

## 5. HECTOR'S DOLPHIN AND SET NETTING

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The purpose of this report is to advise the Council that a submission (attached) has been made on the public paper entitled "Hector's Dolphin and Set Netting – Canterbury Area". This public paper was jointly prepared by the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Fisheries. It was received on 5 July 2001 with submissions closing on 25 July 2001. As there is no delegation to staff for non-statutory plans and discussion documents it is recommended that the Environment Committee endorse the submission retrospectively. Alternatively, as advised in the covering letter accompanying the submission, it may be amended or withdrawn.

Hector's dolphins are endemic to New Zealand and are one of the world's rarest marine dolphins. Their populations are relatively small, comprising clusters of sub-populations with small home ranges of about 60km. The small population size and a low population growth rate means that any mortality from fishing operations has serious implications for the long-term survival of the Hector's dolphin. Additionally, their use of shallow, often turbid, coastal waters as their primary habitat makes them especially vulnerable to entanglement in set nets.

In 1988 the Banks Peninsula Marine Mammal Sanctuary was established to protect Hector's dolphins from incidental entanglement in set nets. Since then additional measures under the Fisheries Act have been introduced in the Canterbury area. In December 1999 the Minister of Conservation declared Hector's dolphin a threatened species under the Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978. Despite these measures further Hector's dolphins have died in set nets. This paper discusses alternative management proposals from four groups: recreational fishers, commercial fishers, environmental stakeholders and a joint MFish/DoC proposal. The submission prepared on behalf of the Council supports the MFish/DoC proposal with suggested amendments.

**Recommendation:** That the submission, on behalf of the Council, be ratified and that Jenny Ridgen be congratulated for her work done in preparing the submission.