
**Background
and Rationale**

Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) has regulated the full use of SLEDs regarding sea lion interactions in SQU 6T, and their *Operational Plan to Manage the Incidental Capture of Sea Lions in the Southern Squid Trawl Fishery (SQU 6T) 2020-23* (Operational Plan) provides the fleet with a clear regime within which it must operate.

Equally clear is that FNZ's Operational Plan may be reviewed if there are significant changes in the operation or performance of the fleet. For the past many years conformance with FNZ Operational Plans has been consistently excellent.

DWG has produced these internal operational requirements so that issues arising can be recognised (by all participants in the fishery) and addressed before any FNZ requirements are persistently breached.

Central to these requirements will be:

- Transparency
- Communication
- Risk management
- Industry review of capture trigger levels.

The goal for DWG and industry must be to show exemplary performance to the requirements of the FNZ SQU 6T Operational Plan.

**Management
Procedures**

In addition to any specifications set out by FNZ in their Operational Plan, DWG and industry agree to adhere to and implement the internal management requirements outlined below.

**Sea Lion
Captures****Requirements**

- The fleet will continue to use the Marine Mammal Operational Procedures (MMOP) trigger level of one sea lion capture at which point they are required to complete the sea lion capture reporting form and report immediately to DWG via email admin@deepwatergroup.org.
 - In the event of reaching a level of **five** captures (observed or unobserved), a meeting will be held amongst operators (video or in person) to discuss evident causes and any options to prevent further captures.
 - Captures of sea lions will be promptly reported to DWG as a matter of course with digital ID photos (as per MMOP).
 - Captures of sea lions and the vessel(s) involved with any information pertinent to the event will be reported by DWG to all operators in the fishery as a matter of course.
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**Pre-season
Training and
Crew Awareness****Requirements**

- All vessels and their crew will undertake the DWG Operational Procedures and environmental training in the 12 months preceding the season (in person or by other means as necessary).
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SLED Specifications

This is now a regulatory matter and operators will need to ensure that their SLEDs comply with the law and are used effectively by following:

DWG Requirements

- Vessels will, as is current practice, certify all SLEDs before the SQU season commences or as early in the fishing year as possible.
- DWG recommends that vessels will carry a minimum of two SLEDs (for vessels intent on fishing SQU 6T).
- Vessels will notify their shore manager immediately should their SLED become damaged.
- At-sea transfers of SLEDs are allowed, but DWG must be notified of vessel names and SLED ID numbers. SLEDs inspected with unlisted ID numbers will be deemed DWG non-compliant.
- Vessels will leave the fishery immediately should circumstances mean they no longer have a SLED on board that is certain to pass an inspection and meet the mandatory specification (i.e., both or all their SLEDs are badly damaged).

Notification Requirements

Rationale

The risk in regard to the notification requirements is somewhat less as the vessel will understand prior to entering the fishery, whether it has breached the standards. The vessel can remedy this by:

- Not entering SQU 6T or
- Returning to port if and as required to pick up an Observer.

FNZ will use GPRS and VMS to check daily vessel activity in SQU 6T and may presume that any lack of notification is an attempt to avoid carrying an Observer.

Requirements

- Vessels that have failed to notify correctly will either not enter SQU 6T or return to port if required by FNZ/MPI to collect an Observer.

Transparency

Rationale

To enable fleet-wide transparency DWG will advise of any information relevant from FNZ updates regarding notification performance and any observed sea lion captures. Key performance that will be reported on indicators (further to those already reported in past years by FNZ) are as follows:

- Number of failed vessel notifications (including name of vessel and date failed to notify).
 - Whether vessels have remedied their notification failure or have remained outside of SQU 6T (based on VMS).
 - Number of observed sea lion captures (including names of vessels reporting captures).
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DWG will circulate information to the squid vessel operators group based on the above reports as required.

This will allow a collective view as to what - and if - remedial action is required in any way.

Procedures

- DWG will circulate reports (including naming any vessels which have failed to notify as required) to all squid vessel operators.

Entry to and Activity in the Fishery

Requirements

- No vessel will enter the fishery prior to 1 February 2023 without an FNZ Observer (unless advised by FNZ that one is not available to be deployed).
- Vessels will be managed in a manner that ensures they are not persistently fishing in SQU 6T for no benefit.
- All operators will monitor each and all of their vessels' activities on a daily basis so that effort and catches are well-managed, and vessels are not operating in SQU 6T for no real purpose.

FRML and Tow Reporting

Rationale

The sea lion FRML of 52 animals imposes an upper limit (by way of assumed mortality rates of captured sea lions multiplied by a scalar of 1.3 for cryptic mortality). The fishery is closed by a Gazette Notice once the FRML is reached (based on the number of animals allowed) even if the SQU 6T TACC is not fully caught.

Requirements

- All operators will send daily reports via the mandatory Electronic Reporting System, and these will be used by FNZ to report as usual total effort (tows) undertaken in the fishery.
- There no longer is a requirement to report separately to FishServe as in past years.

For More Information

If you require more information, please contact Ben Steele-Mortimer on 027 234 3140 or bensm@southswell.co.nz
