

Marine Fishers United

The monthly newsletter of the NZ Recreational Fishing Council.



Issue 9

April 06

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Should you not wish to receive these news updates, please email John at mfu@orcon.net.nz

The aims and objectives of this Monthly News is to support the principles and policies of the New Zealand Recreational Fishing Council and to act as a communication conduit to the wider fishing public

Recreational Fishing Targeting Great White Sharks is Wrong

By Keith Ingram

Recently a major study carried out by an international team of researchers from more than a dozen countries revealed that sharks inhabit less than a third of the world's oceans. It found that sharks only thrive near ocean surfaces, and cannot be found below 3000 metres, because there is not enough food for them to survive at lower levels.

The finding represents a blow to researchers who have spent years scouring the deep for sharks and new species. Clearly there are also concerns about the diminishing number of oceanic sharks on our high seas. There has been a lot of coverage recently regarding one of our oceanic sharks, the great white. Unfortunately, as happens when mainstream media and environmental groups like Forest and Bird get involved, many important facts get lost in the emotions of creating a good story to bolster one's image.

The Minister of Conservation, Chris Carter, has risen to the occasion, as he is apt to do when it suits his eco-driven friends, and recently released a discussion document canvassing options for protecting great white sharks in New Zealand waters.

He states: "Great white sharks are the celebrity predators of the ocean. They are an object of fear and fascination, but sadly there is growing evidence that this magnificent and rare species is in trouble internationally." In 2000, great white sharks were listed as "globally vulnerable" on the International Red List of Threatened Species, amid fears that accidental catch in some commercial and recreational fisheries was having a significant impact on numbers.

And yet he ignored the call in 2000 from the New Zealand Recreational Fishing Council to do something about it by banning the targeting and finning of oceanic sharks at sea. "Like many other top predators, populations of great whites tend to be small and lack the elasticity to withstand external pressures, such as fishing and environmental change," Carter says.

Our near neighbour, Australia, has already moved to protect the great white shark in its waters, but to date New Zealand has not, despite being a party to the International

Convention on Migratory Species, which obliges us to do so. Great whites are also protected in South Africa and the United States.

In releasing the discussion document, Carter says the government believes it is time we thought seriously about playing our part in what is a global conservation issue.

He intends to canvas the views and options of how we might go about meeting our international obligations for protecting the great white from the public and stakeholders in the marine area.

Without appearing to be a wet blanket, it is hard to argue with his spirit of intent. But Minister, a Bantaid fix in our coastal waters is too little, too late. Instead of waiting for cosy support from the eco-ites, start listening to those who go down to the sea in ships, the professional mariners and recreational fishers. The problem is not just great whites, it affects all our oceanic sharks, including our mako.

"The recent media reporting on the exploits of two fishermen in Port Stephens only highlights the inappropriate behaviour of their actions in specifically targeting an endangered and protected species" said Frank Prokop, the President of Recfish Australia, in response to a recent reported catch. Recfish Australia represents the interests of anglers at the national level.

"We always encourage people to participate in fishing and enjoy the many rewards that it has to offer. But we also encourage people to fish within the rules and to understand that sustainable fishing is the responsibility of everyone who fishes." The great white shark has been listed as endangered and afforded protection by many countries around the world so that it may return to close to its natural numbers. It is for this reason that there is a ban on targeting these fish.

"It is clear from media reports that the two anglers are setting out to catch great white sharks, and we cannot condone that behaviour, thinly disguised as helping science or understanding the species, in any way."

Closer to home, a great white shark measuring almost 5m long has been caught seven nautical miles off Port Waikato on the western coast of the North Island. The female shark was caught by a commercial fisherman, Warwick Harris, from the fishing boat he operates out of Port Waikato. The catch was towed back to port and is being examined by researchers at Auckland University.

Warwick Harris says it is the biggest shark he has seen in his time in an area not known for great white sharks. He says its jaws are large enough to fit around a person's body. While not condoning this capture, we should at least

acknowledge that Mr Harris brought the shark in and handed it over for research, rather than go for the quick buck from selling the fins and auctioning the jaw.

This aside, I must address the amount of mis-information being touted by some. No game or sporting club I know of has trophy hunts for great whites in New Zealand. Granted, they remain on the books of the International Game Fishing Association and the New Zealand Big Game Fishing Council's records as a sportfish. I also understand these organisations are reviewing their policies, and they should be encouraged to do this openly and without prejudice. Barry Weeber of Forest and Bird's comments on television accusing the Chatham Islanders of hunting these sharks for their fins and jaws is total mis-information. Reference to the Chatham Islands must be taken in context with the situation.

