

Media release:

Iwi strongly reject Crown's Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary proposal

13 June 2023

Iwi leaders today voted to reject the establishment of the Crown's proposed Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary at a Special General Meeting, hosted by Te Ohu Kaimoana in Wellington. Leaders present at the hui said that an indigenous led approach, designed by iwi for iwi is the only pathway forward and a first step toward any form of future marine management arrangements for that area.

"If we continue conversations under this current framework imposed upon us by the Crown, we do not believe this creates the opportunity for a meaningful outcome for iwi or the Crown. There must be a conversation held that is based upon mana, tikanga and kawa before we can progress, and that conversation must be led by iwi" said Rangimarie Hunia, Chair of Te Ohu Kaimoana. "Iwi have voted clearly and strongly against the Crown's proposal, and have agreed to a further hui together to discuss an indigenous led approach to marine management".

Of the 45 representative iwi organisations present at the general meeting, 42 iwi organisations voted against, one voted in support and two abstained to the Crown's proposal at the Special General Meeting held on Tuesday 13 June 2023.

"The result shows there's need for more discussion with the Crown about iwi rights guaranteed under the 1992 Māori Fisheries Settlement" says Te Ohu Kaimoana Chair Rangimarie Hunia.

Te Ohu Kaimoana was established under the Maori Fisheries Act 2004 and represents the collective interests of 58 iwi entities and is accountable to its iwi shareholders, who have collective responsibilities to all Māori.

The Crown first announced plans for an ocean sanctuary in the Kermadecs in 2015 but didn't consult iwi. The proposal would extinguish the rights of iwi guaranteed in the 1992 Fisheries Deed of Settlement and the Maori Fisheries Act. Since its announcement, Te Ohu Kaimoana and Iwi have fought to protect the fisheries rights of iwi, despite successive governments trying to progress the Bill.

The proposed sanctuary would prohibit any commercial activity for 20 years in 620,000km² of the EEZ surrounding the Kermadec Island group, which coincides with Fisheries Management Area 10. This area is home to Highly Migratory Species (HMS) such as Swordfish, Yellowfin Tuna, Big Eye Tuna, Albacore Tuna and Skipjack Tuna.

The Crown's latest proposal includes \$40 million over 20 years for research on aquatic life and fish stocks in FMA 10, with oversight by a joint Crown-Iwi entity called Te Kāhui.

"For the past three decades, Te Ohu Kaimoana has worked to advance the fishing and fisheries interests of iwi Māori for current and future generations and that applies to FMA 10," says Mrs Hunia.

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About Te Ohu Kaimoana: Te Ohu Kaimoana works to advance Māori interests in the marine environment, including customary fisheries, commercial fisheries and aquaculture as well as providing policy and fisheries management advice to iwi and the wider Māori community. For further information visit: www.teohu.maori.nz

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