



12 December 2016

Dear Stakeholder

Consultation on the Operational Plan to Manage the Incidental Capture of New Zealand Sea lions in the Southern Squid Trawl Fishery (SQU 6T) 2016-17

The southern squid fishery (SQU 6T), overlaps with the foraging range of New Zealand sea lions that breed at the Auckland Islands. This can lead to the unintended capture of sea lions by vessels trawling for squid. New Zealand sea lions are a protected species under the Marine Mammal Protection Act 1978. The 5-year Operational Plan to manage the incidental capture of New Zealand sea lions expired on 30 September 2016.

A collaborative review of management settings for the SQU 6T fishery has been included as an action under the proposed New Zealand Sea lion Threat Management Plan (TMP). However, because the TMP has not yet been finalised, revised management measures will not be ready in time for public consultation before the southern squid fishery begins in late January 2017.

The Operational Plan (2012-2016) set management measures under section 15 of the Fisheries Act 1996, including a fisheries-related mortality limit (FRML) of 68 sea lions per year, which, if reached, would result in closure of the fishery. It is proposed to set the FRML at 68 again for the 2016/17 SQU 6T fishery and to retain all other management settings in the current Operational Plan (2012-2016) (Table 1). These management measures are used to monitor performance against the fishing-related mortality limit, notification requirements, observer coverage requirements and trigger points for review of the Operational Plan (Table 2).

Based on the outcomes of research done to support the development of the TMP, it is considered that operating under the current management settings for one more season will not pose any additional risk to the New Zealand sea lion population and remains consistent with sections 8, 9 and 10 of the Fisheries Act 1996.

The modelling work, collaborative review of management measures and public consultation on future management settings for SQU 6T will begin under the new TMP framework in 2017.

You are invited to make a submission on the FRML staying at 68 for the upcoming southern squid (SQU 6T) season or any of the other management settings as set out in Tables 1 and 2. Please send feedback to FMSubmissions@mpi.govt.nz by 5pm on 23 December 2016. Make sure you include in your submission:

- the title of the consultation in the subject line of your email.
- your name and title (if applicable)
- your organisation's name (if applicable)
- your address.

While we prefer email, you can also send your submission by post to:

Deepwater Fisheries Management Team
Ministry for Primary Industries
PO Box 2526
WELLINGTON 6140

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dave Turner', is written over the 'Yours sincerely' text.

Dave Turner
Director Fisheries Management

Table 1 Management Settings to Manage the Incidental Capture of New Zealand Sea lions

Measure	Number
Annual Fishing Related Mortality Limit (FRML)	68
Strike Rate ¹	5.89
SLED discount rate ²	82%
Effective strike rate for tows that comply with the requirements of the Operational Plan ³	1.06%
Maximum number of tows	4,700

Table 2 Trigger Points to Review Management Settings for interactions with New Zealand sea lions in the SQU 6T fishery

Less than 98% of tows undertaken in the SQU 6T fishery use a SLED ⁴ that meets the specifications detailed in this Operational Plan ⁷
Less than 95% of tows undertaken in the SQU 6T fishery meet the reporting requirements specified in this Operational Plan
More than 15 sea lion mortalities are observed by Ministry Observers in any one SQU 6T season (assuming 50% Observer coverage and pro-rated otherwise)
More than 4,700 tows in any one SQU 6T season
A pup count of fewer than 1,501 pups on the Auckland Islands
Any new information that indicates the risk to sea lions posed by fishing in SQU 6T is appreciably greater than current information suggests

¹ This means that for every 100 tows undertaken in the SQU6T fishery, 5.89 sea lion mortalities will be counted towards the FRML.

² Vessels are eligible for a discount of **82%** on the strike rate if they deploy an approved SLED **and** comply with the reporting requirements of this Operational Plan. This discount will reduce the strike rate from 5.89% to 1.06%.

³ The Ministry intends to provide a minimum of 50% observer coverage across all tows in the SQU6T fishery.

⁴ SLEDs must be of the Mark 3/13 design and each with its unique SLED identification number stamped into the frame.