Great whites hunt and eat seals. The Chatham Island's have prolific numbers of seals, including the New Zealand fur seal, a much-preferred food source for large, oceanic sharks and orca. And as such, the islands are a good feeding ground for sharks, including great whites. The local islanders catch these large, threatening sharks, great whites or otherwise, only in areas where and when paua divers are at risk while working to harvest paua quota, a legitimate activity.

The point I am trying to make is that the number of great whites captured on the New Zealand coast is very small by comparison to those taken at sea or on the high seas.

The Conservation Minister risks causing further problems by enacting bad legislation causing public confusion. Already he has acknowledged that Dunedin will have to get a special permit for its beach shark nets. Does this mean that every amateur or commercial fisher will need a special permit before setting his or her net to catch food?

If Chris Carter really wants to protect our declining oceanic sharks, including great whites, he should address the problem at the source:

First. Ban the practice of finning sharks at sea, alive or dead. Introduce legislation which requires all shark fins from legitimately caught sharks, by-catch or otherwise, be landed attached to the shark's trunk, so that they are recorded both as by-catch or against quota held by the fisher.

Second. Ban the importing of shark fin products and trade in oceanic shark jaws.

Thirdly. Apply government pressure to those nations which encourage finning sharks at sea or on the high seas for the sole purpose of the dried shark fin trade.

Unfortunately the Minister's decision will once again make potential criminals out of normal, law abiding citizens, which is sad, because recreational fishers, and I would suggest most commercial fishers, actually support the high seas protection of our oceanic sharks, including great whites.

Finally, for this to work, the Minister needs public support. His department has no means of effecting compliance, so without public support this decision will create meaningless rules.

Published in Coast to Coast Fishing magazine We thanks the Editor for approval to reprint.

Ends

Long-serving fishery officer goes bush

Ministry of Fisheries, March 30, 2006

Fishery patrols, undercover operations and 4WD adventures have all been part of the action for fishery officer Warren Brown. After 32 years of service he is hanging up his paua measurer and heading for the hills.

Warren, the ministry's longest-serving fishery officer, joined the [then] Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in 1974. He was initially based in Auckland but has spent his career in a number of different regions, from Invercargill to the Bay of Islands.

Warren has seen many changes during his time at MFish, particularly in terms of how honorary fishery officers are managed. Having spent a number of years as coordinator for the northern region's HFOs, he has been instrumental in improving the HFO programme.

"In the old days, the HFOs weren't very well trained or coordinated. The ad-hoc management style wasn't very conducive to presenting a professional fishery officer to the community.

"However, there's been a huge improvement in the last few years. HFO's may be difficult to recruit, but the ones we do have are better trained, better equipped and more effective in assisting us with fisheries management," he says.

Warren has been based in Kaitia for the last two and a half years, where he has become a well-known local figure. He can often be found checking recreational catches at the beach, and is highly skilled at diving, 4WD driving, vessel handling and field surveillance, and is always happy to pass these skills on to others.

MFish officer Harvey Fergusson says Warren will be missed. "Warren has been involved in a number of fishery operations and is skilled in all aspects of fishery surveillance. He is a great mentor for new staff learning the ropes. And he's a legend at four-wheel driving, as he can

get vehicles into, and sometimes out of, places you wouldn't believe."

Warren has fond memories of his years at MAF and then the Ministry of Fisheries. "One particular highlight was being the first fishery officer to man the Fishery Control Centre and receiving the first message from the Navy and Defence Department while on the first watch.

"I have also worked with some of the most skilled fishery officers in the country. It has always felt like a happy working family, where everyone was willing to help out and share their skills."

"I feel the ministry is a world leader in fisheries management, and if they continue to focus on sustainability I know that my grandchildren will have the same pleasures I had in what was given to us all by Tangaroa."

Warren is moving back to his tūrangawaewae in Te Hapua, the northernmost town in New Zealand. After a four-month break to focus on renovating his bach, he plans to help protect the flora and fauna in the Far North.

Bluff versus Nelson - who's the boss?

