



Performance of the 2020 Southern Blue Whiting Fishery (SBW 6I) and Compliance with the Operational Plan

Monitoring of Operational Plan Requirements

The Fisheries New Zealand '2020 Operational Plan to Manage the Incidental Capture of New Zealand Sea Lions in the Southern Blue Whiting Fishery at Campbell Island (SBW 6I),' sets out the operational measures that vessels are expected to employ to manage interactions with New Zealand sea lions (sea lions). The Operational Plan also details the additional monitoring that Fisheries New Zealand Observers commits to undertake 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 SBW 6I during the 2020 season.*
 - Nine vessels participated in the SBW 6I fishery during 2020 (14 vessels participated in 2019). All vessels carried at least one Fisheries New Zealand Observer while operating in the SBW 6I fishery in 2020 (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 2020 SBW 6I season comprised 9 trips in total by 9 different vessels.
 - New Zealand sea lions were observed around the vessel on every trip but not on every day or every tow.
 - Observers noted that *"New Zealand sea lions were regularly encountered, usually arriving during hauling, and then would swim either side of the lengthener and feed off the stickers protruding from the mesh."*
 - The average number of sea lions observed during the daily count was 1.5 (last year 2.6 sea lions were observed on average)
 - Counts ranged from 0 to 15 sea lions (maximum count last year was 20).
 - At times observers noted that from the bridge of the vessel it was difficult to determine whether animals observed were sea lions (HSL) or fur seals (FUR).
 - Counts were not undertaken if light was poor (or at night); it was too foggy or marine mammals were too distant from viewing point.

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 dead sea lion.*

- No sea lions were captured dead in 2020.

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 nine observed trips was excellent, there was no need for follow up actions in 2020.

Additional mitigation measures

6. *SLEDs will be used in every tow in SBW 6I during 2020 and vessels will carry at least one spare SLED on board.*

- Observers reported that SLEDs were used in every tow during the 2020 SBW 6I 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 2020 SBW 6I season were audited prior to the start of the SBW 6I 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 SBW 6I trip in 2020.*

- Observers checked and measured SLED specifications before they were used for the first time, all SLEDs met the specifications in 2020.

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 reports of SLEDs being damaged were received in 2020.

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*

- No sea lions were caught dead in 2020, one male sea lion was released alive

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 SBW 6I (whether for all or part of the trip).*

- The Fisheries New Zealand Observer Programme were provided with 5 days' notice for all trips in SBW 6I in 2020.