

Marine Mammal Sanctuary proposals to protect Hector's and Māui dolphins

Hector's and Māui dolphins comprise one of the world's rarest dolphin species. There are only 63 of the Māui dolphin subspecies (approximately) over 1 year of age with a conservation status of **Nationally Critical**. Hector's dolphin subspecies, with a population of about 15,000, is classified as **Nationally Vulnerable**.

To increase protection for these taonga dolphins, the Minister of Conservation is proposing changes to five marine mammal sanctuaries that were set up to protect Hector's and Māui dolphins. The marine mammal sanctuaries are West Coast North Island, Clifford and Cloudy Bay, Banks Peninsula, Catlins Coast and Te Waewae Bay.

The proposed variations to the marine mammal sanctuaries are among a number of planned Government measures to address threats to the dolphins. The measures result from a review of the Hector's and Māui Dolphin Threat Management Plan that included public consultation in 2019 on protection options outlined in a discussion paper 'Protecting Hector's and Māui dolphins'.

The Minister of Conservation is seeking your feedback on these sanctuary proposals.

Extensions to marine mammal sanctuaries

West Coast North Island Marine Mammal Sanctuary

It is intended to extend the southern boundary of this sanctuary from Oakura, Taranaki, further south to Wellington. With this extension, the sanctuary would stretch along much of the west coast of the North Island, from Maunganui Bluff in Northland to the southern end of the Wellington coast and extending out 12 nautical miles.

Banks Peninsula Marine Mammal Sanctuary

It is proposed to extend this sanctuary north to the southern boundary of Te Rohe o Te Whānau Puha Whale Sanctuary off Kaikōura, south to Timaru, and further offshore, from 12 nautical miles currently, extending out to 20 nautical miles.

With these two extensions, the five marine mammal sanctuaries would cover all the North Island distribution of the Māui dolphin and a large part of the east coast South Island Hector's dolphin distribution. This would double the total area of protection across the five marine mammal sanctuaries to a total 37,286 km².

Prohibiting seismic surveying and seabed mining

It is proposed to prohibit seismic surveying and seabed mining in the five marine mammal sanctuaries set up to protect Hector's and Māui dolphins, including the two extensions, to protect the dolphins from the impacts of these activities, which include noise and sedimentation.

Existing exploration and mining permits that include sanctuary areas will be exempt from the ban. The exemption would apply to any subsequent permits granted in relation to existing permits. The proposed seabed mining prohibition excludes the west coast North Island harbours.

It is also proposed to exempt seismic surveys for urgent hazard assessments and surveys approved for an exemption by the Minister of Conservation and Minister of Energy and Resources to undertake an activity that is nationally significant and could not be achieved if undertaken outside a sanctuary area. This will allow for consideration of activities such as science and research activity and under-seabed cables for telecommunications or offshore wind farms.

As seismic surveying allowed within the sanctuaries under exemptions still risks disturbance to the dolphins, it is intended to make it compulsory for permit-holders to comply with the 2013 Code of Conduct for minimising acoustic disturbance to marine mammals from seismic survey operations.

Te Rohe o Te Whānau Puha Whale Sanctuary proposed seabed mining prohibition

In addition to the proposed changes to the five marine mammal sanctuaries, the Minister of Conservation proposes to prohibit seabed mining within Te Rohe o Te Whānau Puha Whale Sanctuary off Kaikōura.

The proposed seabed mining ban would extend protection for marine mammals along the South Island east coast. This was not among the options consulted on in the Hector's and Māui dolphins Threat Management Plan review.



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Submissions on sanctuary proposals

Submissions on these proposed variations to the five marine mammal sanctuaries and to Te Rohe o Te Whānau Puha Whale Sanctuary are open for a 28-day period, with submissions closing on **21 July 2020**. DOC will collate submissions to provide to the Minister of Conservation to consider in making final decisions.

More information about having your say on these proposals can be found on the DOC website www.doc.govt.nz/marine-mammal-and-whale-sanctuary-proposals

Hector's and Māui dolphin Marine Mammal Sanctuary & Te Rohe o Te Whānau Puha/Kaikōura Whale Sanctuary proposals

 Proposed sanctuary extension (18,661 km²)

 Proposed seismic surveying & seabed mining prohibition area

 Proposed seismic surveying prohibition area (inside west coast North Island harbours)

 Proposed seabed mining prohibition area

 Existing sanctuary to protect marine mammals (protection for Hector's and Māui dolphins: 18,625 km²)

 National park (29,736 km²)

 Other public conservation land

Areas subject to survey.

