

 <p data-bbox="231 533 470 571">Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels</p>	<p data-bbox="507 241 1401 280">Tenth Meeting of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group</p> <p data-bbox="730 297 1401 336"><i>Virtual meeting, 17 - 19 August 2021 (UTC+10)</i></p> <p data-bbox="513 414 1391 611">Social research to understand the drivers and barriers in relation to ACAP best practice mitigation measures in the New Zealand surface longline fishery</p> <p data-bbox="721 638 1189 676"><i>Janice Molloy, Oliver Wilson</i></p>
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SUMMARY

A set of mitigation standards have been developed by the New Zealand government that define best practice seabird bycatch mitigation. For the surface (pelagic) longline fishery, the standard matches ACAP's Best Practice advice. Southern Seabirds is carrying out social science to better understand what types of initiatives or messaging are most likely to affect fisher behaviour in a way that supports the use of best practice mitigation. The overall purpose of the research is to help Southern Seabirds understand what could be done, by who and how, to lead fishers to consistently follow the mitigation standards. We have engaged with experts in the field of social science to design an approach, which included identifying 12 specific objectives around current knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour; motivations and barriers to uptake of mitigation standards; and steps that might encourage compliance with regulations and standards. In-depth hour-long ZOOM interviews are currently being undertaken with fishers. All fishers contacted to date have been willing to participate, and those that have been interviewed have been open and forthright in their interviews.

1. INTRODUCTION

The implementation of effective bycatch mitigation practices is one of four goals within the New Zealand NPOA-Seabirds 2020. Part of the NPOA is focused on ensuring all New Zealand commercial fishers are using practices that best avoid the risk of seabird bycatch. A set of mitigation standards have been developed by government that define best practice, and for the surface longline fishery, the standard matches ACAP's Best Practice recommendations.

With funding from the NZ Department of Conservation, Southern Seabirds is carrying out social science to better understand what types of initiatives or messaging are most likely to affect fisher behaviour in a way that supports the use of best practice mitigation.

2. APPROACH

The Trust selected the surface longline fishery for this social research, firstly because the fishery overlaps with several species of concern (black petrels and Antipodean albatrosses), and secondly because information from several sources suggests there are barriers to full uptake of the standards amongst some fishers.

This work advances the work of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group by addressing key recommendations SBWG9 Doc 10 Rev 1 in a New Zealand specific context to:

- Review the drivers and barriers of seabird bycatch mitigation uptake
- Consider which are the key drivers and barriers of seabird bycatch mitigation
- Identify mechanisms to promulgate drivers or overcome barriers to seabird bycatch mitigation uptake.

In line with conclusions in SBWG9 Doc 10 Rev 1 the approach undertaken by the Trust is focussed on engaging with fishers in a manner that overcomes any gap between decisions that are made by a management organisation and what happens on the water.

The overall purpose of the research is to help Southern Seabirds understand what could be done, by who and how, to lead fishers to consistently follow the mitigation standards. This research focuses on behaviours and attitudes with regards to New Zealand's mitigation standards 2.1 and 2.2, which aim to achieve the desired outcome of "Seabirds are not able to access baited hooks during setting". These two mitigation standards are listed below from the "Mitigation Standards to Reduce the Incidental Captures of Seabirds in NZ Commercial Fisheries – Surface longline – June 2019" as published by the Department of Conservation and Fisheries NZ (source: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/38018/direct>).

Desired outcome 2: Seabirds are not able to access baited hooks during setting	
Mitigation standards 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 are necessary to achieve desired outcome 2.	
Mitigation standard 2.1:	A tori line effective at deterring birds from accessing baited hooks is deployed throughout setting unless a hook shielding device is used.
Mitigation standard 2.2:	Hooks are either protected by a hook shielding device or are set at night and are weighted in accordance with ACAP minimum standards. ⁶
Mitigation standard 2.3:	Bait state (such as whether it is frozen) does not reduce the sink rate.

The Trust is approaching this research in two stages. Firstly, we have engaged with experts in the field of social science to design an approach. A group of six government social scientists were invited to join a ZOOM call with the Trust, to share their experiences from similar programmes they had been involved in, and to provide advice on how to approach our research. We are currently in the second stage and are implementing the designed approach, which involves contracting a science researcher to carry out in-depth hour-long ZOOM interviews with fishers. Fishers have been reassured that their interview will be kept confidential by the social researcher and that their opinions and experiences will be summarised in an anonymous format in the report. A small financial incentive is being offered to encourage participation – either for the fisher to keep or for the fishers’ favourite charity. This offer has been appreciated by the participants.

The Trust provided detailed briefing notes to the social researcher, so that she was able to converse with the fishers and understand the fishing and mitigation terms used during the interview.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives are to understand:

Current knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour:

1. What do fishers know about best practice mitigation (including knowledge of the mitigation standards, their specs, when they apply)?
2. How did fishers learn what they know about best practice mitigation, including mitigation standards?
3. How likely is it that fishers fully follow the mitigation standards?

Motivations and barriers to uptake of mitigation standards:

4. Where relevant, what are the stated and underlying reasons why fishers don’t fully follow the mitigation standards and what is the relative weighting of the reasons
5. Why would fishers choose to follow the mitigation standards and what else would motivate them to do so?
6. Where (or from whom) do fishers get their knowledge of how to fish, and of fishing gear?
7. What has convinced them to try new fishing gear in the past?
8. Would performance or social norm related information sourced from their peers motivate them to alter the mitigation measures they use?

Steps that might encourage compliance with regs and standards:

9. Who have been shown to be the most effective people or organisations in changing how fishers carry out their fishing operations? Who are the worst?
10. What type of messaging/information/statistics would encourage fishers to follow mitigation standards?
11. How do fishers prefer to consume information – what channels or types of resources are likely to be most effective? What makes some communications better than others?
12. What type of creative approach or messages would encourage fishers to follow the mitigation standards?

4. STATUS OF PROJECT

All fishers contacted to date have been happy to participate, and those that have been interviewed have been open and forthright in their interviews. Several interviews are still to be completed at the time of writing. The results, and learnings from this process will be provided to ACAP once the report has been finalised.