30 March 2006

By Phil Mc Carthy From Stuff

If oysters were boxers, Bluff's would probably be a world champion with an expensive appearance fee, while Nelson's would be a plucky battler.

The Southland Times set out to search out the facts of the longstanding rivalry between Bluff's finest and Nelson's finest.

A taste test by this reporter at Invercargill's King's Fish Market (carried out under strict world anti-doping agency conditions, or something close to that) confirmed that Bluff oysters tasted far sweeter than their Nelson rival.

However, Joseph Mollo, who works at Nelson's Haven Fish & Chips, weighed in behind his local contender. "Nelson's are probably better - people up here buy them. I think it's probably because of the price."

At Haven, a dozen Nelson oysters cost between \$15 and \$16 raw or \$20.40 cooked.

A staff member at Nelson's Guyton Fisheries said its wholesale and retail operation sold both Nelson and Bluff oysters. "I've got no comment to make on who's better," he said, diplomatically.

However, a few years ago he said he remembered two supposed oyster connoisseurs blind-tasted the two varieties and couldn't tell the difference. The only thing defining the two was probably price, he said.

Outside King's Fish Market in Invercargill, a sign reads: "Ocean fresh Nelson oysters – same as Bluff".

Owner Greg King explained that the two oysters were the same species but tasted different because of the differing underwater conditions in which they grew.

Bluff oysters are crafted by the strong ocean currents of Foveaux Strait, while Nelson oysters grow in sheltered bays where mud and silt run off from farm paddocks.

"We've been selling (Nelson oysters) for a couple of weeks. The sales have all but stopped when Bluff oysters went on sale."

However, King predicted sales of the Nelson oysters would increase again after the first couple of weeks of the Bluff oyster season.

The Nelson oyster season was also potentially longer than its Bluff rival, with quota increases introduced this year, he said. At King's, Bluff oysters are selling for \$20.50 a dozen raw, while Nelson oysters were \$16.95 a dozen raw.

Fisheries assets flow to Ngati Porou

Gisborne Herald Saturday 1st April
by James Ihaka

Ngati Porou will receive the first part of their fisheries assets, worth nearly \$35.5 million, now that the runanga has become a mandated iwi organisation, or an MIO.

Te Runanga o Ngati Porou (TRONP) will initially acquire assets including \$22.5 million worth of shares in New Zealand's largest fishing company, Aotearoa Fisheries Ltd, \$11 million (2700 tonnes) in quota shares and \$1.9 million in cash.

A further \$9 million of quota will be allocated once agreements have been reached with a neighbouring iwi, Rongowhakaata, which will achieve MIO status later this year. The status comes after extensive hui with Ngati Porou beneficiaries throughout Tairāwhiti and New Zealand.

TRONP received a 92 percent mandate to establish the Porou Ariki Trust as the MIO for Ngati Porou, adopt the trust deed and become the trustee.

Under provisions in the Maori Fisheries Act 2004, an MIO must receive at least 75 percent support from its registered members before any transfer of assets can be made from the governing body, Te Ohu Kaimoana, or TOKM.

Porou Ariki Trust has established an asset holding company, trading as Ngati Porou Seafoods Ltd, which will

hold and manage the fisheries assets. TRONP chairman Apirana Mahuika said he was pleased the allocation of fisheries assets would finally take place and he looked forward to future developments.

"This is a vindication of all the effort and investment that Ngati Porou and other iwi have made over the past 14 years to secure the fisheries assets in the first instance and then to ensure allocation to respective iwi in a timely and efficient manner," said Dr Mahuika.

The runanga had been at the forefront to advocate and protect Ngati Porou fisheries interests and rights since the debate on the Waitangi Fisheries Settlement began in 1989, he said. This included political lobbying and taking costly legal action to the Privy Council and United Nations to protect the rights and interests of iwi.

"The difficulties in terms of our treaty rights and letting other people fish in our territory still smacks a bit, but that's in the past and we now have to start making money," Dr Mahuika said.

TRONP's chief executive, Amohaere Houkamau, said the outcome was a collective effort by the runanga, the Ngati Porou Marae and Hapu Fisheries Working Party and the Ngati Porou Fisheries Advisory Group.

"The clear mandate received and the receipt of our fisheries assets enables Ngati Porou to move on and focus on other developments, confident in the structures we have put in place to achieve sustainable benefits and gains for Ngati Porou," said Ms Houkamau.

