



## Office of Hon Dr Nick Smith

Minister of Conservation  
Minister of Housing

4 September 2013

George Clement  
CEO  
Deepwater Group Ltd  
Private Bag 24901  
Wellington 6142

Dear George

### **Use of sea lion exclusion devices (SLEDs) in the Campbell Island southern blue whiting fishery**

We have been informed by Officials from the Department of Conservation (DOC) and the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) that 16 New Zealand sea lion mortalities have recently occurred in the Campbell Island southern blue whiting fishery (SBW6I). As you will appreciate, the New Zealand sea lion is classified as a nationally critical species. While this is unprecedented in this fishery, we require urgent action to reduce the risk of further mortalities.

The use of sea lion exclusion devices (SLEDs) in the squid fishery at the Auckland Islands has now been undertaken for a number of years and evidence suggests the SLEDs can reduce sea lion mortalities. We consider that SLEDs may present a viable option to mitigate further mortalities in SBW6I. We therefore request that SLEDs are trialled across the fleet this year to reduce the risk of further sea lion mortalities.

We expect that the vessels continuing to operate in SBW6I will employ SLEDs for the remainder of the season. Within the next 24 hours we also ask that you confirm that shareholders operating in SBW6I will commit to implementing this management action.

We understand that the operating conditions in the SBW6I fishery are sufficiently different from the Auckland Islands squid fishery to warrant a measured approach to the use and deployment of SLEDs. We are encouraged that the initial SLED trials you have coordinated in SBW6I have not presented significant operational difficulties that suggest wider use of SLEDs would be a problem. While we consider it an urgent requirement that the risk of further mortalities is reduced, we understand that the environment this fishery operates within can be dangerous and that the health and safety of the crew on these vessels remains the primary focus.

In addition to requiring SLEDs to be used, we ask that you continue to maintain your daily communication with MPI Officials and provide all relevant information;

particularly regarding the effectiveness of SLEDs. MPI observers onboard all vessels will also be reporting on the use of SLEDs. We have asked MPI to compile a weekly report for us that details all further developments. We would also welcome any further suggestions that may assist in reducing the risk of sea lion captures in this fishery.

We commend you for working closely with MPI on this issue and your proactive approach as evidenced by ensuring all vessels have SLEDs onboard and undertaking initial SLED trials.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'N Smith', written in a cursive style.

Hon Dr Nick Smith  
Minister of Conservation

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Nathan Guy', written in a cursive style.

Hon Nathan Guy  
Minister for Primary Industries