

Stop seismic blasting for oil and gas Rally for Māui dolphin

The vessel Southern Express has begun a seismic survey for Greymouth Petroleum off the coast of Waitara and west towards New Plymouth. The survey area is within the West Coast North Island Marine Mammal Sanctuary.

It is appalling that the government would allow oil companies to look for more fossil fuels during a climate and ecological crisis. And to do that within our critically endangered Māui Dolphin's home range is extremely irresponsible. There is strong scientific evidence of direct or indirect harm to marine mammals, seabirds and other wildlife.

What's the point of all these big talks of emissions reduction and adaptation plans, when the key actions of ending fossil fuel exploration and protecting our ecosystems are ignored? Is this not hypocrisy?

The Marine Mammal Sanctuary was established in 2008 to protect the Hector's and Māui dolphins. It extends alongshore from Maunganui Bluff in Northland to Taputeranga Marine Reserve on the south coast of Wellington, to 12 nm offshore. In 2020, the southern boundary of the sanctuary was extended from Oakura Beach to the south Wellington coast.

Although both seismic survey and seabed mining are supposed to be prohibited within the entire Sanctuary, there are plenty of exemptions such as an existing exploration or mining permit or an existing privilege. Again, the fossil fuel and mining industries can get away with anything it seems.

The 263.5 square km seismic survey area, authorised under section 42A of the Crown Minerals Act (CMA) in January 2022, falls outside Greymouth Petroleum's current mining license PMP50509 on and offshore of New Plymouth. The 2018 ban of new offshore petroleum exploration does not affect the operations and privilege of existing permit holders.