Te Ohu Kaimoana congratulated the runanga for implementing its management structure, constitution and register of members that were all required under the Maori Fisheries Act. Maori Fisheries Trust chief executive Peter Douglas said the trust and TRONP had worked together to overcome any potential difficulties so the runanga would hold the fisheries assets on behalf of its members.

"This approach will show the way for the further 10 or so trust boards facing similar circumstances," said Douglas.

TRONP established Ngati Porou Fisheries Ltd (NPFL) in 2003 to manage its commercial fisheries operations. Ngati Porou Seafoods Ltd will take over these functions, with the current NPFL directors acting as interim directors, until Porou Ariki trustees appoint new ones.

NPFL general manager Ngarangi Bidois said the new company would manage the quota to maximise its returns. "The allocation provides Ngati Porou with a very strong asset base from which we can lever further investments into the industry, which has always been part of our growth strategy," said Bidois.

Charter boat fishing impacting on stocks

The Gisborne Herald
by Sarah Curtis

Two-thirds of all big game fish caught off the East Coast is being stripped of its fillets then dumped back overboard, says traditional Maori fisherman Joe McClutchie

McClutchie was recently involved in a dispute at sea with the American skipper of a Whakatane-based vessel. The Maritime New Zealand consequently warned both men about unsafe practices at sea.

The pair clashed in the Ranfurly Canyon fishing area off Hicks Bay. He says that the fishing ground is now being infiltrated by fishermen like Whakatane skipper Rick Pollock, who have over-fished their local waters.

McClutchie's stance on fishing has captured the interest of the national media. A documentary team for Maori

Television's Te Karere programme has now travelled to the East Coast to report on the issues.

He says laws surrounding catch limits for big game fish like hapuku and bass are not sustainable. "For our people here locally, the need to look after the future of the resource and the future generation is a real concern.

"Many of the fish are 100 to 135 years old. They are the breeders and are important to the cycle of the species. Unfortunately, these are the targets to satisfy the egos of people who want to land the biggest or heaviest fish on board," he said.

People who were going to eat the fish should take the smaller ones. Like lamb is to mutton, the smaller fish were better eating than the larger ones, he said. Maori were being wrongly portrayed as the main abusers of the fishing stock.

"We accept there are some sad cases of this happening, but charterboats and commercial operators who both fish within the law have a much larger impact on resources than most people find acceptable."

Such commercial operators were also responsible for wastage of fish, he said. "Most people on charters are only interested in the fillets, which account for about a third of the fish. Cleaning, scaling and dumping of fish at sea and on fishing grounds is a no-no. It is also an insult to our people.

OIA Request? Carters Office Reacts as Expected

by John Friend

Over the past three or four years we have become accustomed to the knee jerk reaction from the current Minister of Conservation's office when faced with an IOA request.

On August 1, 2004, the minister was presented with the following emailed letter that contained a request under the Information Act concerning communications between the Department of Conservation staff, Forest and Bird and any other groups or their agencies.

"We request, separately, copies of all information and communications on the Great Barrier Marine Reserve Proposal, electronic and otherwise, passed between all DoC staff, internally and any between DoC, Forest and Bird and any other group and/or their agents over the last three months."

As a result of this request, DoC, after a considerable delay, finally made available on the October 4, four days after the closing date for submissions to the Aotea Great Barrier Marine Reserve Application, approximately 114 pages of information.

In answer to a question put to the minister, Chris Carter, as to when Forest and Bird were first informed of the application, the minister replied that:

"More recently, I have been advised that the Department of Conservation held a meeting with Forest and Bird on the July 14, 2004"

As a result of the information received under the OIA in October 2004 it became apparent that the minister's reply had given misleading information regarding the date that DoC first made Forest and Bird aware of the application. That date was in fact June 4, 2004, some six weeks before the date given by the minister in his reply.

An internal DoC email dated June 4, 2004 first pointed to the fact that Forest And Bird knew well in advance of the upcoming application:

"Can you take a look at the attached update for F&B MAG. The editor has allowed us about 100 words. I'll try and slip in a picture too. I need to send this off today."

It is believed, given the wording of this internal email that Forest And Bird Were informed about the application much earlier than June 4.

