



Fisheries New Zealand

Tini a Tangaroa

**2023 OPERATIONAL PLAN TO MANAGE THE INCIDENTAL CAPTURE OF
NEW ZEALAND SEA LIONS IN THE CAMPBELL PLATEAU SOUTHERN
BLUE WHITING FISHERY (SBW 6I)**

July 2023

v 1.1

PURPOSE

- 1 This Operational Plan (the Plan) sets out the operational measures that vessels which target southern blue whiting in the Campbell Plateau fishery (SBW 6I) will employ during the 2023 season to manage interactions with New Zealand sea lions (sea lions).
- 2 This Plan also details the additional monitoring that Fisheries New Zealand Observers will undertake in support of these operational measures and to inform the future management of sea lion interactions in this fishery.
- 3 Following a high number of interactions with sea lions during the 2013 fishing season in SBW 6I, additional operational measures were developed that the fleet has adhered to since the 2014 season. Vessel operators have agreed to continue with these measures for the 2023 season. These measures have been effective in reducing captures of sea lions in this fishery.
- 4 The measures contained in this Plan apply in addition to agreed industry requirements and guidelines specified in all relevant Operational Procedures onboard deepwater vessels.
- 5 The measures specified in this document have been developed with the Deepwater Council which is the organisation that represents southern blue whiting quota owners.
- 6 These operational measures will give effect to the operational objectives in the southern blue whiting fishery specific chapter of the National Deepwater Fisheries Plan, including:
 - a. **Operational Objective 1.1:** Support the southern blue whiting fishery in achieving and maintaining credible third-party certification and ensure any Conditions of Certification are met within the required timeframe
 - b. **Operational Objective 2.2:** Ensure that incidental New Zealand sea lion mortalities, in the southern blue whiting fishery at the Campbell Plateau (SBW 6I), do not impact the long term viability of the sea lion population and that captures are minimised through good operational practices.

OPERATIONAL MEASURES

- 7 The additional operational measures detailed in this Plan were developed following a review of the information collected during the 2013 season, and after implementing the Plan in the 2014 season.
- 8 The operational measures that will apply in the 2023 SBW 6I season include:
 - a. Information gathering by the Fisheries New Zealand Observer Programme;
 - b. Real-time communication between vessels, Deepwater Council and Fisheries New Zealand as and when relevant;
 - c. Real-time monitoring based on electronic catch and position reporting, providing more accurate, integrated and timely data; and
 - d. Additional mitigation measures that aim to minimise risk of sea lion capture and any potential for adverse effects on the Campbell Island sea lion population.

Information gathering

- 9 Fisheries New Zealand plans to place an observer on each vessel that operates in SBW 6I during the 2023 season.
- 10 Observers will undertake one marine mammal abundance count each day. This count will take place during the first daylight haul as standard practice.
- 11 In addition to standard ID and biological sampling (sex, length, tissue samples, and photos), Observers will aim to take a tooth sample from any sea lion mortality observed.
- 12 Observers will monitor the vessel's adherence to the guidelines specified in the Vessel Management Plan and Marine Mammal Operating Procedures (MMOP).

Additional mitigation measures

- 13 SLEDs will be used on every tow in SBW 6I during 2023 and vessels will carry at least one spare SLED on board.
- 14 SLEDs will be audited on shore by an approved net maker before the season commences, to ensure they meet the agreed SLED specifications (Appendix 1).
- 15 SLEDs will be measured and checked by the Fisheries New Zealand observer on board before they are used for the first time targeting southern blue whiting in SBW6I in 2023.
- 16 SLED damage: If at any point during the season the observer or crew have reason to consider a SLED has been damaged:
 - The SLED will not be used until the SLED measurements have been checked and verified by the observer on board as complying with the SLED specifications (Appendix 1)
 - Alternatively if it is confirmed that the SLED is damaged then the spare SLED will be deployed on the next tow undertaken. The damaged SLED will not be used again on the trip unless brought back to specification by repairs onboard.
- 17 Industry have a non-regulatory annual limit that if reached will prompt the fleet to leave the fishery for the year:
 - a limit of 12 female sea lion mortalities or
 - a total of 25 sea lion mortalities (both sexes)

