



**OPERATIONAL PLAN TO MANAGE THE INCIDENTAL CAPTURE OF
NEW ZEALAND SEA LIONS IN THE SOUTHERN SQUID TRAWL
FISHERY (SQU6T)**

2016 – 2017

February 2017

KEY POINTS

- This Operational Plan is effective from 1 October 2016 until 30 September 2017
- The annual fishing-related mortality limit (FRML) is 68
- The strike rate is 5.89%
- The SLED discount rate is 82%
- The effective strike rate for tows that comply with the requirements of this Operational Plan is 1.06%
- The maximum number of tows is 4,700 per year
- Trigger points are in place that, if breached, will result in the Ministry reviewing this Operational Plan

TRIGGERS FOR REVIEW OF THE OPERATIONAL PLAN

Adherence to the trigger points is **vital** as the Ministry will review this Operational Plan before 30 September 2017 if **any** of the following trigger points are breached. The nature of any review that the Ministry undertakes will be tailored to respond to the nature and severity of that breach.

- More than 15 sea lion mortalities are observed by Ministry Observers in any one SQU6T season (assuming 50% Observer coverage and pro-rated otherwise);
- More than 4,700 tows in any one SQU6T 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 SQU6T is appreciably greater than current information suggests.

PURPOSE OF OPERATIONAL PLAN

This Operational Plan sets out the measures in place in the SQU6T fishery to manage the interaction between squid vessels and sea lions. All industry operators intending to fish in the SQU6T fishery between 1 October 2016 and 30 September 2017 must adhere to these measures.

The measures are in place to give effect to the Minister for Primary Industries' decision, announced on 24 February 2017 on the management of sea lion interactions with the squid fishery in SQU6T. Under section 15(3) of the Fisheries Act 1996 operators are required to provide information relating to the FRML. This Operational Plan sets out the information that is required.

FISHING-RELATED MORTALITY LIMIT (FRML)

The annual FRML for the fishing season from 1 October 2016 until 30 September 2017 is **68**.

ARRANGEMENTS TO MONITOR THE FRML

Strike rate in the absence of an approved SLED

A strike rate is used to monitor vessel performance against the FRML. The strike rate for the fishing season from 1 October 2016 until 30 September 2017 has been set at 5.89%. This means that for every 100 tows undertaken in the SQU6T fishery, 5.89 sea lion mortalities will be counted towards the FRML.

Based on an FRML of 68, a strike rate of 5.89% will permit **1,154** tows in the fishery in 2016-17.

Discount for vessels deploying an approved SLED and complying with reporting requirements

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% and would permit 6,414 tows in the fishery before the FRML is reached. However, based on the trigger points the Minister has set (detailed below in paragraph 18) the maximum number of tows available in the SQU6T fishery under this Operational Plan is **4,700** per year.

Only vessels that deploy an approved SLED are eligible for the discount. SLEDs must be of the Mark 3/13 design with the unique SLED identification number stamped into the frame. The specification for the Mark 3/13 design is in Appendix 1; note that Clause 11 was modified in November 2010 and Clause 7 was modified in January 2012.

Once vessels are operating in SQU6T the discount rate will only apply to tows made by the vessel provided:

- The approved SLED has not been modified during the fishing season.

- Vessel operators notify the Deepwater Group Ltd (DWG) immediately should the SLED become damaged. If the SLED is repaired onboard during the trip the SLED discount will continue to apply but the SLED will be inspected once the vessel returns to port. If the repaired SLED no longer meets the approved specification the discount will retrospectively be removed from all tows made during this trip.

- The SLED continues to meet the specifications during the SQU6T season. Ministry Observers and Fishery Officers will be inspecting SLEDs throughout the season.

- Vessel operators fulfill the 72 hour notification requirements as detailed in the reporting section below.

The SLED must also comply with Regulation 15A of the *Fisheries (Southland and Sub-Antarctic Areas Commercial Fishing) Regulations 1986*. This regulation prescribes a minimum mesh size of 60 mm for any part of the trawl net when fishing within the Sub-Antarctic Fishery Management Area (including the SQU6T fishery).

The Ministry intends to retrospectively remove the discount rate accreditation for all tows where a non-approved SLED or a modified SLED was deployed, or where the reporting requirements have not been met.

Reporting Requirements

Reporting to the Ministry

Vessel operators must provide the Ministry's Observer Programme with 72 hours notice (not including Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays) prior to the vessel leaving port for **each** fishing trip where the vessel intends to operate in SQU6T. This notification must contain the following information:

Name of fishing company.

Name of fishing vessel.

Call sign.

Date and time of notification.

Name of vessel master.

Port of departure.

Expected arrival time in port of departure.

Expected date and time of departure.

Number of approved SLED.

Whether the vessel intends to fish in SQU6T.