As a result, on March 3, 2006, the minister, Chris Carter, was sent an OIA request for the third time, only this time using the same wording as the first successful request, given that there had been no misunderstanding regarding what information it was that was being asked for (The dates are specified):

"We request under the Information Act 1986 separately, copies of all information and communications on the Great Barrier Marine Reserve Proposal, electronic and otherwise, passed between all DoC staff, internally and any between DoC, Forest and Bird and any other group and/or their agents from December 1, 2004 up to and including May 15, 2005"

This, believe it or not, is the reply from Chris Carters office on April 4, 2006:

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**Fish for the Future
PO Box 26-064
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Wellington**

"I refer to your letter of March 2, 2006 requesting copies of all information and communications on the Great Barrier Marine Reserve proposal, electronic and otherwise, passed between all department of conservation staff (internally) and between DoC, Forest and Bird and any other group and/or their agents from December 1, 2004 up to and including May 15, 2005.

I note that this is the third Official Information Act request of a similar nature made by in the past 18 months and that this request, as worded, covers a more extensive range of information than the previous ones.

I have been advised that it would require processing information contained in 17 files and that much of the information contained in the files would need to be copied to comply with your request.

Section 12(2) of the Official Information Act 1982 states that requests for information need to specify the official information that is sought with due particularity. Accordingly, your request is likely to be declined under section 18(f) of the Act unless you can be more specific.

If you can, please let me know and the request will be considered.

Chris Carter

Let's now look at what was then, as opposed to what is now.

In August 2004, when requesting the same information using the same wording as was used in the most recent request, Carter's office had no problem understanding the OIA request then.

What is now apparent is that Chris Carter's office would seem can no longer understand a simple OIA request that in the past was not a problem. Perhaps one in future might do better drawing a picture.

All jokes aside this is not a laughing matter, it is in fact a very serious issue, if it is found that Carter's office might have deliberately misled the public concerning the Aotea Great Barrier Marine Reserve Application.

So now lets look at the latest reply firstly it is noted that this requested "all information and communications" as had been made in the past only difference this time are the dates, Secondly the reply says "

I have been advised that it would require processing information contained in 17 files, and that much of the information contained in the files would need to be copied to comply with your request".

How could this statement have been made by Carter's office unless those concerned knew what it was that was being requested in the OIA, The request was quite simple. Is all "information and communications" that hard to understand?

Finally, what is Carter's office afraid of? Remember that when the first request was made it took 64 day for the 114 pages of information to be made available, not 28 days as it should have. Note the information was received four days after the closing date for submission on the Aotea Great Barrier application, too late for any information within the documents to be used in a submission.

"One hundred and fourteen documents over 64 days equates to just 1.7 documents a day"

Now, once again there is another convenient delay, this time just prior to when the minister is expected to make his announcement declaring the approval of the Great Barrier Marine Reserve.

A follow-up to this article will be printed in the June issue of Marine Fishers United newsletter. The question is, will Carter's office make this information available? Or will they give every excuse in the book in the hope that the problem will go away?

Public opinion sought on benthic protection areas

April 13, 2006
New Zealand Government

Fisheries Minister Jim Anderton is consulting on an industry proposal to ban bottom trawling from almost a third of New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

"In 2006, I announced a bold initiative which I had received from the fishing industry about bottom trawling in New Zealand waters," Anderton said. "I believe this would be an unprecedented win-win for conservationists and fishermen. But before the government investigates it fully, we want to hear what the New Zealand public thinks of the proposal."

The industry proposal would close some 1.2 million square kilometres of the EEZ to bottom trawling and dredging. When added to New Zealand deepwater areas already closed, the proposed closures would mean that 42 percent of seamounts in New Zealand waters will be protected. This would be the largest single marine protection measure ever proposed within a nation state's EEZ.

The proposed closures have been based around the Ministry for the Environment's Marine Environment Classification system.

"The proposed areas have had little or no bottom trawling or dredging in the past, so we expect their ecosystems and habitats are relatively intact," Mr Anderton said.

"This proposal will allow substantial progress in achieving the Government's marine biodiversity protection objectives in the offshore and demonstrates the fishing industry's enterprise and responsibility in being willing to take proactive steps to preserve the capacity of the marine environment from which they harvest."

The period for public consultation runs until June 9, when submissions will be analysed and an advice paper prepared for Cabinet.

"Depending on the advice, we would hope to have Cabinet decisions by October 1 this year and Regulations enacted before the end of 2006," Mr Anderton said.

