

WWF Responds to Global Eco-Label Approval of New Zealand Hoki Fishery

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14 March 2001 (Wellington New Zealand) - Responding to the announcement of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification of the New Zealand Hoki fishery, the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) today voiced its general support for the decision, but noted the need for timely, concrete steps to conserve seal populations affected by the fishery, and address other environmental concerns. The conservation organization joined government and fishing community officials participating in the announcement.

"The Hoki fishermen are doing a much better job protecting the fish populations they rely on than most other world fishermen," said Scott Burns, Director of WWF's Endangered Seas Campaign. "We think that corrective actions required by the MSC's certifier are our best hope for resolving environmental problems in the fishery."

The fishery was audited by an independent company against MSC standards for environmentally responsible fishing. The analysis raised a number of issues that need to be addressed in the next six months. "These issues include the need to better protect fur seal populations, and to more conservatively manage the eastern portion of the fishery," said Mr. Burns. "We will be carefully monitoring the fishery's progress in these areas, and look forward to working with the fishermen to address them. We think that the fishery has an obligation to expeditiously minimize mortality and bycatch of fur seals using the best fishing technologies available. This report is an important step in the right direction."

The Marine Stewardship Council, a non-profit, non-governmental organization based in the United Kingdom, has worked for nearly five years to develop a market-based program to reward fisheries for responsible conduct. Over 100 seafood buyers worldwide have pledged to purchase from MSC certified sources.

WWF is the world's largest conservation organization, with over 4.7 million supporters and a global network active in 96 countries. WWF has been working on marine conservation and fisheries projects for more than 30 years.

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