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Dear s 9(2)(a)

Hector's dolphin summer observer programme

We are writing to you to tell you about the main aim of the dolphin observer programme and the role of observers, should you carry one on your vessel.

As you are aware, MFish Observers are being placed on inshore commercial fishing vessels during January and February 2009 as part of a new summer programme to collect information on any interactions between fishing vessels and protected species, including Maui's and Hector's dolphins.

We see this as an excellent opportunity for MFish and the fishing industry to work together to add to our understanding of Hector's and Maui's dolphins and how much interaction they have with commercial fishing vessels.

MFish will be placing up to 50 Observers on commercial fishing vessels around much of the South Island and on the North Island's west coast.

There may still be some overlap between the areas in which the threatened Hector's and endangered Maui's dolphins live and the areas where there is fishing activity. The summer programme will help us determine the nature of any interactions between dolphins and fishing vessels and is designed to give us a high level of coverage over a short timeframe. The results of this year's survey will provide us the information to review the effectiveness and necessity of the programme in the future

The role of the MFish Observers is to review any marine mammal interactions and non-fish bycatch (for example, seabirds). All of their training has been focussed on these two areas and has not included species identification or catch quantification.

We are relying on the vessels' normal returns to provide the fishing information required of each operator.

Observers will use palm top computers to record information on any sightings of dolphins; if there is any contact between dolphins and fishing gear; and any accidental deaths that occur. They will also carry cameras to capture images of marine mammal interactions wherever possible for later use in identification.

We are aware of a number of practical issues raised by inshore fishers already relating to this programme, which is why we are being flexible in our approach, so as to accommodate vessel specific concerns.

We appreciate the support that we have received from fishers to date and look forward to your future help with the programme.

If you have any questions about details of the observer programme please contact

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Chief Executive

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National Manager Fisheries Compliance

Proactive Release – 16 September 2016
Independent Review of Fisheries Prosecution Decisions