



## **Review of the Maui's dolphin Threat Management Plan, September 2012: Q & A sheet and submission guidance**

### **About Maui's dolphins**

#### **1. What is a Maui's dolphin?**

Hector's and Maui's dolphins are endemic to New Zealand and are considered to be one of the world's rarest dolphin species.

The Maui's dolphin is the world's smallest dolphin and is found only on the west coast of the North Island of New Zealand and nowhere else in the world. It is New Zealand's rarest dolphin.

#### **2. What is the difference between a Maui's and a Hector's dolphin?**

This small population of dolphins is thought to have been isolated from their more-numerous relatives, South Island Hector's dolphin, for thousands of years.

Maui's dolphin used to be known as North Island Hector's dolphin. But research showed the North and South Island dolphins are separate sub-species that are distinct from each other.

It is not possible to visually distinguish between Hector's and Maui's dolphins and they can only be differentiated through genetic testing or skeletal analysis.

#### **3. Where are the Maui's dolphins located?**

Maui's can be found along parts of the West Coast of the North Island. Maui's dolphins are frequently sighted between Manukau Harbour and Port Waikato, though they have been genetically sampled between Kaipara and Raglan harbours.

Dolphins, which may be Maui's or Hector's dolphins have been observed through sightings or strandings further south including Taranaki and Whanganui.

#### **4. How many Maui's dolphins are there in New Zealand?**

A population assessment commissioned by the Department of Conservation and released in March 2012 indicated that there are an estimated 55 individuals over one year of age. The population is likely to have decreased over the last decade.

#### **5. What is the threat classification for Maui's?**

Maui's dolphins were gazetted in 1999 as a threatened species under the Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978. Maui's dolphins are listed as 'nationally critical' under the New Zealand Threat Classification System. Under the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Red List Categories and Criteria the subspecies is listed 'critically endangered'.

## **6. Why are they at risk?**

There is not enough evidence to pinpoint the exact reason for the decline in the population. There are a number of threats to the dolphins which include pollution, set net fishing, boat strike, predation and disease.

Maui's are also slow breeding. Females don't mature sexually until they are seven to nine years old and produce only one calf every two to four years.

## **7. Is there more I can do to help Maui's dolphins?**

The Department of Conservation and the Ministry for Primary Industries continues to gather data on Maui's dolphins but everyone can play a part by reporting sightings. If you think you see a Maui's dolphin report your sighting straight away to 0800 DOC HOT, or your local DOC office.

There are also ways through your community that you can help protect dolphins. To find out more visit the DOC website <http://www.doc.govt.nz/helpmauis>

You can also provide feedback while the consultation is open on the management options proposed to protect Maui's dolphins in the Maui's dolphin Threat Management Plan (see below). See Section 8 of the Threat Management Plan on collaboration and how you can get involved.

## **8. Where can I find out more about the dolphins?**

Visit the DOC website –

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/native-animals/marine-mammals/dolphins/mauis-dolphin/>

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# **How to protect Maui's dolphins**

## **9. Which government agencies are responsible for Maui's dolphins?**

The two central government agencies with relevant legislation are the Department of Conservation (DOC) – which administers the Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978 and the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) – which administers the Fisheries Act 1996.

MPI and DOC consider a combination of the tools available under both these pieces of legislation, which enables an integrated approach to the management of human-induced threats to the Maui's dolphin population.

MPI and DOC work closely together to administer the Threat Management Plan, including planning, and monitoring and commissioning research.

MPI is better placed in terms of resourcing (primarily through fisheries officers and observers) to actively enforce and monitor any fishing restrictions.

DOC is responsible for measures for non-fishing related threats.



Territorial Authorities (district and city councils) and Regional Councils have responsibility for controlling activities under the Resource Management Act 1991, including those which may impact Hector's and Maui's dolphins.

#### **10. What is the government doing to protect them?**

Many areas along parts of the West Coast of the North Island where Maui's are known to exist and be vulnerable to human-related impacts have some form of protection, with measures dating back to 2003 and extended in 2008.

In July 2012 the Minister for Primary Industries implemented further interim measures, under Section 11 of the Fisheries Act, to mitigate the risk of dolphin mortality caused by fishing activity while the Review of the Threat Management Plan was being undertaken. The interim measures were considered appropriate because new information had emerged.

DOC updated its population abundance estimates in March 2012. These resulted from research commissioned by DOC, which entailed genetic mark-recapture sampling and a revised abundance estimate.

Also, MPI is investing significantly to better understand the risks to Maui's dolphins and also currently funding 100% observer coverage in the area around Taranaki.

DOC and MPI work with numerous partners and stakeholders in a wide range of work concerning Maui's dolphin including iwi/hāpu/whānau, community groups, and the fishing industry.

DOC and MPI also fund and undertake surveys for dolphins from the air and by boat. In addition DOC also maintains records of public sightings. DNA samples are collected when a dead Hector's or Maui's dolphin is found dead and the animal is sent away for a necropsy. This information can tell us a lot about the species. DOC and MPI also support or are involved in research led by external research providers, for example the revised abundance estimate for Maui's dolphins.

#### **11. What is the government proposing to improve their protection?**

The government is now presenting options for further measures to work on two fronts: to reduce uncertainty and to reduce risk.

For a summary of the options, go to pages 7 to 15 of the Overview section of the Review of the Maui's dolphin portion of the Hector's and Maui's dolphin Threat Management Plan to see the summary tables.

#### **12. The government talks about uncertainty – why is that?**

The uncertainty relates particularly to the margins of the Maui's dolphins range.

This is because of the difficulty in detecting a small inconspicuous dolphin at the extremes of its range. This is made more difficult by its small population size.

