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TE OHU
KAIMOANA



MĀORI FISHERIES TRUST

Iwi must be vigilant to protect Fisheries Settlement

Te Ohu Kaimoana chairman Archie Taiaroa told Maori leaders in Wellington today they needed to remain vigilant over unnecessary proposals by the Government and lobbying by environmental groups that want to undermine the value of Maori commercial fisheries.

At the annual meeting of Te Ohu Kaimoana at Pipitea Marae, Mr Taiaroa said government proposals such as last year's so-called "shared fisheries", plans to amend the Fisheries Act and the recent dolphin threat management plan for Hector's and Maui's dolphins each had the effect of undermining Maori fisheries while providing no real environmental or sustainability advances.

"As fishers, we have accepted our responsibilities for the managing the marine environment. Management must be done in a manner that is practical and sensible - by being based on science and commonsense - not driven by environmental NGOs with an agenda to severely restrict all fishing activity," Mr Taiaroa told delegates today.

"Fish is an important and healthy food resource for all New Zealanders and access to fisheries for food must be able to continue based on science and sustainability."

Mr Taiaroa said the Government's proposed changes to the Fisheries Act would give too much power to the Minister of Fisheries, placing at risk the balance between ensuring sustainability of the fisheries resource while also allowing for utilisation. "We don't want a situation where political considerations and the quirks of an individual Minister determine the total allowable catch year in, year out."

"It is our considered view, that decisions made purely on ensuring sustainability without having to consider the consequences on utilisation are likely to become more and more risk averse. The pressure of environmental lobby groups is forcing Ministers to act more and more conservatively. With changes to the Fisheries Act, this would place a large degree of uncertainty into the business of fishing."

Mr Taiaroa said recent proposals for a dolphin threat management plan showed the negative influence of environmental groups on government policy. "Their influence is very clear. The dolphin TMP was aimed purely at stopping all inshore fishing in parts of New Zealand without addressing the real threats to dolphins, which are disease, pollution and predation."

He told iwi that the continued advisory role of Te Ohu Kaimoana is important to prevent further unnecessary policies and that successes can continue if all iwi work together.