Estimated trip duration.

Notification can be provided by faxing the notification form in Appendix 2 to the Ministry's Observer Programme. Emails are also permitted provided the email contains the same information as the notification form.

The purpose of this notification is two-fold:

To give the Ministry's Observer Programme the opportunity to place an Observer onboard the vessel for the upcoming trip.

To enable SLED inspections to be carried out by either a Fishery Officer or an Observer.

Operators of vessels that move from SQU1T to SQU6T during the same trip are still required to notify the Ministry's Observer Programme of their intention to start fishing in SQU6T. Vessel operators are required to give the full 72 hours notification before entering SQU6T. Vessel operators may be requested to return to port to allow placement of an Observer onboard. Vessel operators should also be aware that the SLEDs onboard these vessels will be a priority for inspection when the vessel returns to port.

Within 48 hours of the completion of each fishing trip, the master of the fishing vessel is required to notify the Ministry of any encounter with any marine mammal that results in death or injury. This notification fulfills the reporting requirements under the Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978. The preferred method of notification is via the 'Non-Fish Protected Species Catch Return'. The Ministry also welcomes real time information on sea lion interactions and encourages all vessel operators to report this information to the DWG.

Reporting to DWG

All vessels in the SQU6T fishery must report to the DWG. This information should be returned to the DWG by 5.30pm **every** Monday and Thursday and must include:

Each tow undertaken in the SQU6T fishery.

Whether the tow was observed by a Ministry Observer.

If an approved SLED was deployed during the tow.

If any sea lions were caught during the tow and whether they were released dead or alive.

When 80% of the FRML is reached, vessel operators must report to the DWG on a daily basis. Daily reports must include the information listed in paragraph 16 above. A copy of the reporting form can be found in Appendix 3.

TRIGGER POINTS

The current Operational Plan will apply until 30 September 2017. However, this decision is based on current knowledge and recent good performance of SQU6T operators. The Ministry will review this Operational Plan if **any** of the following trigger points are breached. The nature of any review that the Ministry undertakes will be tailored to respond to the nature and severity of that breach.

Less than 98% of tows undertaken in the SQU6T fishery use a SLED that meets the specifications detailed in this Operational Plan;

Less than 95% of tows undertaken in the SQU6T fishery meet the reporting requirements specified in this Operational Plan;

More than 15 sea lion mortalities are observed by Ministry Observers in any one SQU6T season (assuming 50% Observer coverage and pro-rated otherwise);

More than 4,700 tows in any one SQU6T 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 SQU6T is appreciably greater than current information suggests.

OBSERVER COVERAGE

The Ministry intends to provide a minimum of 50% observer coverage across all tows in the SQU6T fishery. Among other things, Ministry Observers will monitor that:

Each vessel accurately records and reports any New Zealand sea lion captures.

SLEDs are in good working order, have not been modified and are being deployed in the correct manner.

POUND GRIDS

All vessels targeting squid within the SQU6T fishery are encouraged to cover the pound entrance from the trawl deck with a grid that is sufficient to prevent any sea lion from entering the pound. This grid should include a bar spacing of no greater than 23 cm.

NO RETENTION OF SEA LIONS

Should any vessel capture a sea lion, MPI does not require animals to be retained for necropsy purposes (as has been the case in previous years). Any captured sea lion should be conspicuously marked for future identification (should the animal be re-captured) and discarded at sea.

FISHERY CLOSURE PROCESS

The Ministry will work with the DWG to monitor performance against the FRML. Once the FRML is about to be reached the Ministry will advise the Minister who may close the fishery by gazette notice.

Closure of the SQU6T fishery will be undertaken without consultation but the Ministry will work with the DWG to ensure all participants in the fishery are kept updated on levels of fishing activity against the FRML throughout the fishing season.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like further information on the management measures in place for the SQU6T fishery please contact:

