



Inshore fleet moves forward with new mitigation programme

Fisheries Inshore New Zealand Limited (FINZ) is implementing a fleet-wide programme to reduce the sector's impact on protected species.

The programme will set up vessel-specific operational procedures to lessen risk for protected marine life.

Created in conjunction with the Ministry for Primary Industries and Department of Conservation, the plan will also help change perceptions the sector isn't doing enough to help marine life.

The programme is already underway in the inshore trawl and setnet fleets along the Canterbury, Otago and Southland coast.

FINZ chief executive Dr Jeremy Helson said the vast majority of the fleet already operated mitigation measures.

"We will on occasions unavoidably capture some animals and cause harmful injuries," Helson said.

"It's appropriate as users of the common space that we recognise our impacts and reduce them to the feasible minimum. It is also in our best interests to demonstrate to New Zealand and the world that we value those animals, seek to minimise our impact and are willing to be held accountable for our performance."

The plans will be written by operators with the assistance of liaison officers contracted to DOC and will be retained on vessels and used to train new crew,

and as a reminder of how the vessel will operate its measures during fishing activities.

"As the programme evolves we will use that experience and new technology to improve our mitigation measures to reduce further the risk to marine animals," Helson said.

Along with their legal reporting requirements, the programme will put in place additional processes if captures occur.

"If a vessel exceeds the capture incident triggers, the skipper will contact their liaison officer who would if circumstances warrant review aspects of the vessel specific plan with the operator and fisher with a view to helping to identify any improvements that could be made," he said.

"On an annual basis at least, industry, MPI and DOC would review the overall performance for the fleets. This would consider the triggers reported, the observed and estimated levels of captures and the outputs of risk assessments."

The programme will be rolled out through the entire fleet over the next two years.

"The implementation of the programme will not be simple with some 500 vessels to be worked with," Helson said. "But, this is an important step in continuing to reduce our risk to marine life."

The Programme

The programme is voluntary but FINZ expects all vessel owners to participate. The programme outlined parallels that already used successfully in the deepwater and surface long line sectors.

The programme will consist of:

- a set of operational procedures for the mitigation of risk to protected species, one for each fleet or subfleet as operators consider appropriate. These will be prepared in consultation with our operators and interested parties;
- a vessel-specific risk mitigation plan for every vessel, setting out how that vessel will mitigate risks through management of attractants – offal, waste, fish – and how it will mitigate the risk from our gear and fishing activity;
- a set of triggers or notifiable capture events to initiate a review of mitigation measures;
- an auditing of utilisation on the water by monitoring; and
- an auditing of performance by a joint committee of MPI, DOC and industry representatives.

For more information on the programme

www.inshore.co.nz