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EDS calls for urgent action to halt the catastrophic decline in Maui's dolphin numbers

The Environmental Defence Society has slammed the Ministry for Primary Industries and the Department of Conservation for proposing weak and inadequate measures to protect the world's rarest marine mammal.

In its submission on the review of the Maui's dolphin Threat Management Plan, filed yesterday, EDS called for complete removal of all key known human threats to the dolphin to save it sliding swiftly to extinction."

"We need far more urgency in addressing the ongoing threat to Maui's dolphins than recommended in the government's plan," said EDS Policy Director, Raewyn Peart.

"The latest risk assessment estimates that the population of only around 55 adult individuals can sustain one death caused by human activity every 10 to 23 years. The actual impact of human activity far exceeds that.

"The risk assessment shows that fishing is by far the most significant known threat.

"EDS is very concerned that the measures proposed in the discussion document only provide for limited extension to the existing regulations, when what is needed are extensive new measures which fully protect the dolphins from fishing and other activities.

"EDS is urging the Ministers to adopt a precautionary approach to the design of new regulations.

"The Maui's dolphin is in such a precarious position that we can't wait for more information to be collected before taking definitive action.

"Government has a clear responsibility to ensure that the Maui's dolphin does not become extinct. The review of the Threat Management Plan may be the last opportunity to implement the measures that are needed.

"Losing the Maui's dolphin would not only be a national disaster but would have serious implications for New Zealand's international reputation," concluded Ms Peart.