



**Meeting: Conservation Services Programme Technical Working Group
National Plan of Action – Seabirds Technical Working Group**

Date: 6 May 2008

Time: 9.00 am – 10.30 am

Place: Department of Conservation, 18-32 Manners Street, Wellington

Chair: Johanna Pierre (DOC)

Attendees: Suze Baird (NIWA), Chris Carey (Trawl skipper), John Cleal (Fishing Vessel Management Services), Stephanie Rowe (DOC), David Middleton (SeaFIC), Ed Melvin (Washington SeaGrant), Chris Robertson (Wild Press), Susan Waugh (Forest and Bird), Richard Wells (Clement and Associates)

Mitigation studies:

MIT2006/02: Mitigating seabird interactions with trawl nets

- SB presented her report: Net captures of seabirds during trawl fishing operations in New Zealand waters
- DM asked if SB thought the new non-fish bycatch form was working in clarifying details of capture incidents. SB considered that there were problems, especially with respect to identifying which captures were actually net captures. She had found some unexpected codings on the forms viewed. SR noted that observers may also write fewer comments than previously as they may feel that with the new codes, the information is already captured to the degree required.
- RW queried whether different seabird species were captured in different parts of the trawl net. SB replied that sooty shearwaters were often recorded in the codend, whereas albatrosses were more frequently recorded on the large ropes, for example.
- SW asked how the figures were derived and whether they were anecdotal. SB clarified that the figures reflect captures that were clearly identifiable as net captures. There could be other captures recorded that were net captured, but were not identifiable as such. Therefore, the numbers are not definitive, and they can not be interpreted that way. DM asked whether it was possible to guess what proportion of the captures in which it was unclear where birds were caught might actually be net captures. SB did not consider this possible with the information available.
- SW asked whether the comments made by observers only related to capture events. SB confirmed this was the case, and DM added that the new observer non-fish bycatch form and logbook were now recording gear events and such when there was no non-fish bycatch. So, more information was now available.

- RW intends to take the report to operators and compare its findings with their thoughts from being at sea. He considered that there were some operational practices that all vessels shared. However, others were more restricted to blocks of vessels that had operational similarities.
- RW asked if multiple capture events were usually of single species. SB clarified that this was often the case, and the species were typically sooty shearwaters or white-chinned petrels. RW wondered if there were detectable changes in species caught in nets over time, which SB clarified there were not detectable changes but this did not preclude an actual change (given the nature of the information available).
- RW stated that now there were weekly reports received from vessels that included the net and warp captures. These reports could also be used for management, e.g. detecting when Vessel Management Plans may have been breached, offal discharge occurred at less than ideal times, and suchlike.
- SW recommended examining multiple captures as a separate group to look at factors relating to these. SB commented that from memory, multiple captures often related to gear breakdown events. RW wondered whether quirks in the way fishing masters operated their own vessels lead to multiple captures, and noted that if vessels had operational similarities, managing the factors leading to multiple captures would be easier.
- EM recommended describing the fleet itself, and reporting this description. He noted that this was of assistance in his work in Alaska, as it could be used to design mitigation measures appropriately. He wondered what proportion of mortality was net-related and warp-related.
- SB did not consider this useful to include this in the report due to the nature of the information identifying net captures (i.e. not all net captures are identifiable as such from past data etc).
- RW considered that the report generally supported operational findings
- SR will post the report at MFish Observer Services with a cover sheet highlighting how observers can more clearly record their comments, and what information is most desirable to record.
- DM suggested highlighting the frequencies in Tables 6 – 8. SB did not wish to draw particular attention to the figures in the report, given the nature of the data they were drawn from.

Other project updates:

MIT2006/09 Plans for development and testing of a device to reduce the extent of New Zealand fur seal captures in trawl nets

- JP noted that this report was being distributed as the TWG was advised at the 19 March 2008 WG meeting. The Group's feedback is sought on the report and attached project plan (CSPTWG2008-08a, b), especially any material not included in the mitigation review. A review of relevant gear operating parameters, and a draft design for the device will be circulated as they become available.
- RW outlined his thoughts on why industry was interested in the project, i.e. the MSC Hoki CAR requirements relating to fur seals. He noted that given the

findings of the paper presented here and the enquiries of the project team, the team considered exclusion devices were the most profitable avenue to investigate.

- CC queried whether the pursuit of the project was an optics issue for industry or due to recognisance of a problem. RW clarified that his estimates of fur seal mortality in NZ trawl fisheries were of a level some parties were disconcerted about, and that this was an issue beyond any actual or perceived sustainability issue. He considered that beyond issues of sustainability, 'needless and careless' protected species deaths should be stopped if safe and cost effective for fishing operations.

JP closed the meeting, noting that draft minutes and presentations would be circulated to the TWG with a call for written comments by 26 May 2008.

End of meeting.