



Performance of the 2018 Southern Blue Whiting Fishery and Compliance with the SBW6I Operational Plan

Monitoring of Operational Plan Requirements

The Fisheries New Zealand '2018 Operational Plan to Manage the Incidental Capture of New Zealand Sea Lions in the Southern Blue Whiting Fishery at Campbell Island (SBW6I)' sets out the operational measures that vessels employed during the 2018 season to manage interactions with New Zealand sea lions (sea lions). The Plan also details the additional monitoring that Fisheries New Zealand Observers undertook in support of these operational measures.

Performance against each operational measure is set out below:

Information Gathering

- At least one Fisheries New Zealand Observer will be placed on each vessel that operates in SBW6I during the 2018 season.*
 - Ten vessels participated in the SBW6I fishery during 2018. All vessels carried at least one Fisheries New Zealand Observer while operating in the SBW6I fishery (100% coverage).
- Fisheries New Zealand Observers will undertake a minimum of one marine mammal abundance count each day. This count is taken during the first daylight haul as standard practice.*
 - The 2018 SBW6I season comprised 14 trips in total, four of the 10 vessels conducted two trips each.
 - Mammal abundance counts were done daily during the first daylight haul on a total of 204 tows (48% of the total number of 423 tows). Counts were not undertaken if light was poor; it was too foggy; hauls took place during night hours; or marine mammals were too distant from viewing point (52% of tows).
 - 98 tows were observed with sea lions present (48%)
 - The average number of sea lions observed on tows where sea lions were present was 4.9 with a range from 1 to 40 sea lions counted.
 - On two trips, Observers did not observe any sea lions.

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.*
 - Two male sea lions were captured, one each by two separate vessels in 2018, appropriate samples were taken from each animal including a tooth sample.
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 the 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 closely monitor each vessel's adherence to the guidelines specified in the VMP and MMOP.*
 - Observers noted that the level of adherence with VMPs and the MMOPs on the 14 observed trips was excellent, there was no need for follow up actions in 2018.

Additional mitigation measures

6. *SLEDs will be used in every tow in SBW6I during 2018 and vessels will carry at least one spare SLED on board.*
 - Observers reported that SLEDs were used in every tow during the 2018 SBW6I season and vessels carried one or two spare SLEDs.
7. *All SLEDs will be audited on shore before the season commences, to ensure they meet the agreed SLED specifications.*
 - Based on information provided to Fisheries New Zealand by Deepwater Group Ltd (DWG), all SLEDs on vessels that participated in the 2018 SBW6I season were audited prior to the start of the SBW6I season and met the agreed SLED specifications.
8. *Each SLED will be measured at the beginning of the season by the Fisheries New Zealand Observer on board for the first SBW6I trip in 2018.*
 - Observers checked and measured SLED specifications before they were used for the first time, all SLEDs met the specifications in 2018.

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.*

- No SLEDs were damaged badly enough to warrant repairs in 2018.

10. *The Operational Plan contains sea lion trigger points, including a limit that if reached will prompt the fleet to leave the fishery for the year. Monitoring by Fisheries New Zealand Observers will assess progress towards these capture trigger points and limits. Industry have a voluntary limit that if reached will prompt the fleet to leave the fishery for the year:*

- i. a limit of 12 female sea lion mortalities or*
- ii. 25 total sea lion mortalities*

- The sea lion trigger points were not approached in 2018

11. *Vessel operators must provide the Fisheries New Zealand Observer Programme with 5 days' notice by email prior to the vessel leaving port for each fishing trip where the vessel intends to operate in SBW6I (whether for all or part of the trip).*

- The Fisheries New Zealand Observer Programme were provided with 5 days' notice for all 14 trips in SBW6I in 2018.