



Office of Hon Phil Heatley

MP for Whangarei

Minister of Fisheries

Minister of Housing

PH0118

02 MAR 2009

Shaun McConkey
Chairman
New Zealand Sea Lion Trust
sealiontrust@clear.net.nz

Dear Mr McConkey

Thank you for your email expressing concern about my recent decision to set the sea lion limit in the squid fishery at 113 sea lions.

I acknowledge the New Zealand Sea Lion Trust's view of my recent decision to set the limit at 113 sea lions. However, as I am sure you appreciate I am required by law to consider both the utilisation of the squid fishery and the likely environmental impacts of that activity. My decision took into account all of the available information on the sea lion population including the recent decision by the IUCN to reclassify the status of the New Zealand sea lion. Although recent science gave me a range of plausible options, right up to 249, I was conservative and set the fishing related mortality limit (FRML) at 113 sea lions only.

I agree that the recent decline in pup numbers on the Auckland Islands is a cause for concern and I hope that all parties, including environmental groups, can work together to determine the contributory factors.

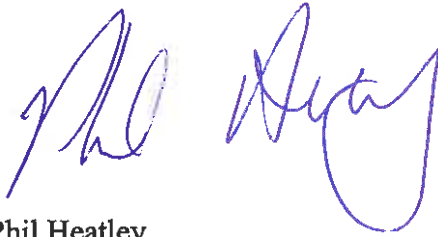
As you are aware the fishing industry has responded proactively to the decline by agreeing to reduce their fishing effort in the squid fishery for the 2009 fishing season. This will effectively take the FRML from 113 to 95 sea lions. I support and congratulate the industry for taking this responsible and cautious approach.

I do not consider that a further reduction to the 2008-09 FRML is required at this time. The decision to voluntarily reduce fishing effort was made even though the best available science information indicates that a FMRL of 113 sea lions remains a robust management measure. I am satisfied that both the current FRML and the voluntary reduction, based on harvest control Rule 320, continue to meet my obligations under the Fisheries Act 1996.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to contact me on this important issue. I appreciate the concerns you have about the impacts of fishing activity on sea lions. I

can assure you that I will continue to support all efforts to reduce the impact of fishing on these important marine mammals.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Phil Heatley', written in a cursive style.

Hon Phil Heatley
Minister of Fisheries