OPERATIONAL PLAN TO MANAGE THE INCIDENTAL CAPTURE OF NEW ZEALAND SEA LIONS IN THE SQUID (SQU6T) TRAWL FISHERY FOR THE 2009-10 FISHING YEAR

December 2009

PURPOSE OF OPERATIONAL PLAN

1 This Operational Plan sets out the management 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 during the 2009-10 fishing season, must adhere to these measures.

2 The key elements of the Operational Plan are as follows:

a) A fishing-related mortality limit (FRML) of 76 sea lions.

b) A pre-determined strike rate of 5.65% will be used to estimate the total number of sea lion mortalities against the FRML.

c) Vessel operators have an opportunity to receive a discount of 35% on the predetermined strike rate by deploying an approved sea lion exclusion device (SLED). This discount will provide a strike rate of 3.67%

d) Monitoring and reporting requirements to support the FRML and discount rate.

e) Closure procedures in the event the FRML is reached.

3 These monitoring requirements are in place to give effect to the Minister of Fisheries decision of 16 December 2009 on the management of sea lion interaction 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.

4 Specific details of the Operational Plan are provided below.

FISHING-RELATED MORTALITY LIMIT (FRML) FOR THE 2009-10 SEASON

5 The FRML for the 2009-10 fishing season has been set at **76**.

ARRANGEMENTS TO MONITOR THE 2009-10 FRML

Strike rate in the absence of an approved SLED

6 A strike rate is used to monitor vessel performance against the FRML. The strike rate for the 2009-10 season has been set at 5.65%. This means that for every 100 tows undertaken in the SQU6T fishery, 5.65 sea lion mortalities will be counted towards the FRML.

7 Based on an FRML of 76, a strike rate of 5.65% will permit **1,345** tows in the fishery.

Discount factor for vessels deploying an approved SLED

8 Vessel operators can receive a 35% discount on the strike rate by deploying an approved SLED during all tows made in the SQU6T fishery. This discount factor will reduce

the strike rate from 5.65% to 3.67% and will permit **2,069** tows in the fishery, before the FRML is reached, provided all operators deploy approved SLEDs appropriately and comply with the Observer notification requirements.

9 Only vessels that deploy an approved SLED are eligible for the discount rate. 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.

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

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

b) Vessel operators notify the DWG immediately should the SLED become damaged. If the SLED is repaired onboard during the trip the discount factor 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 factor will retrospectively be removed from all tows made during this trip.

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

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

11 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 60mm, for any part of the trawl net when fishing within the Sub-Antarctic Fishery Management Area (including the SQU6T fishery).

12 MFish 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

MFish reporting

13 Vessel operators must provide the MFish Observer Programme with 72 hours notice (not including Saturdays, Sundays and 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:

i) Name of fishing company

ii) Name of fishing vessel

iii) Call sign

iv) Date and time of notification

v) Name of vessel master

vi) Port of departure

vii) Expected arrival time in port of departure

viii) Expected date and time of departure

ix) Number of approved SLED

x) Whether the vessel intending to fish in SQU6T

xi) Estimated trip duration.

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

15 The purpose of this notification is two-fold:

a) To give the MFish Observer Programme the opportunity to place an Observer onboard the vessel for the upcoming trip.

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

16 Operators of vessels which move from SQU1T to SQU6T during the same trip are still required to notify the MFish 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.

17 Within 48 hours of the completion of each fishing trip, the master of the fishing vessel is required to notify MFish 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' form. MFish also welcomes real time information on sea lion interactions and encourages all vessel operators to report this information to DWG.

18 MFish also requests that vessel masters retain onboard, if practicable, any sea lions that have died so that they can be returned for necropsy. DWG will work with MFish and vessel operators to ensure vessel masters have the appropriate storage bags, Department of Conservation permit requirements and dispatch instructions to achieve this.

DWG reporting

19 All vessels in the SQU6T fishery must report to the DWG. A copy of the reporting form can be found in Appendix 3. Completed forms should be returned to the DWG by 5.30pm **every** Monday and Thursday. The information reported must include:

i) Each tow undertaken in the SQU6T fishery

ii) Whether the tow was observed by a MFish Observer

iii) If an approved SLED was deployed during the tow

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

20 When 70% 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 19 above.

Observer Coverage

21 MFish intends to provide a minimum of 30% observer coverage across all tows in the SQU6T fishery in the 2009-10 season. MFish Observers will monitor that:

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

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

Pound Grids

22 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.

