



MP for Napier

Minister of Police

Minister of Fisheries

Minister of Revenue

Minister for Small Business

B19-0617

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Kia ora koutou

## Squid 6T Operational Plan 2019-2023

I have made decisions on management settings for the Squid 6T Operational Plan to manage interactions between vessels in the Squid 6T trawl fishery and New Zealand sea lions. The Operational Plan will be in place for the next four fishing years, from 2019/20 to 2022/23.

I want to express my appreciation to iwi and stakeholders for their engagement and input during the review of the management settings for the Squid 6T fishery over the past two years, and especially thank the Squid 6T Operational Plan Technical Advisory Group. I also appreciate the time and effort put into submissions received on the consultation document.

Following consideration of submissions and advice provided to me by Fisheries New Zealand, I have decided on a package of measures comprising:

- A new annual fishing-related mortality limit of 52 sea lions
- Compulsory use of Sea Lion Exclusion Devices (SLEDs) from 2020/21; and
- Fisheries New Zealand observer coverage of at least 90% of fishing activity.

An annual fishing-related mortality limit of 52 sea lions is consistent with the Squid 6T fishery having no more than a 5% impact on the Auckland Islands sea lion population in the long term, to allow the population to continue rebuilding. I note that the Squid 6T fishery is estimated to currently be having less than a 1.5% long term impact on the sea lion population. Given the current low impact of the fishery (with the average annual estimated number of sea lion deaths being 3.4 over the last 5 years), the fishing-related mortality limit is unlikely to constrain the amount of fishing activity each year. However, I consider it is necessary to have this limit as a backstop to ensure that fishing cannot have an adverse effect on the sea lion population.

Until SLEDs are required by regulation under section 11(3) of the Fisheries Act 1996 for the 2020/21 fishing year, I expect vessels will continue to deploy audited SLEDs on all tows in the Squid 6T fishery.

To monitor the fishing-related mortality limit, I have instructed Fisheries New Zealand to maximise observer coverage, with a minimum of 90% of all tows to be observed annually.

I have also carefully considered the additional option proposed in submissions for a spatial closure in the SQU6T management area. However, given the low impact of the fishery, I do not consider spatial measures to be necessary at this time. Fisheries New Zealand will undertake further research to investigate additional satellite tagging of sea lions at the Auckland Islands to address the uncertainty in sea lion foraging distribution and allow for possible reconsideration of spatial measures in future.

As in previous years, Fisheries New Zealand will provide weekly updates to stakeholders on activity during the Squid 6T fishing season.

Management settings in the Squid 6T Operational Plan will be reviewed if new information becomes available that indicates fisheries activities are having a different impact on the sea lion population than currently estimated, or if there are significant new concerns regarding the sea lion population.

The discussion paper, final advice and submissions are available on the Fisheries New Zealand website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stuart Nash". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hon Stuart Nash  
**Minister of Fisheries**