Ministry for Primary Industries – Observer Programme

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Wellington

Email: observer@mpi.govt.nz

Fax: 04 819 4775

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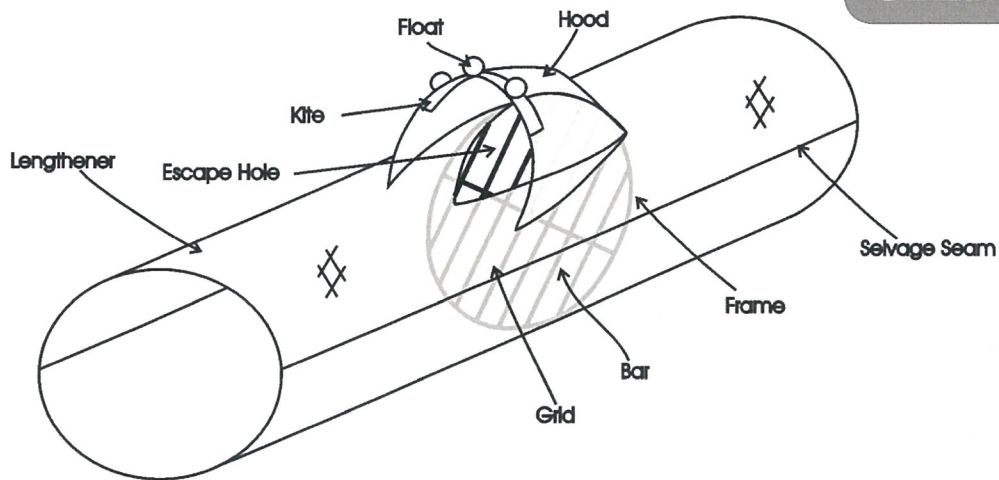
DWG AND MPI SLED SPECIFICATION FOR SQU6T OPERATIONAL PLAN

October 2010 MK 3/13 SLED approved by SLED Working Group September 2009. Clause 11 modified by MFish November 2010; clause 7 modified by MAF January 2012; clause 6 modified by MPI July 2012.

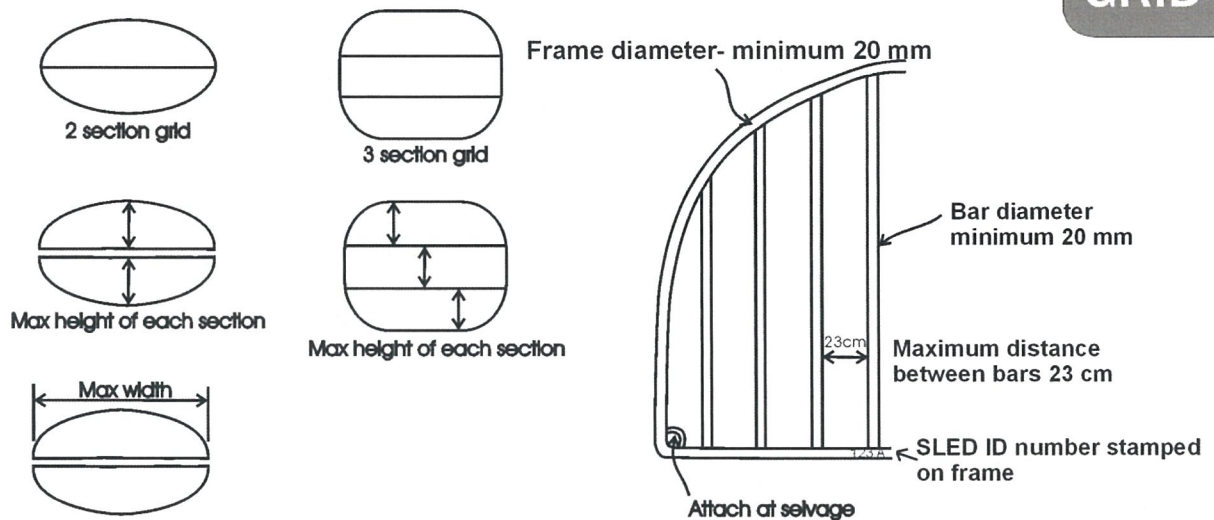
The SLED required for use by all vessels in the SQU6T fishery is an approved type that meets the following criteria:

