

 <p>Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Eighth Meeting of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Wellington, New Zealand, 4 – 6 September 2017</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Elevating the status of branch line weighting in ACAP’s best practice advice for reducing the impact of pelagic longlines on seabirds</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Nigel Brothers, Jonathon HS Barrington</i></p>
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SUMMARY

ACAP has established best practice advice for reducing the impact of pelagic longlines on seabirds and recommends, among other things, that three best practice measures: branch line weighting, night setting and bird scaring lines, are applied simultaneously. Advocacy by ACAP within relevant regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) continues to encourage adoption of binding conservation and management measures implementing these best practices. The preponderance of relevant RFMOs only require longline fishing vessels to employ at most two of the three best practice measures. Recognising that ACAP considers it is important to enhance the priority accorded to branch line weighting, this paper considers the current best practice advice for mitigating seabird bycatch in pelagic longline fisheries, and advocates that the advice be updated to elevate the status of branch line weighting in circumstances where only a limited number of best practice measures are employed.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That SBWG agrees to recommend that the best practice advice for reducing the impact of pelagic longlines on seabirds be updated to elevate the status of branch line weighting in circumstances where only a limited number of ACAP’s best practice measures are employed.

1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

1. ACAP has established best practice advice for reducing the impact of pelagic longlines on seabirds and recommends, among other things, that three best practice measures: branch line weighting, night setting and bird scaring lines, are applied simultaneously (ACAP, 2016).

2. Advocacy by ACAP within relevant regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) continues to encourage adoption of binding conservation and management measures implementing these best practices. However, the three best practices have not been adopted by RFMOs where pelagic longline fishing occurs. The preponderance of relevant RFMOs only require longline fishing vessels to employ at least two of the three best practice measures, see:

- a. Indian Ocean Tuna Commission: Resolution 12/06 — On reducing the incidental bycatch of seabirds in longline fisheries (applies in the Convention area south of the parallel of 25° South).
- b. Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission: Conservation and Management Measure 2015-03 — Conservation and management measure to mitigate the impact of fishing for highly migratory fish stocks on seabirds (different requirements apply in the Convention area north of the parallel of 23° North, and south of the parallel of 30° South).
- c. International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas: Recommendation 07-07 — Recommendation by ICCAT on reducing incidental by-catch of seabirds in longline fisheries (applies in the Convention area between the parallel of 20° South and the parallel of 25° South), and Supplemental Recommendation 11-09 Supplemental recommendation by ICCAT on reducing incidental bycatch of seabirds in ICCAT longline fisheries (applies in the Convention area south of the parallel of 25° South).
- d. Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission: Resolution C-11-02 — Resolution to mitigate the impact on seabirds of fishing for species covered by the IATTC (applies in the Convention area north of the parallel of 23° North, and south of the parallel of 30° South).
- e. Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna: use of tori poles is required in all longline southern bluefin tuna fisheries south of the parallel of 30° South.

3. Implementation of ACAP's best practice recommendations for pelagic longline fisheries will require advocacy by ACAP into the future. Meanwhile, the dominant model adopted by RFMOs remains focused on providing fishing operators with a choice to employ two out of the three recommended best practice measures. However, it has been wrongly presumed that the various combinations from among the three best practice measures are able to achieve an equivalent mitigation outcome to the simultaneous use of the three best practice measures. These combinations are as follows: branch line weighting and night setting, branch line weighting and bird scaring lines, night setting and bird scaring lines.

4. ACAP considers it is important to enhance the priority accorded to branch line weighting within the three best practice measures, providing that certain pre-conditions can be met, among other things, that the branch line weighting regime is adequately specified, safety issues are adequately addressed, and issues concerning application to artisanal fisheries are considered (ACAP 2016). There is growing evidence in support of this prioritisation indicating that best practice branch line weighting in pelagic longline fisheries:

- a. is adequately specified (ACAP, 2016)