Note that captures of female sea lions are rare, around 95% of sea lion captures in SBW 6I since 2001/02 have been male. The annual limit of 25 sea lion mortalities was set by a Potential Biological Removal (PBR) Assessment for the Campbell Island sub-population of New Zealand sea lions in 2014.¹

¹ PBR Assessment for the Campbell Island Sub-population of New Zealand sea lions Prepared for Deepwater Group Limited October 2014, Roberts J, Roux M.J, and Ldroit Y. (NIWA) 27p.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Reporting to Fisheries New Zealand

- 18 Vessel operators must provide the Fisheries New Zealand Observer Programme with **5 days'** notice by email (Appendix 2) 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). Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays are included in the 5-day notification. Email notification must contain the following information:
- Name of fishing company.
 - Name of fishing vessel.
 - Call sign.
 - Date and time of notification.
 - Name of vessel master.
 - Port of departure.
 - Expected arrival time in port of departure.
 - Expected date and time of departure.
 - Number of approved SLEDs.
 - Estimated trip duration.
- 19 Notification is provided by emailing the notification form in Appendix 2 to the Fisheries New Zealand Observer Programme. The purpose of this notification is to give the Fisheries New Zealand Observer Programme time to organise and place Fisheries Observer(s) on-board the vessel for the upcoming trip.
- 20 Operators of vessels that move into SBW 6I part way through any fishing trip are still required to notify the Fisheries New Zealand Observer Programme of their intention to start fishing in SBW 6I. For the avoidance of doubt, notification is only required prior to the first entry into SBW 6I in a particular trip, should a vessel enter and exit SBW 6I several times within a trip, repeat notification is not required.

OBSERVER COVERAGE

- 21 Fisheries New Zealand observers will:
- Monitor that each vessel accurately records and reports New Zealand sea lion captures;
 - Take biological samples to inform sea lion population modelling and other research;
 - Monitor that SLEDs meet the required standard, and are being deployed in the correct manner.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THIS PLAN

- 22 This Plan will commence at the onset of the 2023 SBW 6I season and will be reviewed at the end of the 2023 season. The review will incorporate the information collected by Fisheries New Zealand observers and industry. It will aim to determine which aspects of the Plan can be removed, changed, or continue to be incorporated in the management of sea lion interactions in this fishery.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- 23 If you would like further information on the management measures in place for the SBW 6I fishery please contact:

Fisheries New Zealand – Observer Programme

PO Box 2526

Wellington

Email: observer@mpi.govt.nz

Phone: 04 819 4762

Fisheries New Zealand –Deepwater Fisheries Management Team

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Deepwater.Team@mpi.govt.nz

Appendix 1 Sea Lion Exclusion Device Specifications

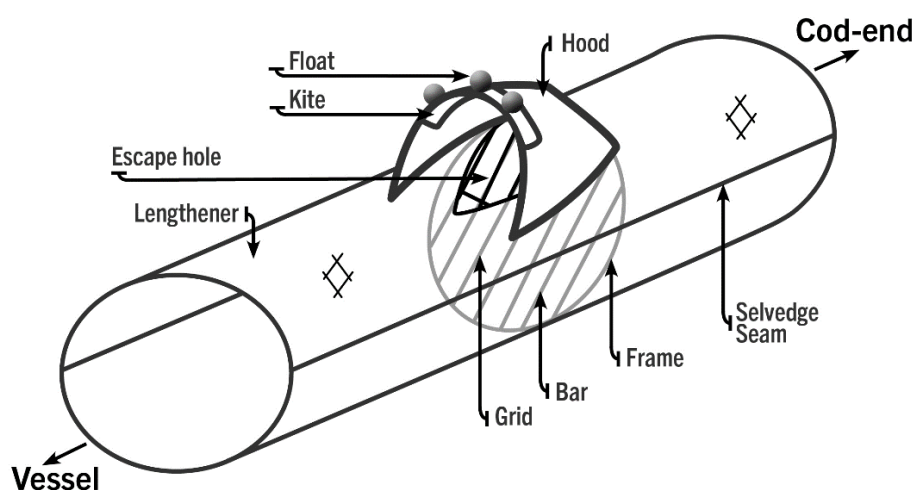
For the purposes of regulation 58CA of Fisheries (Commercial Fishing) Regulations 2001, the Sea Lion Exclusion Device must be constructed in such a way that it:

