

# Summary of 2015 southern blue whiting Operational Plan

## Monitoring of Operational Plan requirements

The Ministry for Primary Industries' Operational Plan to Manage the Incidental Capture of New Zealand Sea Lions in the 2015 Southern Blue Whiting Fishery at Campbell Island (SBW6I) contained the operational measures set out below. Performance against each operational measure is set out after the description of each measure.

### Information gathering

1. At least one MPI Observer will be placed on each vessel that operates in SBW6I during the 2015 season.

*Ten vessels participated in the SBW6I fishery during 2015 and all ten carried at least one MPI observers while operating in the fishery.*

2. MPI Observers will undertake an additional marine mammal abundance count each day. This count will take place in addition to the first count (which is taken during the first daylight haul as standard practice) and will be taken during a daylight tow. This count aims to detect any variation in the numbers of marine mammals that attend vessels during the course of a fishing event.

*The 2015 SBW6I season comprised 15 observer trips. For 13 of the trips, additional mammal abundance counts were done daily or most days. For two trips, abundance counts appear to have undertaken only once per day. These two trips were early in the season.*

3. In addition to standard ID and biological sampling (sex, lengths, tissue samples, and photos) observers will aim to take a tooth sample from each captured sea lion.

*Biological sampling was undertaken on all six sea lions captured during the 2015 SBW6I fishery after species identified. Tooth samples were taken from five of the six animals. A tooth sample was unable to be taken from one animal as the observers had not been issued with the device necessary to extract teeth.*

*The eight fur seals taken during the fishery were also identified, photographed and had relevant samples taken.*

4. Observers will also monitor the operation of Sea Lion Exclusion Devices (SLEDS) in the fishery, specifically
  - a. Any issues with crew safety; and
  - b. The behaviour of the SLED in trawl net

*Observers did not report any issues with either crew safety or the behaviour of the SLED in the trawl net.*

5. Observers will also pay particular attention to monitoring each vessel's adherence to the guidelines specified in the VMP and MMOP.

*Observers noted a high level of adherence with each vessel's VMP and the MMOP.*

#### **Additional mitigation measures**

6. SLEDs will be used on every tow in SBW6I during 2015

*Observers reported that a SLED was used in every tow during the 2015 SBW6I season.*

7. All SLEDs will be audited onshore before the season commences, to ensure they meet the agreed SLED specifications.

*Based on information provided to MPI by Deepwater Group Ltd, all SLEDs on vessels that participated in the 2015 SBW6I season were audited prior to the start of the season and met the agreed SLED specifications.*

8. Each SLED will be measured at the beginning of the season by the MPI Observer on board for the first SBW6I trip in 2015.

*MPI Observers on all ten vessels that participated in the 2015 SBW6I season measured the SLEDs on each vessels prior to fishing commencing. Measurements were sent back to MPI. If initial specifications changed, the relevant details were noted and also sent back to MPI.*

9. SLED damage: if at any point during the season the observer or crew have reason to consider a SLED has been damaged, its use will be discontinued until the SLED measurements have been re-checked by the Observer. If the observer is CONFIDENT that the SLED still meets the specifications, its use can be continued. If the observer has ANY DOUBT about whether the SLED meets the specifications, the measurements will be sent as soon as practical to the MPI Observer Programme for verification by the MPI Deepwater Fisheries Management team. Use of the SLED can resume if and when measurements are verified.

*One SLED was damaged badly enough to warrant repairs. It was not used while damaged.*

10. All vessels will pay particular attention to ensuring they abide by the guidelines within both their VMP and the MMOP.

*Observers noted a high level of adherence with each vessel's VMP and the MMOP.*

11. MPI has also been informed that industry had developed a series of sea lion trigger points, including a limit that if reached will prompt the fleet to leave the fishery for the year.

**Monitoring by MPI observers will assess progress towards these capture trigger points and limits.**

*Limits were not reached.*

## Communication

12. Each vessel that operates in SBW6I will communicate daily with DWG representatives.

*DWG received communications from each vessel on a daily basis. DWG communicated to MPI on a daily basis for the beginning of the season and subsequently when notable events occurred.*

13. Observers will include sea lion abundance counts in the standard weekly reporting regime.

*For six of the trips covering the 2015 SBW6I season, observers did include sea lion abundance counts in weekly reports. For the remaining nine trips, sea lion abundance counts were not included.*

14. Each vessel will have its own digital camera on board to ensure photos of any incidental captures can be sent emailed for identification purposes.

*Based on information provided to MPI by Deepwater Group Ltd, all ten vessels that participated in the 2015 SBW6I season had a digital camera on board.*