Summary of the main points to make on Maui's dolphins when writing your submission to the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) and/or the Department of Conservation (DOC)

Stakeholders and the public have been asked to submit on various fishing- and non-fishing-related options, proposed by MPI and DOC respectively, within the Threat Management Plan (TMP) consultation document in order to improve protection for Maui's dolphins.

Submission deadline is November 12, 2012.

WWF believes the options presented within the document are inadequate to halt the extinction of this species and fall short of the recommendations made by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress earlier this year. For Maui's dolphins to survive, they need complete protection across their entire range – from Maunganui Bluff (near Dargaville) to at least far south as the Wanganui river mouth (including all harbours) and out to 100m deep.

During a recent risk assessment workshop, facilitated by MPI and DOC officials within New Zealand, an expert panel (comprising of domestic and international specialists in marine mammal science and ecological risk assessments) made very clear conclusions:

- There are only about 55 Maui's dolphins remaining.
- Each year, approximately 5 Maui's are killed in fishing nets.
- Their current death rate is 75 times higher than the population can withstand.
- The population is declining at almost 8% per year.
- Fishing with nets (gillnetting and trawling) is currently causes 95% of the problem.
- The greatest level of risk to Maui's from set net fisheries is currently in the area of the Northern Taranaki coastline out to 7 nautical miles (nm), and at the entrance to the Manakau Harbour.
- The greatest level of risk to Maui's from inshore trawl fisheries is currently between the boundary of the trawl fishery closure areas (that extend 2 or 4 nm) and 7 nm, particularly in the core region of the dolphin distribution (from Raglan Harbour entrance to the Kaipara Harbour entrance).

Here are some key points to help when preparing your submission:

- Maui's dolphins (*Cephalorhynchus hectori maui*) are only found in New Zealand and are listed as '*critically endangered*' by the IUCN.
- The latest abundance estimate released by the Department of Conservation (DOC) and Auckland University indicates that only 55 individuals over the age of 1 year remain as of 2011 (95% confidence interval range of 48-69).
- Maui's dolphins live to about 20 years, mature at 7-9 years and only produce 1 calf every 2-3 years – this equates to a natural population growth of only 1.8% (in absence of human-induced death).
- The historical population size of Maui's dolphin is believed to have been around 1500-2000 individuals, and may have been considerably higher.
- Data from aerial and boat surveys (including DNA from live and historically stranded individuals) , as well as public sightings records indicate that Maui's dolphins once ranged the full extent of the West Coast of the North Island. Their current range is acknowledged from Maunganui Bluff in the north to Wanganui river mouth in the south, with the highest

densities occurring within 2-4nm of shore, particularly between Manakau harbour and Raglan harbour.

- Ever since nylon monofilament gillnets (set nets and drift nets) were introduced in the late 1960s, dolphin numbers have been drastically declining. This method of fishing is indiscriminative, and has been banned in many countries as it's known for its high levels of bycatch of marine mammals, sharks, turtles and seabirds.
- Gillnets and trawlers are currently operating where Maui's are found, due to inadequate protection measures not extending across their entire known habitat. The options proposed by the government within the TMP also do not adequately cover this entire range.
- Maui's dolphins are threatened with extinction within several generations. There is no room for error.
- Their extinction would earn New Zealand the dubious honour of achieving only the second-ever recorded disappearance of a cetacean (dolphin, whale, or porpoise) caused by human actions. The first was China's Baiji or Yangtze River dolphin.
- Fishing doesn't have to stop, we just need to switch to more selective methods, such as longlining, fish trapping, trolling, angling, and spear fishing – especially where the dolphins are found. Set nets have already been banned in many countries due to their destructive levels of bycatch of various marine mammals, sharks, turtles, and seabirds.
- Historically, observer coverage has been too low (<1%) and under-reporting of bycatch has been problematic.

To save New Zealand's endemic Maui's dolphins, a precautionary approach is needed. I call on MPI and DOC to:

- Extend the boundary of the set net closure along the coast from Maunganui Bluff to the Wanganui river mouth, into all the harbours found in between (including Manukau, Kaipara, Raglan, Kawhia, and Aotea) and offshore to 100 m water depth.
- Extend the boundary of the trawling restrictions from Maunganui Bluff to Wanganui river mouth (including all harbours) and offshore to 100 m water depth.
- Raise set net and trawling vessel observer coverage to 100% (on any remaining vessels operating outside the protected area) to ensure accurate estimates of bycatch.
- Extend the boundary of the West Coast North Island Marine Mammal Sanctuary (MMS), including the mining restrictions, from Maunganui Bluff to Wanganui river mouth and into all harbours in between (including Manukau, Kaipara, Raglan, Kawhia, and Aotea) and offshore to 100 m water depth.
- Place a moratorium on all seismic surveying within the MMS for a 5 year duration while more research is conducted.
- Include protection of the marine corridor between Farewell Spit and Cape Egmont to allow connectivity between Maui's and Hector's dolphins.
- Develop a clear plan of action for the species recovery within the TMP, including population targets, achievable management goals and clear, timebound actions.

More details about the dolphins are available in two factsheets on the WWF-New Zealand website at: http://wwf.org.nz/what_we_do/species/hector_s_and_maui_s_dolphin/