

Deed signed to settle aquaculture obligations



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Kaumatua Ben Hippolite signing for Ngati Koata.

In May, the Crown signed a Deed of Settlement with iwi from the South Island and Hauraki in the North, for an early cash settlement of obligations under the Māori Aquaculture Settlement.

The settlement delivers a one-off cash payment of \$97 million in full and final settlement of all Crown obligations for ‘pre-commencement space’ – aquaculture space that was approved between 21 September 1992 and 31 December 2004 under the previous marine farming regime.

The signing ceremony took place at the Museum of New Zealand – Te Papa Tongarewa, and was attended by over 400 iwi, local government representatives, crown officials, industry leaders and five ministers of the Crown including the Prime Minister, Hon John Key.

Covering the vast majority of New Zealand’s current aquaculture development areas including the Marlborough Sounds, Tasman Bay, Hauraki Gulf, and the remainder of the South Island, MFish’s GM Corporate Services, Peter Murray, says the settlement removes uncertainty for a range of stakeholders.

“It allows marine farmers, councils and everyone involved in the industry to have more confidence – making way for investment into aquaculture – and gives more certainty for further expansion into a billion dollar a year industry.”

Peter Murray says it is a huge step forward that has involved constructive input from all parties.

“Iwi spent several months developing a proposal for the early settlement of pre-commencement space. The Ministry then worked with iwi to develop estimates of the value of the Crown’s obligations in each region, based on a valuation methodology specifically for the settlement.

“Iwi and Ministers later agreed to a fair value for the space and signed an agreement in principal, which has now formed the foundation for the Deed of Settlement.”

Minister of Fisheries, Hon Phil Heatley says the settlement required hard work, real commitment and a spirit of co-operation.

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To complete the settlement and make the payment to iwi, the Māori Aquaculture Settlement Act now needs to be amended. Subject to Parliament’s approval, it is planned to have an amended bill effective by the end of the year.

Peter Murray says the Ministry wants to see the settlement completed as quickly as possible so that the benefits can flow to iwi. The Crown’s focus will now move to identifying opportunities to settle the few remaining regions where aquaculture exists.