Copies of the Initial Position Paper for public consultation and other relevant material are available from the Ministry of Fisheries' website:

<http://www.fish.govt.nz/sustainability/bpa/index.html>

Fishermen raise concerns over reserve

Bay of Plenty Times
by Katherine Hoby

Fishermen need to be informed before they react to an application to set up a reserve in the waters off Mount Maunganui, says the head of a Tauranga recreational fishing association.

Steve Penn, chairman of the Bay of Plenty Marine Recreational Fishermen's Association, said club members had raised concerns over the application for a mataitai

reserve being made by the Tauranga Moana Iwi Customary Fisheries Committee.

"People are jumping up in arms and will continue to do so," he said. "I'm telling them, 'Let's get involved'. Mataitai means management, it doesn't mean exclusion.

The committee has applied to the Ministry of Fisheries for the reserve, which includes waters around Moturiki (leisure) and Motuotau Islands.

Public notices inviting submissions have appeared in local newspapers.

"People need to be better informed before they react. They're not just going to be trampled on because they're non-Maori. That's uninformed reaction," Penn said.

The application cites a desire to protect seafood resources from depletion and overharvesting as the aim of managing the area as a mataitai reserve.

The Ministry of Fisheries says mataitai reserves can only be established over traditional fishing grounds to help ensure fisheries resources are available for customary food gathering purposes.

They also provide for the expression of customary management practices.

If the reserve is granted, the ministry's spatial allocation manager, Randall Bess, said any bylaws restricting seafood gathering would apply to all, except the applicants and those they represent, for the purpose of sustaining a marae only.

The consultation process is two-fold, with the first phase inviting submissions from those who own land in proximity to the proposed mataitai reserve, or who have lived in proximity to the site for three months or more. A public meeting will follow.

The second phase consists of submissions from those who have a fishing interest in the proposed area, and whose ability may be affected by the reserve. If all the criteria are met, the minister must approve the mataitai reserve.

A copy of the application can be obtained from the spatial application manager, Ministry of Fisheries, PO Box 1020, Wellington or randall.bess@fish.govt.nz.

ORNZ supports hapu and recreational fishers

Outdoor Recreation NZ
March 30, 2006

"Ngati te Whiti Hapu's spokesman, Jack Knuckey, is absolutely right, there has been bugger all concern for traditional seafood gathering in the kaimoana areas", said ORNZ's marine Committee coordinator.

This follows the statement by Knuckey on March 17 that traditional kaimoana gathering areas have been seriously depleted by industrial development, leaving New Plymouth's Sugar Loaf Islands area as the only traditional seafood gathering area left available to the hapu.

"The marine reserve application must be put on hold until such time as a properly organised and transparent public consultation process is put in place - one that requires public debate at length by all concerned groups, not only including local iwi but also recreational fishers," says John. "The Minister of Conservation, Chris Carter, has again demonstrated his trademark arrogance towards public opinion and proper consultation. His latest statements regarding the consultation period is ridiculous and outrageous."

"The minister now says that the reserve application has taken eight years and so should not be delayed. Then in the same breath he says he will rule on the application

within two months. Why bother? Why wait two months when it's plainly obvious that the minister intends to push this application through, regardless?

"The whole point of consultation is to avoid railroading those that have the most to lose, and not to run roughshod over them as if they didn't matter," said John.

Conservationists and Maui dolphins"

By John Friend
Pathology reports supplied by S Cameron

Conservationist are misleading both schoolchildren and the public in television advertisements and in particular in our schools it would seem, of most concern is that this at the primary level, which is one of the most impressionable times in a child's life, all this in the name of conservation.

When will the Minister of Conservation, Chris Carter, ensure that when conservation groups that are responsible for making television advertisements or lecturing in schools provide correct information, as children are being given incorrect and misleading information regarding set nets and the Hector's dolphin.

It is widely recognised that the Maui dolphin is on the endangered list. It is not correct that set netting is responsible for killing them. Between March 2001 and July 2003 there have been approximately seven reported Hector's dolphin deaths, one of which was net-related.

The cause of the second death could not be directly said to have been set-net related, and the remainder, according to the nine pathology reports received from DoC, were through natural causes or beach-cast.

Since July 2003 it is believed that there have been only a further two reported deaths, neither of which was set-net related.

