



Meeting: Conservation Services Programme Research Advisory Group

Date: 1 March 2017

Time: 12:30 pm – 16:30 pm

Place: The Terrace Conference Centre House, 114 The Terrace Wellington.

Chair: Ian Angus

Attendance: Jim Roberts, Jingjing Zhang, Di Tracey (NIWA), Anton Van Helden, Katrina Goddard, Karen Baird (Forest & Bird), Tiffany Bock, Nathan Walker, Rich Ford, Amanda Richards, Erin Breen (MPI), Bruce Robertson (Otago Uni), Oliver Wilson, Tom Clark (FINZ), Richard Wells (DWG, FINZ, Resourcewise Ltd), Graham Parker (Parker Conservation), Igor Debski, Ian Angus, Katie Clemens-Seely, Kris Ramm, Freya Hjørvarsdottir, Graeme Taylor, Laura Boren, Jody Weir, Julie Knauf, Kath Walker (DOC).

Apologies:

Introduction

A general reminder of the purpose and scope of the March RAG meeting was presented. IA gave an update on the indicative timeline and process for the CSP Annual Plan 2017-18. IA presented the routine refresh of the CSP Strategic Statement.

Update on medium term research plans

ID presented the draft results of the draft CSP seabird medium term research plan 2017. KB raised concern about different models being used for the risk assessment, which makes them incomparable between years. The risk score for yellow-eyed penguin has reduced significantly by moving to a new model even though the population counts should have resulted in an increased risk score compared to the older model used. TC outlined that although the models are different it doesn't mean that the methodology used in the new one is wrong and that there is a need for a discussion about what method is the more appropriate one. TC raised problems about the terms used in the risk assessment (Very High, High, Medium, Negligible) and suggested that those would be changed.

Discussion on Prioritisation process

An overview of the prioritisation scoring used to determine the initial prioritisation was presented for consideration by the Group. TC raised continued concern about the scoring of projects and the need for the stakeholders to be able to view the complete breakdown of the scores. TC raised the concern about the definition of adverse effects and the need for proof of adverse effects when a project is proposed. TC expressed a desire to see all other relevant areas of research into the environmental effects of fishing including outputs of TMPs and AEWG planning. TC Outlined the importance of having a distribution project for the Maui's dolphins before the upcoming TMP.

Discussion and scoring of projects

Project proposals for 2017/18 and comments from the Group are summarised in the table below. Ongoing projects are included first in each project category (interaction, population and mitigation) for completeness.

Further feedback

The Chair called for any additional feedback, in writing to csp@doc.govt.nz, by 15 March 2017. Feedback period for the three projects that will be presented on at the CSP TWG on the 16 March 2017 (INT2016-04 Indirect effects on commercial fishing on Buller's shearwater and red-billed gulls; INT2016-03 Post release survival of white pointer sharks in New Zealand setnet fisheries; POP2016-01 Seabird population research: Chatham Islands 2016-17) will be extended until Sunday the 19th of March.

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CSP RAG proposal		Comments from CSP RAG 25 Feb 2016
INT-1	Observing commercial fisheries	This project will be developed by a separate process, in collaboration with MPI. Agreed high priority.
INT-3	Supporting the utility of electronic monitoring to identify protected species interacting with commercial fisheries.	Split views – Concerns that the project is premature given the uncertainty around the IEMRS process and implementation timelines. Some felt that this should wait until development of detailed specifications including what vision and scope the cameras will have, how clear the images will be and where they will be placed. Was suggested that this should be a part of the implementation of the cameras on board. Others suggested that it would be more useful to have a project on developing methods to assess the methodology used in the camera monitoring so that we can ensure that we have the proper system in place.
INT-2	Identification of marine mammals, turtles and protected fish captured in New Zealand fisheries	Agreed high priority – Suggested if it was possible to use information from the entire fleet rather than limiting to observed specimens.
INT-4	Post release survival of white pointer sharks	Split views –Pending the presentation of draft results from INT2016-03 on 16 March. Concerns about the expected level of interactions and the need for a power analysis of the level of interactions, deployment plan, number of sea days, sample size etc. Agreement to extend consultation on this project until 19 March to allow working group to consider INT2016-03 outputs.
POP-1	Chatham Island seabird research	Agreed high priority – Group felt it was important to ensure that and data from this feed into the MPI led L3 Chatham Island albatross modelling. Discussion about the closing date for consultation for the project as it won't be presented until 16 th of March, agreement to extend the consultation period until Sunday the 19 th of March.
POP-10	Indirect effects of fishing on New Zealand sea lions	Agreed high priority.
POP-2	Salvin's albatross: Bounty Islands population project	Agreed high priority – Suggested that this project should be higher up on the priority list.
POP-3	Auckland Islands seabird research	Agreed high priority – Suggested that this project should include an aerial survey.
POP-7	New Zealand Sea Lion: Auckland Islands Pup count	Agreed high priority – Concerns about how low on the priority list this project is and the lack of time allocated for resights. The need for subants research planning programme was raised and that a coordination meeting should occur in April. Suggested that this project should be higher up on the priority