1. The SLED must consist of a lengthener section of net, with either 2 or 4 seams, containing a 2 or 3 piece grid, hinged horizontally along the middle. The grid must be set in the net at about $45^{\circ} \pm 5^{\circ}$ from the vertical with the top of the grid closest to the cod end section and continuously sewn to the net meshes around its outer edge.
2. The grid must be constructed of minimum 20 mm outside diameter solid stainless steel bar and should be shaped to conform to the working parameters of the net (refer diagram).
3. Vertical grid bars must be evenly spaced at a continuous maximum distance of 23cm between bars (see diagram). There will be no minimum number of bars, provided they are evenly spaced and do not exceed the required maximum spacing. It may be necessary to have the last spacing between the final bar and the grid frame differing from the rest of the spacings provided they are less than 23 cm apart between bars and frame.
4. The escape hole must be triangular and cut into the upper surface of the lengthener section. This hole must be a minimum of 130 cm wide at the base, measured along the top bar of the grid. The apex of the triangle must be a minimum of 150 cm forward of the base (refer diagram).
5. Above the escape hole, a hood-shaped mesh scoop must be attached with its open (leading) end facing into the water-flow and its closed (trailing) end attached and over stretched to the top bar of the grid. The leading edge of the hood must be a minimum of 90 cm high when fully open. The leading edge rope around the mouth of the hood must be a minimum of 320 cm long after attachment of kite and floats. The hood must be a minimum length of 170cm long (refer diagram).
6. The hood must have a semi rigid kite 220 cm long by 32 cm wide (both measurements + 10%; a piece of thick conveyor-belt is ideal) attached under the meshes of the hood. The kite must be attached to the hood by stitching at regular intervals the leading edge of the hood and the leading edge of the kite using a minimum of eight attachment points. The trailing edge of the kite should also be attached to the hood netting. The leading corners of the hood must extend forward of the escape hole.
7. Three floats of between 19 and 30 cm in diameter (a centre hole float is best) must be each attached to the leading edge on the kite. One float must be in the centre of the kite length and the other two equidistant between the centre float each end of the kite (refer diagram).
8. The SLED should be inserted into the trawl (between the body of the trawl and the lengthener) with the escape hole always on the upper surface when the net is fishing.
9. Each SLED grid frame must have a unique registration number, identifying it as a unit, clearly stamped into the frame bar at each end of each hinge section. Deepwater Group Ltd will record each SLED registration number. DWG's register of SLED numbers must be provided to MPI on an annual basis before fishing commences.
10. Depending on the net for which the SLED is built, there are elements of the SLED configuration that may vary, including: the presence or absence of floats attached to the outside of the grid or back of the kite, the shape, width and height of the grid, the number of vertical bars in the grid, the number of meshes in the hood and the number and size of meshes in the lengthener section.
11. No extra panels or mesh material may be fitted inside the net or lengthener before the SLED. Additional floats may be fitted outside the lengthener to the top of the grid frame. Floats may also be fitted inside the lengthener behind the grid or frame but NOT in front of the grid.
12. Alterations are not to be made to the design outside of this specification. For new builds or major repairs contact Motueka Nets Ltd or Hampidjan NZ Ltd.

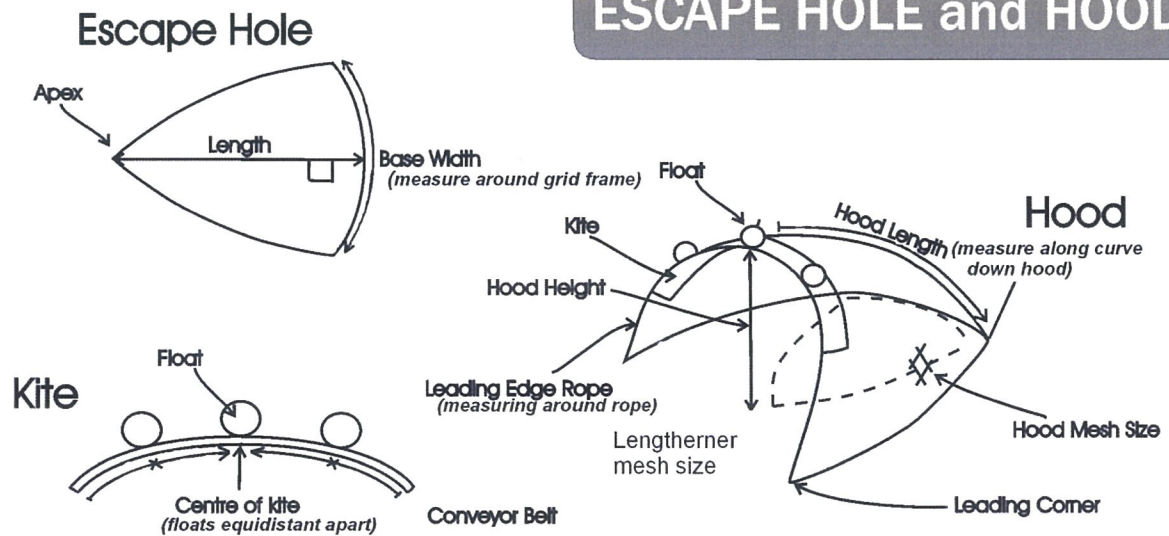
SLED TERMS



GRID



ESCAPE HOLE and HOOD



72-HOUR NOTIFICATION OF PORT CALL OR PORT DEPARTURE FOR ANY VESSEL THAT HAS FISHED/OR INTENDS TO FISH IN SQU6T

Name of Vessel	
Name of Fishing Company	
Call sign	
Date of Notification (day-month)	
Time of notification (hours)	
Name of vessel master	
Name of port of departure	
Arrival time in port of departure	
Number of approved SLED	
Expected departure date	
Expected departure time	
Intend to fish in SQU6T Yes/No	
Estimated duration of trip (days)	

Signature of Vessel Master or Company Representative

Sign:

Please FAX/email this completed form to the Ministry's Observer Programme.

Fax Number: 04 819 4775

Email: observer@mpi.govt.nz

Completed forms must be received no later than 72 hours (not including Saturdays, Sundays and holidays) prior to the vessel departing from the notified port of departure.

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