



Hon Tim Groser, Minister of Conservation
Hon Phil Heatley, Minister of Fisheries
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The West Coast Marine Protection Forum (the Forum) was established in early 2005 and is constituted mainly of West Coast people who have an interest in the marine environment, including: community members, fishers, tangata whenua, conservation groups and local authorities.

Since the release of the Marine Protected Areas Classification, Protection Standard and Implementation Guidelines in February 2008, the Forum has been working hard to establish a network of potential candidate sites for Marine Protection. The Forum completed a classification of the West Coast marine environments, and have applied the implementation guidelines to assist them in identifying some candidate sites for protection.

Forum members are aware that the Policy and standards do not necessarily require 10% of a biogeographic region or each habitat type to be in some form of protection. However they are also mindful of the overarching New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy target of protection of 10% of the marine environment by 2010. This target has been kept at the back of their minds when considering the size of sites for protection.

The Forum has agreed on four candidate sites that it is prepared to consult with the public on. Each of these sites includes a mosaic of protection tools. The sites are spread along the length of the West Coast and encompass most habitat types including a replicate of each, as is required by the Policy and guidelines. A map of each of the sites is included for your information.

While the Forum has agreed on sites for the consultation process, there is an impasse between some members representing the fishing and conservation sectors. The fishing sector representatives are very concerned that the Kahurangi site in particular will have a significant effect on their commercial fishing activities. They understand that the site covers a large area of an important trawl fishery. The fishers using this area come from outside of the West Coast (Nelson and Motueka). They are likely to be displaced into other areas.

Some members feel that this is the only site that offers protection for the full longitudinal or cross-shelf range of habitats, including the deeper areas from 30 - 200m. At present there is no formal protection of any habitats on the West Coast, so they consider that this package does need to be substantive and comprehensive. The proposed Kahurangi site is substantially larger than any other existing Marine Reserve around mainland New Zealand and has been the most controversial to the

forum. It is also fished by about 17 commercial vessels and as far as the Forum is aware is inaccessible to recreational fishers due to its remoteness.

While the Forum has agreed to consult on these sites, they are also mindful that consultation is unlikely to resolve this impasse. The Forum is in general agreement around the other sites, commercial fishers acknowledge that there may be some impact on their existing operations but these have been minimised and they consider that these sites will achieve the policy objectives at the least cost.

The Forum has discussed the concepts and principles of compensation, but to date has received advice that compensation is not an option that could be considered as part of this process. The Forum is also mindful that a compensation package may not end up compensating those individuals most affected by any fishing closure. However they would like to invite you to consider this as an option when you eventually consider any recommendations.

The commercial fishers represented on the Forum have made concessions that have enabled the proposed protected areas to be identified and as a result significant habitat will be protected but this may cause the loss of existing commercial fishing activities.

In addition to the four main candidate sites that the Forum is also considering some other options that are considerably smaller, and are being branded as “educational or showcase” sites. These are very small areas accessible to the public often at strategic visitor sites that could be used for educational purposes and to demonstrate the benefits of marine protection.

The Forum is starting to prepare a consultation report and strategy and is intending to go public with this around May 2009.

The Forum would like confirmation from both Ministers that they are supportive of the process the Forum is carrying out and seek any advice that either of you may have on resolving the impasse in opinions for the Kahurangi site, and an indication as to whether the new National Government is prepared to consider offering a compensation package for loss of access to fishing areas. The Forum would also like to be informed of the process you will run to deal with the recommendations from the Forum once they are finalised.

The forum would like to meet with you in the near future to discuss the Forum’s progress to date and the issues that have arisen.

Yours sincerely,

Bruce Hamilton

Chair,
West Coast Marine Forum