

5 September 2013

Hon Dr Nick Smith & Hon Nathan Guy
Parliament Building
Wellington

Dear Ministers

Trial Use of SLEDs in the SBW6I Fishery

Thank you for your letter of 4 September 2013. We can confirm that all in the fishery are committed to continuing to do all that makes sense to reduce these unprecedented and concerning interactions with New Zealand sea lions and to prevent any further captures. There are a range of positive options coming from the crews at sea, from vessel managers, and from MPI and DWG on ways to prevent sea lions from placing themselves at risk of harm.

DWG and MPI commenced trials with SLEDs on 31 August and, while it is early days yet, progress to date does look promising. We are monitoring these trials closely with MPI observers on board every vessel and with daily contact between the fleet, DWG and MPI. These communications will continue.

All vessel operators in the SBW6I fleet have agreed to participate in the trial use of SLEDs for the balance of this season.

You have asked us to make further suggestions that may assist in reducing the risk of sea lion captures in this fishery. One vessel has been successfully trialling an alternative mitigation strategy. They have changed the manner of net retrieval in order to bring the net to the surface immediately astern of the vessel, thereby reducing the risk of sea lion captures at or near to the surface. This vessel has not captured any sea lions during this season. On-board this vessel is a qualified and experienced New Zealand fishing skipper in an operational compliance role. He was formerly employed as a science technician with NIWA and has been at the forefront of developing successful measures to mitigate interactions with seabirds. He is presently monitoring these trials alongside the MPI observer. We seek your agreement to continue with this as a trial of an alternative method, using a single vessel. In response to your request, the vessel operator undertakes to deploy a SLED should any sea lion mortalities occur during the trial of this alternative method.

DWG seeks your support for MPI to obtain full documentation from all vessels and observers on these trials and for industry's participation in a review on the efficacy of the different mitigation methods in this season's fishery, to establish whether or not the use of SLEDs or alternatives are both effective and do not damage fish quality, prior to any decisions for the future.

Kind regards:



George Clement
CEO