		list.
POP-6	Indirect effects on seabirds in north-east North Island region	Agreed high priority – Concerns about the population decline of red-billed gulls were raised. Discussion about the closing date for consultation for the project as it won't be presented until 16 th of March, decided to extend the consultation period until Sunday the 19 th of March. Discussion about the large scale of the project and if the proposed budget would be enough.
POP-4	Antipodes Island seabird research	Agreed high priority – Discussion about how the scoring doesn't seem to reflect the inconsistency of population estimates. Concerns about declines in the Antipodean albatross population were raised. Suggested that the autopsy reports of bycaught Antipodean albatrosses would be analysed to look at the sex ratio of bycaught birds. Group agreed that analysis has shown that while bycatch within the EEZ is likely to have negligible impact on decline, bycatch in international fisheries will be strongly contributing factor. Suggested that it would be important to not only look at the bycatch in the EEZ but also in international waters, using trackers on juveniles might help us get some answers. Suggested that this project should be higher up on the priority list.
POP-11	The age and growth of New Zealand protected corals at high risk	Generally agreed high priority – Concerns raised about the gaps in our knowledge about corals. It was highlighted that research on the age and growth of corals will be a key input into robust benthic risk assessment.
POP-12	Cold-water coral connectivity in New Zealand	Generally agreed high priority. Concerns raised about the gaps in our knowledge about corals. It was highlighted that research on the connectivity of cold-water corals will be a key input into robust benthic risk assessment.
POP-9	NZ fur seal: Cook strait habitat use assessment	Generally agreed – Discussion about capture rates and observer coverage in the Cook strait. Suggested that analysing sex ratios from bycaught animals would be important.
POP-5	Campbell Island seabird research	Generally agreed – Discussion about what synergies could be found with other projects to maximise cost effectiveness and what other funding could be used to analyse species outside the scope of CSP.
POP-8	NZ fur seal: Bounty Islands population assessment	Generally agreed – Discussion about the use for the project alongside the Salvin's albatross: Bounty Island project to maximise efficiencies.
MIT-2	Characterization and development of offal management for small vessels.	Split views – General agreement that offal is a key contributor to risk of interactions. Discussion was had that this should form core fisheries management work however concern was raised that this work should be reported transparently and in an auditable manner.

MIT-1	Protected species liaison project (SLL and BLL)	Agreed highest priority – Suggested that the project would be split into two projects, one for BLL and one for SLL, for management purposes as well as the correct stock cost recovery. Suggested that the project could be done cheaper.
MIT-3	Mitigation of New Zealand fur seal captures	Generally agreed – Some suggestion, based on similar net capture investigations, that current observer may not provide sufficient predictive power.
MIT-4	Dolphin interactions with trawl fisheries – Characterisation and mitigation methods	Generally agreed – Discussion about the work done in Australia in 2015 and that it could be an important information source for this project. Suggested that this project should be higher up on the priority list and it should be a research project for the development of mitigation rather than characterisation of the nature of interactions. Suggestion that jack mackerel fishery should not be the focus due to recent reductions in capture rates.