- (i) allows a sea lion to escape: and
- (ii) includes a grid, escape hole, hood, kite and floats that meet the following specifications:

Attachment

- a) The Sea Lion Exclusion Device must be inserted into the lengthener such that the escape hole is in the upper surface (panel) of the lengthener.
- b) No extra panels or mesh material may be fitted inside the net or lengthener before the Sea Lion Exclusion Device.

The Sled



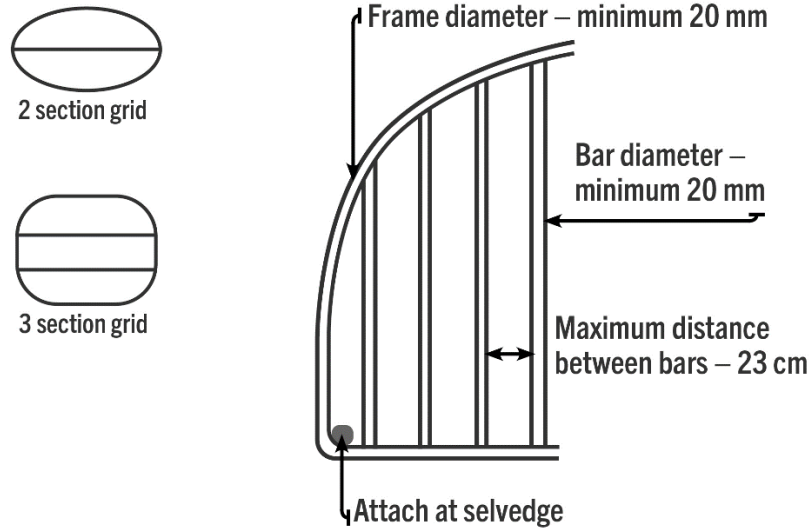
The Lengthener

- c) The lengthener section of net must have a minimum of **2** seams (i.e selvages or panels).

The Grid

- d) The metal grid must be inserted into the lengthener section of net at $45^\circ \pm 5^\circ$ from the vertical with the top of the grid closest to the cod-end section of the trawl net.
- e) The grid must be hinged horizontally between sections.
- f) The grid must have a minimum of **2** sections.
- g) The grid must have a solid stainless-steel bar that forms the frame around the grid. This frame steel bar must be a minimum of **20 mm** in diameter.
- h) The grid frame must be continuously sewn to the net meshes around its outer edge.

Dimensions of the Sled Grid

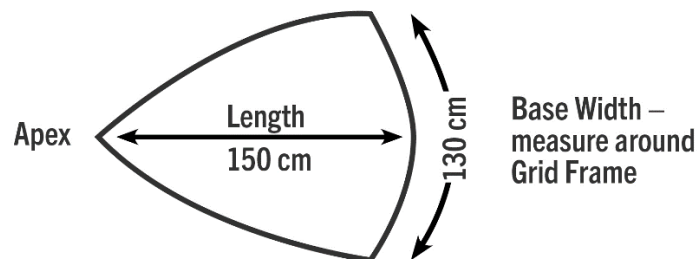


- i) The grid must contain vertical bars that should be evenly spaced and must be at a maximum interval (i.e. between the bars) distance of **23 cm**.
- j) It may be necessary to have a different spacing between the final bars and the grid frame and this spacing must be **less than 23 cm** between the last vertical bar and the grid frame.

The Escape Hole

- k) The escape hole must be triangular in shape and cut into the upper surface of the lengthener section.
- l) The escape hole must be a minimum of **130 cm** in width, measured along the top frame bar of the grid.
- m) The apex of the escape hole triangle must be a minimum of **150 cm** forward from the centre of the base of the triangle.