- b. ensures baited hooks sink quickly with minimal lag (Robertson et al., 2010a; Robertson et al., 2010b; Robertson et al., 2013, Robertson & Candy, 2014; Barrington et al., 2016)
- c. promotes compliance, by facilitating inspection by independent observers at-sea, and in port, which is otherwise problematic for night setting and use of bird scaring lines (Robertson, 2013; Robertson 2014)
- d. has no negative effects on target species catch rates (Gianuca et al., 2011; Gianuca et al. 2013; Jiménez et al., 2013; Robertson et al., 2013; dos Santos et al., 2016), and
- e. improves crew safety, where sliding weights are employed (Robertson et al., 2013; McCormack & Rawlinson, 2016), and where line hauling occurs at an angle to the direction of any potential recoil events
- f. recognises the mandatory use of branch line weighting that has occurred in certain pelagic longline fisheries over considerable periods with the safety issues managed within the range of hazards arising during fishing operations (see e.g. the Hawaii Longline Fishery where over 40 million hooks are deployed annually across over 100 fishing vessels).

5. The use of two out of the three best practices may not lead to consistent mitigation outcomes in pelagic longline fisheries. Employing night setting and bird scaring lines is less effective than using branch line weighting and night setting or branch line weighting and bird scaring lines. It is difficult, if not impracticable to ensure the effective deployment of bird scaring lines in darkness, and compliance may not be fully ascertained. In any circumstance where setting is likely to continue beyond the coming nautical dawn there will be a requirement to use branch line weighting. There is a risk in unmonitored fisheries that bird scaring lines will be deployed ineffectively, and that night setting restrictions will not be adhered to rigorously. In contrast, branch line weighting is more readily employed in a consistent manner, and less likely to be subject to misapplication.

6. Achievement of consistent mitigation options is also affected by the requirements of RFMOs. Distinct from ACAP's best practice advice for reducing the impact of pelagic longlines on seabirds, the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (see Resolution C-11-02) and Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (see Conservation and Management Measure 2015-03) provide fishing operators with other options concerning seabird bycatch mitigation technologies and techniques in the pelagic longline fisheries including the following: side setting, blue-dyed bait, deep-setting line shooter, underwater setting chute, and management of offal discharge. There are, as a consequence, increased permutations and combinations of mitigation technologies and techniques — with seabird bycatch mitigation approaches able to be employed in the relevant pelagic longline fisheries outside those recommended by ACAP that leads to inconsistent mitigation outcomes.

7. There is value in ACAP adopting a strategic approach in its advocacy of best practice for reducing the impact of pelagic longlines on seabirds. ACAP's best practice advice continues to be influential within RFMOs in establishing and refining binding conservation measures concerning seabirds. It is unclear however, whether RFMOs will fully implement the three best practice measures, given the political, economic and other considerations affecting decision-making within RFMOs. In recognising such constraints, there is value in

ACAP including in its best practice advice specific information relevant to the current mitigation options used by the preponderance of RFMOs.

8. ACAP already advises that branch line weighting improves the effectiveness of other mitigation methods, such as night setting and bird scaring lines, in reducing seabird bycatch (ACAP, 2016). Taken with ACAP's view that it is important to enhance the priority accorded to branch line weighting, it is appropriate to recommend that branch line weighting should be mandatory in circumstances where only a limited number of ACAP's best practice measures are employed.

2. PROPOSED AMMENDMENTS

9. The existing best practice advice for reducing the impact of pelagic longlines on seabirds is proposed to be amended. The existing advice already indicates the importance of enhancing the priority accorded to branch line weighting. This now should become the cornerstone of the best practice advice, through the inclusion of additional text in the best practice advice indicating that branch line weighting should be mandatory in circumstances where only a limited number of ACAP's best practice measures are employed.

10. The text below (in red) is suggested as an addition to the existing text (in black) taken from page 3 of the summary advice, under the sub-heading 'best practice measures'.

ACAP recommends that the most effective way to reduce seabird bycatch in pelagic longline fisheries is to use the following **three best practice mitigation measures** (branch line weighting, night setting and bird scaring lines) **simultaneously**. **ACAP recommends that pelagic longline fisheries choosing to employ certain combinations of measures rather than fully implementing best practice be required to use branch line weighting as one of the measures. ACAP considers that any combination of measures where branch line weighting is not a requirement does not adequately contribute to reducing the impact of pelagic longlines on seabirds.**

11. Similar wording to the above should now be also included in each specific section dealing with mitigation type in the best practice advice.

3. REFERENCES

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