

Hon. Stuart Nash
Minister of Fisheries
Parliament Buildings
Wellington



30 October 2019

Dear Minister,

We are national and international environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) writing to you because of our ongoing concerns regarding the Threat Management Plan (TMP) process for Māui and Hector's dolphins.

We know submissions closed on 19 August 2019 and that there was considerable interest in the process, illustrated by the large number of submissions and petitions from the public and NGOs of New Zealand and around the world. Included in these submissions were substantive comments, as well as an open letter led by World Animal Protection and signed by 65 organisations including those who are signatories to this letter also.

We write to you with further concerns regarding the lack of rigour in the TMP review process.

The draft TMP included modelling of protection options in part informed by the assumed costs of closure of some fisheries areas. The outcome of this modelling was problematic because the recommendations allowed up to 100 dolphins to be killed as by-catch every year, and deflected fishing pressure onto already marginal areas of dolphin habitat, such as in Otago and the South Island South Coast. The proposals also failed to provide additional protection for some endangered dolphin sub-populations at all – for example, in the Marlborough Sounds and on the East Coast of the North Island.

The TMP modelling itself was challenged because of the lack of rigour in the economic analysis which informed the protection options. The peer review carried out by Market Economics on behalf of World Animal Protection found the costs of fisheries area closure were overstated by up to ten times.ⁱ Market Economics found the benefit cost methodology failed to follow best practice and led to undefended results – and yet these have been carried forward into the TMP. The benefits of dolphin protection were understated.ⁱⁱ

worldanimalprotection.org.nz

Private Bag 93220 Parnell, Auckland 1151 New Zealand

T: 0800 500 9772 E: info@worldanimalprotection.org.nz

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We hear through an Official Information Request that Fisheries NZ has commissioned the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (NZIER) to review the methodology and conclusions informing the TMP economic analysis. However, we do not know if this review is informing the TMP staff advice to Ministers. Our emails to the Fisheries NZ head, Steve Halley have gone unanswered. Previous TMP economics reviews called for better transparency and more robust methodologies. Obscure or unsupported methodologies run the risk of Judicial Review from the fishing industry and/or NGOs. At best, a lack of confidence in economic underpinnings informing protection options undermines public confidence generally, and leads to a failure to live up to standards expected of Government departments, ultimately failing to provide the necessary protection for endangered Māui and Hector's dolphins.

We urge the government to release the NZIER economic report to the public so there can be confidence it is robust, withstands critical scrutiny, is subject to further submissions if warranted, and informs the best outcomes for Māui and Hector's dolphins.

We look forward to hearing from you

Thank you,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Simone Clarke".

Simone Clarke

Executive Director

World Animal Protection

for

The Jane Goodall Institute New Zealand, Sea Shepherd New Zealand, Oceanic Preservation Society, Animal Agenda Aotearoa, Humane Society International – Australia, In Defense of Animals, Fremantle Underwater Film Festival – Australia, Pro Wildlife, American Cetacean Society, NZ Whale and Dolphin Trust, Fundaciōn Cethus, Kiwis Against Seabed Mining, Tui Allen – Author, Surfbreak Protection Society, Māui and Hector's Dolphin Defenders NZ Inc, Project Jonah, New Zealanders for Endangered Wildlife, Aotearoa Dolphin, The Pod – Saving Māui and Hector's dolphins, The Society for the Conservation of Marine Mammals Whale and Dolphin Conservation International, MEER. E. V, Our Seas:Our Future, Mission Blue Foundation, Origami Whales Project, Cet Law, Ocean Care

ⁱ https://d31j74p4lpxrfrp.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/nz_files/maui_and_hectors_tmp_-_peer-reveiw_of_economics_-_memo.pdf

ⁱⁱ <https://www.worldanimalprotection.org.nz/news/protecting-maui-and-hectors-dolphins-has-positive-economic-benefits>