



Office of Hon Phil Heatley

MP for Whangarei

Minister of Fisheries

Minister of Housing

PH0134

05 MAR 2009

Bruce Hamilton
Chair
West Coast Marine Forum
Buller Bridge
Westport

Dear Mr Hamilton

Thank you for your letter updating the Minister of Conservation and me on the progress the West Coast Marine Protection Forum has made thus far. I commend the Forum for its commitment to this process and hard work over the years. The Government will continue to support the Forum as it moves into its phase of consultation.

You have raised with us your concern over arriving at an impasse on particular sites. The Marine Protected Area (MPA) process was always going to require hard work, frank debate and compromise. I encourage you, as the Chair of the Forum, to have that debate and seek compromise, while making sure the recommendations meet the requirements of the MPA Policy. The Forum has done well to have prepared a package of marine protection to consult on; perhaps well directed consultation will provide the appropriate feedback needed to finalise its recommendations.

You have raised the issue of possible compensation for affected commercial fishers to remove that impasse. I must be clear; for a number of reasons compensation is not an option available to the Government or the Forum. We recognise a cost in implementing the MPA policy and that the true challenge to the Forum, and you as the Chair, lies in developing the network at the least cost. This is why the policy was written with the principle of minimising impacts on existing users and the need for least cost recommendations. Once you have completed community consultation and have more information on the Kahurangi site, the Forum can consider whether an alteration to the boundaries is required in order to minimise the impact on the fishers using the area, as compensation will not be available.

The concept of the education sites woven into the MPA network is a very constructive idea and we welcome the initiative where the Forum has been able to demonstrate minimised impact on users. On a cautionary note, since we understand these sites are additional to fulfilling the MPA Policy requirements, please take care they do not unduly distract from the consultation on the larger sites.