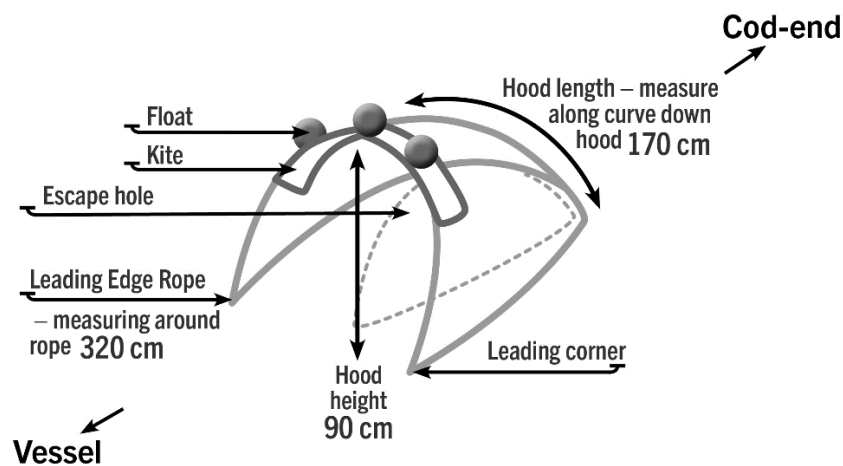
The Escape Hole



The Hood

- n) The hood is a hood-shaped mesh scoop which must be attached above the escape hole.
- o) The leading-edge of the hood (that is closest to the vessel) must be open and facing into the water-flow when the gear is fishing. The trailing part of the hood (that is closest to the codend) must be attached to the top frame bar of the grid.
- p) The leading-edge of the hood must be a minimum of **90 cm** in height when fully open.
- q) The leading-edge rope around the mouth of the hood must be a minimum of **320 cm** in length after attachment of the kite (see below) and floats.
- r) The hood must have a minimum length of **170 cm** between the centre of the leading edge of the kite and the top of the grid bar.
- s) The leading corners of the hood must extend forward and be attached to either side of the escape hole.

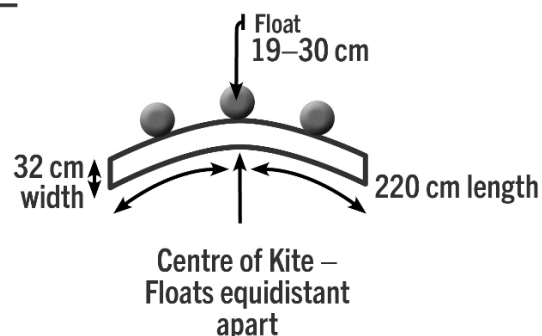
The Hood



The Kite

- t) The hood must have a semi-rigid kite **220 cm ($\pm 10\%$)** in length and **32 cm ($\pm 10\%$)** in width.
- u) The kite must be attached to the underside of the hood.
- v) All edges of the kite must be attached to the hood netting.

The Kite



Floats

- w) At least three floats of between **19 cm** and **30 cm** in diameter must be attached to the leading edge of the kite.
- x) One float must be in the centre of the kite length and the other two floats equidistant between the centre float and each end of the kite.
- y) Floats must not be fitted inside the lengthener in front of the grid.

Appendix 2 FIVE-DAY NOTIFICATION OF PORT CALL OR PORT DEPARTURE FOR ANY VESSEL THAT HAS FISHED/OR INTENDS TO FISH IN SBW6I

Name of Vessel	
Name of Fishing Company	
Call sign	
Date of Notification (day-month)	
Time of notification (hours)	
Name of vessel master	
Name of port of departure	
Arrival time in port of departure	
Number of approved SLED	
Expected departure date	
Expected departure time	
Intend to fish in SBW6I Yes/No	
Estimated duration of trip (days)	

Signature of Vessel Master or Company Representative

Sign:

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Please email this completed form to the Ministry's Observer Programme.

Email: observer@mpi.govt.nz

Completed forms must be received no later than 5 days (120 hours) including Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, prior to the vessel departing from the notified port of departure.