What is really behind all of this mis-information? One has to look a bit deeper and take into account the recreational and commercial fishing effort. Recently, and in the past, conservationists have put out incorrect and misleading statements regarding both fishing sectors on set netting, trawling, recreational fishing and marine reserves, and that both the Department of Conservation and MFish are due to review the set-netting ban.

Hector's dolphin incident reports

#H46/02

Found entrapped in a net, moderate decomposition, easily accessible parts eaten. Evidence of parasites in various organ systems, but appears otherwise healthy. Appears to have drowned (sand in the upper respiratory system).

#H48/02

Found "associated with" a fishing net. Decomposed body but with net marks on surface. Minor parasites load but appears otherwise healthy. Cause of death is drowning after blunt trauma, probably as a result of net entrapment.

Massy University Lab #32074

Beached animal, markedly decomposed, not allowing any examination of internal organs and preventing determination of cause of death. Many things, not excluding a net, could have caused the numerous liner skin marks referred to.

Massey University Lab #32339

No information as to circumstances of death, very decomposed allowing only very limited examination, Cause of death not discernible. "Crossed liner marks" on flipper. No comment on these - could be net-related.

Massey University Lab #32441

Found on Sunset Beach, Port Waikato. Fresh specimen, large loss of tissue in front of dorsal fin occurred after death. External marks and bruising in the region of the jaw and top of head due to blunt trauma, but no cuts or penetrating wounds.

Congested lungs consistent with an acute change just prior to death from many causes. Apparently an otherwise healthy animal apart from some parasites (it would appear that a parasite load is normal for these animals). Specimens taken for microscopic, toxicology and parasite examinations - results not available. No salmonella in gut (no acute food poisoning from bacteria at least).

In conclusion: Death from trauma in an otherwise reasonably healthy animal, Cause of trauma from the report is pure conjecture.

H45/02

No information as to circumstances of death. Grossly decomposed incomplete carcass (large part of head region missing). Cause of this degree of tissue loss not identifiable, but at least some of it almost certainly happened after death. No cause of death discernible.

70/03

Found on O'Neil' Beach and body helicoptered out! Cause of death was bleeding into left lung and chest cavity that was secondary to chronic, longstanding pneumonia. The description of this pneumonia sounds similar to tuberculosis-type disease.

Animal also has chronic hepatitis with changes that sound like cirrhosis.

The scars consistent with previous propeller strike are of no importance. The dolphin pox is said to be a common viral illness usually of no consequence.

Comments:

They think a fungal infection is a possible cause of the chronic pneumonia. The liver disease is possibly secondary to parasitic infection. The extent of the dolphin pox is said to be unusually extensive. The combination of these three factors leads them to believe that the animal may have been immuno-compromised ie unable to mount the usual immune response to an infective threat. (In humans, AIDS is the most well known disease that does this, but there are many conditions that can also do it.)

This dead dolphin is by far the most interesting and has the most detailed pathology the body was best preserved. It died of natural causes and was not a well dolphin by any stretch of the imagination.

**It is important that we do protect the Dolphins
more important is that the public and our
children are given the correct information.**

The New Zealand Recreational Fishing Council is committed to developing policies to mitigate future dolphin deaths

NZRFC

The NZRFC has supported many measures to mitigate the capture of Hector's and Maui dolphins, said Keith Ingram, President NZ Recreational Fishing Council, today responding to news that 19 Hector's dolphins died over summer. It is noted that only 11 of these deaths can be attributed to fishing, including both recreational and commercial.

The seafood industry has acknowledged that some of the deaths have been caused by commercial fishing activities. These deaths occurred despite a number of actions taken by the industry to avoid capture. We also recognise that unattended set nets be they recreational or commercial pose a risk to marine mammals. Recreational fishermen are requested and encouraged to report any accidental capture of dolphins

When the risk and threat to the at risk population of Maui dolphins was identified the recreational sector took the first and positive response by supporting the ban on the use of set nets on the white water coastal strip out to 4nm including the the west coast harbour entrances.

Before we agree to any extensions of these existing closures or the introduction of new set net bans the recreational fishing sector must be consulted. From these discussions further solutions to minimise the threats to all dolphins from set nets maybe developed. For example the banning overnight setting or multi tide soak times or the introduction of set net attendance when fishing may well be the best course of action.

All to often the environmental groups and Department of Conservation forget that in most cases when trying to reduce marine mammal mortalities associated with fishing, the best course of action is to talk with the fishermen.

Ends.