this year. The Supreme Court's decision is expected to have an important effect on all future fisheries management decisions, particularly in the way non-commercial fishing interests must be allowed for.

The Accord's initial view of MFish's draft Fisheries Plan and process is that more work is required, and we eagerly await the Court's decision before making further submissions on that draft.

These and other issues will be discussed at the next Hokianga Accord hui in June at Whitiara marae, Te Tii. All welcome – please call Shelley Naera on 0275 872466 for more details if you would like to attend.

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