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Media Release

Maui's dolphin proposal needs strengthening

The Minister of Conservation, Nick Smith, today released a new proposal for greater protection of the Maui's dolphin off the Taranaki coast.

The Minister is proposing to vary the West Coast North Island Marine Mammal Sanctuary in order to ban the use of set nets from between two and seven nautical miles from the coast between Pariokariwa Point and the Waiwhakaiho River.

"We are pleased to see that the Minister is considering more stringent measures than those proposed in the Threat Management Plan review released last year, which were clearly inadequate" said EDS Policy Director, Raewyn Peart.

"We also support the move to implement the new measures under the Marine Mammals Protection Act, which is legislation specifically designed to protect the dolphins, rather than under the Fisheries Act which is focused on utilisation.

"However, although the Minister is moving in the right direction, the new proposal announced today does not yet go far enough to provide the full protection from set and trawl nets that the dolphins need to survive.

"The updated sightings information released today with the Minister's announcement confirm that dolphins have been reliably sighted outside the proposed protected area.

"We welcome the opportunity to provide feedback on the new proposal. EDS will be examining the Minister's legal obligations carefully and we will be providing him with advice on how to make a robust and lawful decision.

"It is important that we get this right. It is clear that the Maui's dolphin is on the brink and we need to do everything possible to ensure its survival.

"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.