It is impossible to pinpoint the exact size of the population because we simply can't definitively count every dolphin in thousands of square kilometres of sea off the North Island's West Coast.

The recent abundance estimate and risk assessment account for this uncertainty in their conclusions.

This is why MPI is currently funding 100% observer coverage on commercial set net vessels off Taranaki, and DOC and MPI are conducting aerial and boat surveys in that area.

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## **The Threat Management Plan Review**

### **13. What is a Threat Management Plan?**

A Threat Management Plan considers all threats to a species, natural and human-induced, and guides management approaches.

The Hector's and Maui's dolphin Threat Management Plan (TMP) was first developed in 2007.

It is led by DOC (for non-fishing related threats) and MPI (for fishing-related impacts).

It was due to be reviewed in 2013, but Ministers instructed that the Maui's dolphin component of the review be brought forward to 2012.

### **14. Why is it being updated?**

The review of the Maui's portion of the TMP is reconsidering the management strategies and research that will support the recovery of the Maui's dolphin population. In considering how to deliver on the TMP goals for the Maui's portion the Minister for Primary Industries and Minister for Conservation each must consider and meet their legislative obligations.

### **15. Who is doing the review?**

The review is conducted by DOC (for non-fishing related threats) and MPI (for fishing-related impacts). These two agencies have brought in appropriate specialists, for example a panel of nine domestic and international scientific experts were brought in to do the Risk Assessment.

### **16. What is the Risk Assessment and what does it have to do with the TMP review?**

DOC and MPI ran a formal Risk Assessment process in June. The Risk Assessment was done by a group of nine national and international scientific experts and facilitated by scientists from the Royal Society of New Zealand, MPI and DOC.

The Risk Assessment pulled together best-available information about Maui's dolphin distribution, threats to the population, and their vulnerability to those threats, to form a picture of likely risks and where these would occur.

This Risk Assessment has fed in to the Review of the Threat Management Plan, which is now being consulted on.



## The submission process

### 17. Why am I being consulted?

Your views are important in helping to determine preferred options and priorities, and we are calling for the public to input into the plan.

### 18. How can I make a submission?

You can make a submission by email:

[MauiTMP@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:MauiTMP@mpi.govt.nz) (To comment on any fishing-related options)

[MauiTMP@doc.govt.nz](mailto:MauiTMP@doc.govt.nz) (To comment on any non-fishing-related options)

By post:

Maui's dolphin TMP  
PO Box 5853  
Wellington 6011

Or you can also submit on the non-fishing-related options online:

[www.doc.govt.nz/mauisconsultation](http://www.doc.govt.nz/mauisconsultation)

### 19. Can I suggest ideas which are not included in the proposed options?

Feedback is encouraged on alternative options and comments need not be limited to those presented and discussed within the consultation document.

### 20. What happens after the public have made submissions?

The Minister of Conservation and the Minister for Primary Industries will consider all submissions and best-available information on threats. The Minister of Conservation will decide what management measures will be put in place to address non-fishing related threats. The Minister for Primary Industries will, after consultation with the Minister of Conservation, decide on what management measures will be put in place to address fishing-related threats.

### 21. Is the submission open to everyone or only to New Zealanders and New Zealand residents?

The submission process is open to anyone.

### 22. Do I have to be over a certain age to be allowed to make a submission?

No.

### 23. When is the deadline to make a submission by?

Submissions close at 5pm, Monday 12 November 2012.

## **24. Who do I address my submission to?**

Your submission does not need to be addressed to a specific person. You can submit via post, email, or online as mentioned above. Note online submissions are available for the non-fisheries-related measures.

## **25. What will happen with my submission?**

All submissions will be summarised and provided to Ministers to consider when making a decision on further management measures.

## **26. What will happen after the consultation period is over?**

The Minister of Conservation (for non-fishing related threats) and the Minister for Primary Industries (for fishing-related impacts) can choose different management measures for each type of threat and could also choose to bring in measures immediately or over time. The Ministers will then direct agencies to implement what measures are decided upon.

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# **What should I include in a submission?**

Agencies would like to hear:

- What you consider to be a threat to Maui's dolphins – and why,
- What of the measures proposed you feel are the most appropriate – and why,
- If there is anything else that hasn't been considered and why it should be,
- How the proposed measures might impact you, and
- Feedback on the research and monitoring planning priorities proposed.

Some generic questions to think about as you prepare your submission are:

### ***Threat mitigation options***

- Is the evidence for the current management measures in place an accurate reflection of your experience?
- Why do you consider threat management for the Maui's dolphin is necessary?
- Are all the social, cultural and economic values of the Maui's dolphin captured within the revised TMP? If not, what is missing?
- What information is missing, or has not been considered, that might impact or alter the proposed threat management options?
- What other methods or tools could be applied to manage the described human-induced threats?
- How might you be impacted by the proposed threat management options?
- Are there any other geographic areas you think should be designated for management to protect Maui's dolphins – and why? Please identify these areas.



***Research planning and priorities***

- Are there any additional or different research needs that should be addressed?
- Have the key features of the proposed annual planning and review process been described?
- Are there suggestions for where efficiencies in such a process could occur?
- Are there other comments you would like to make about the planning and review process or research priorities discussed above?

***Monitoring planned for 2012/2013***

- Have the key elements required for monitoring the population been addressed?
- Have the key elements required for monitoring the interaction of fisheries and the Maui's dolphin population been addressed?
- What other monitoring methods need consideration?

***Collaboration***

- Where might agencies better support whānau, hāpu and iwi input into the protection of Maui dolphin?
- Where might agencies better support protection of the Maui's dolphin by other interested parties (for example, through an existing or ongoing forum, group or process)?
- Are there any additional or different collaborative tools or approaches that need consideration?