



Meeting: Conservation Services Programme Research Advisory Group

Date: 11 March 2014

Time: 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Place: Conservation House, 18 - 32 Manners St, Wellington.

Chair: Dean Peterson

DOC lead: Ian Angus (ph: 04 - 471 - 3081; email: iangus@doc.govt.nz)

Attendance: Simon Childerhouse (Blue Planet Marine), Karen Baird (Forest and Bird & Birdlife International), Anne McCrone (WWF-NZ), Paul Breen (NZRLIC), Martin Cryer, Richard Ford, Vicky Reeve, Ben Sharp, Rohan Currey, Adam Von Opzeeland (MPI), Ian Doonan, David Thompson, Rosemary Hurst, Malcolm Francis, Ian Tuck (NIWA), Jack Fenaughty (Sanford Ltd), Richard Wells (DWG & FINZ), David Middleton (Seafood NZ), Ian Angus, Igor Debski, Katie Clemens, Kris Ramm, Will Arlidge, Laura Boren (DOC)

Apologies: Tom Clark (Seafood NZ)

Update on CSP Annual Plan timeline and process

IA gave an update on the timing and process for the CSP Annual Plan 2014-15. There was discussion with regard to the timing of issues and the ensuing effects upon the cost-recovery process.

Seabirds project ideas

ID presented the draft medium term seabird research plan (see draft plan).

There was some discussion around small discrepancies in the Seabird Risk Assessment. Gaps were identified in the Risk Assessment and DOC will liaise with MPI to determine how to better bridge the gaps.

The group agreed that the Seabird Risk Assessment was a good process to inform on prioritisation, and that the seabird medium term research plan was a good approach.

BS cautioned that when the results of the November 2013 workshop were made available, they are likely to influence the risk assessment, and hence the research plan. This information could affect the order of the species, but the framework and the way the CSP RAG attendees are likely to prioritise the projects, are unlikely to change for the coming year.

The benefits of a medium-term research plan were discussed, emphasising that it allows for the ability to plan for multiple projects taking place in a single location (conducting several research projects on multiple species in the Campbell Islands). This is important to reduce costs and logistics for sending researchers to one location on multiple occasions.

DM raised the issue of the lack of mitigation and interaction aspects included in the medium term seabird research plan, and a decision was made to include these.

Action: Seabird research framework has been accepted and DOC will develop and include observation and mitigation into the framework.

Protected fish project ideas

KR presented the draft medium term protected fish research plan (see presentation).

DM mentioned that valuable background information could be missing from many of the species discussed in the plan, as many of them have only recently gained protected status, and as such, there's a lot of work that needs to be done, similar to risk assessment work on seabirds, that hasn't been included in this plan.

Marine mammal project ideas

LB presented on possible research projects for marine mammals (see presentation).

It was highlighted that in the absence of a marine mammal risk assessment, project ideas were being presented on a species by species basis.

There was a discussion around the reporting of this season's Auckland Islands field research; ways to link DOC and MPI projects (ex: mortality in sea lions) occurring in the same location; conducting winter vs. summer diet projects; and which aspects of the species should best be studied in order to fill current data gaps. It was noted that research may be needed to pick up on findings from modelling underway by NIWA, and that there may be older data and samples that could also be analysed. Cold branding was suggested as a possible marking method for use at the Auckland Islands, and collecting population information at Stewart Island. Continued work at Campbell Island was supported by the CSP RAG attendees. The effects of human interactions on the animal populations in that area were discussed, as was minimising them where possible.

There was discussion around the nature of the survey work on Maui's dolphins this summer and whether mark-recapture work was going to be considered. This work was determined to most likely to come out of the Maui's RAG. Adding *Klebsiella* to the planned genotyping work was also suggested.

There was discussion surrounding the implementation of a better system and increased support for fishers returning animals/animal parts to researchers/DOC, particularly for protected species, and the difficulties that they currently face due to permitting issues.

The lack of fur seal projects was mentioned and IA stated that a database of fur seal population data was currently being groomed and committed to making the fur seal data available.

Action: Once the marine mammal risk assessment is complete DOC will develop a research plan similar to that for seabirds.

Coral project ideas

WA presented on possible research projects for corals (see presentation).

There was discussion about the coral projects that MBIE & MPI (BRAG) are undertaking.

There was also discussion about the synergy between the MPI benthic project and DOC's future aim of a risk assessment-like approach to protected corals; suggestions were made that perhaps these could be undertaken together.

Priorities for interactions projects and observer coverage

ID presented on possible research for interaction projects and observer coverage (see presentation).

There was discussion around the prioritisation of observer coverage, basing this on risk assessments where available. One priority areas suggested were:

- fisheries impacting yellow-eyed penguins and sea lions.
- a one-off project could be developed to assess historic photos of protected fish captures to gain better historic data due to know identification issues
- strengthen current photographic protocols and training for all protected species interactions observed

Mitigation proposals not covered elsewhere

KR presented on possible research for mitigation projects (see presentation).

RW highlighted the need for development of practical Surface Long-Line vessel tori-lines. Discussions then ensued on the technical aspects of creating tori lines.

RH mentioned that it may be worthwhile considering a parallel project with observer coverage in set net fishery with regards to a project proposed earlier involving humpback whales and entanglements in set nets.

Other ideas raised included implementation of purse seine ray mitigation methods and expansion of the seabird liaison officer roles.

Proposals for any other Conservation Services

No additional services suggested.

IA called for any further written submissions, by email to csp@doc.govt.nz by 25 March 2014.

List of suggested CSP projects/project ideas discussed by CSP RAG 11 March 2014

Seabird projects

Refer to the [draft CSP seabird population medium term research plan](#)

Protected fish projects

Refer to the [draft CSP protected fish medium term research plan](#)

Marine Mammals projects

New Zealand sea lion

- Pup count Auckland Island; resighting marked animals at the Auckland Islands
- Project(s) to determine diet, causes of mortality, winter variations in the population

- Assess the contribution of different causes of mortality to overall decline (potentially outside CSP purview)
- Pup count at Campbell Island; tracking project at Campbell Island

Hector's/Maui's dolphin (through MRAG, already in train or in planning, except last item)

- Investigate the structure of, and gene flow between populations, through biopsy (for the following populations: ECSI, TSI, WCNI)
- Genotyping and determining the origin of toxoplasmosis
- Improving public awareness and data collection
- Enhanced CSP support to fishers returning Hector's/Maui's dolphin

Humpback whales

- Tracking to identify high risk areas or pot line and set net entanglement
- Photo identification of entanglement scars and collection of material to quantify the issues, and identify the origin of entanglements

Other suggestions

- Southern right whale (distribution, potential areas of overlap as population increases, e.g. overlap with cray industry)
- Blue whale research

Coral projects

- Cold-water coral modelling – Predictive modelling
 - Feeds into MBIE-funded programme “Climate Change: Impacts and Implications (CCII)” Oceans case study
 - Ground truth predictive models
 - Management measures – abundance over presence/an

Cold-water coral physiology and identification

- Cold-water coral reproductive study
- Increased observer training (increase understanding of cold-water coral identification)
- Updates of cold-water coral ID guides

Interaction projects

- INT2013-02 Identification of seabirds captured in New Zealand fisheries
- INT2013-03 Identification of marine mammals, turtles and protected fish captured in New Zealand fisheries
- INT2013-05 Assessment of cryptic seabird mortality on trawl warps and longlines

Mitigation projects

- Protected species newsletter review underway (scope and content to be determined following review)
- Inshore Bottom Longline – tori lines
- Inshore Bottom Longline – seabird liaison
- Humpback whale entanglement