FISHERY CLOSURE PROCESS

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

24 Closure of the SQU6T fishery will be undertaken without consultation but MFish 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

25 If you would like further information on the management measures in place for the SQU6T fishery for the 2009-10 season please contact:

MFish Observer Program
PO Box 1020
Wellington
Email: observer@fish.govt.nz
Fax: 04 819 4775
Phone: 04 819 4762

MFish Deepwater Team
Aoife Martin
Email: Aoife.Martin@fish.govt.nz
Phone: (04) 819 4675

Jeremy Helson
Email: Jeremy.Helson@fish.govt.nz
Email: (04) 819 4643

Ministry of Fisheries
PO Box 1020
Wellington
Tel 04 470 2600

Richard Wells
Deepwater Group Ltd
PO Box 1460
Nelson
Tel 03 545 7020
Mobile: 021 457 123

Aoife Martin
Manager Deepwater Fisheries
Ministry of Fisheries

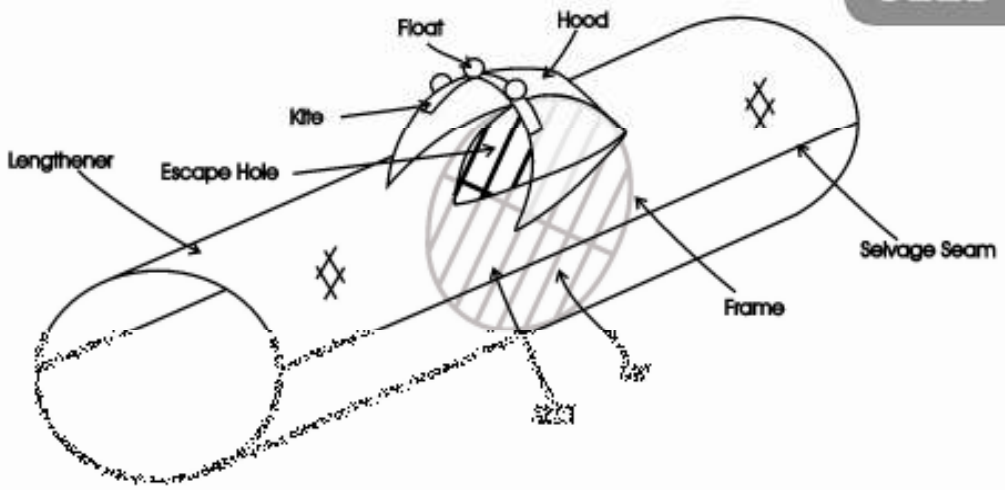
DWG AND MFISH SLED SPECIFICATION FOR SQU6T 2010 OPERATIONAL PLAN

October 2009 MK **3/13 SLED approved by SLED WG September 2009**

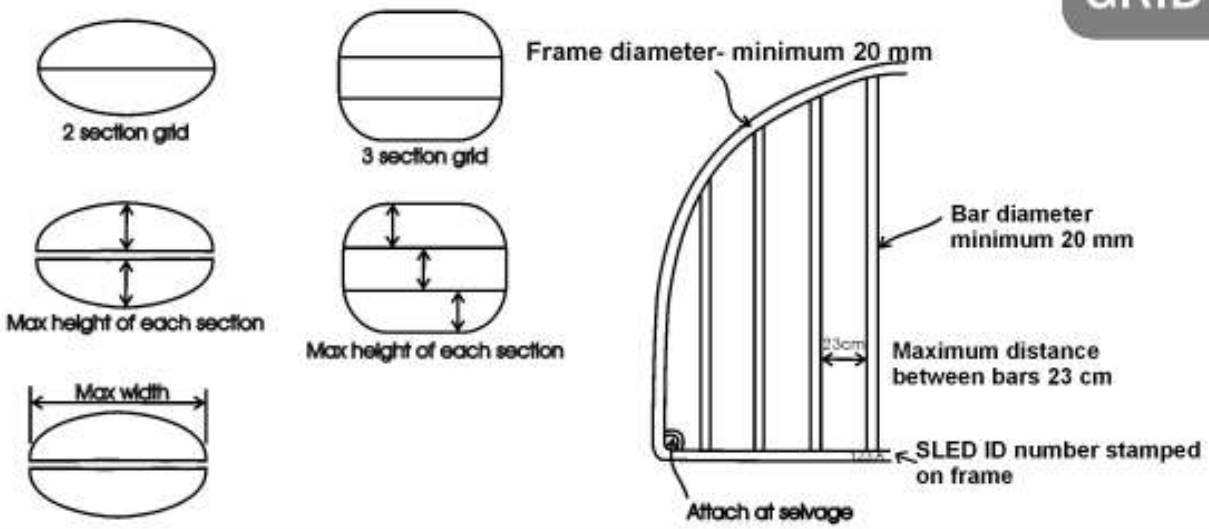
The SLED required for use by all vessels in the SQU6T fishery is an approved type that meets the following criteria:

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° ± 5° 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 leading edge of the kite must be continuously stitched to the leading edge of the hood and the trailing edge also attached to the hood netting. The leading corners of the hood must extend forward of the escape hole.
7. Three floats of between 20 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 MFish 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 before the SLED. Additional floats may be fitted inside the lengthener behind the grid or frame but NOT in front of the grid or to the top grid frame outside the lengthener.
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.

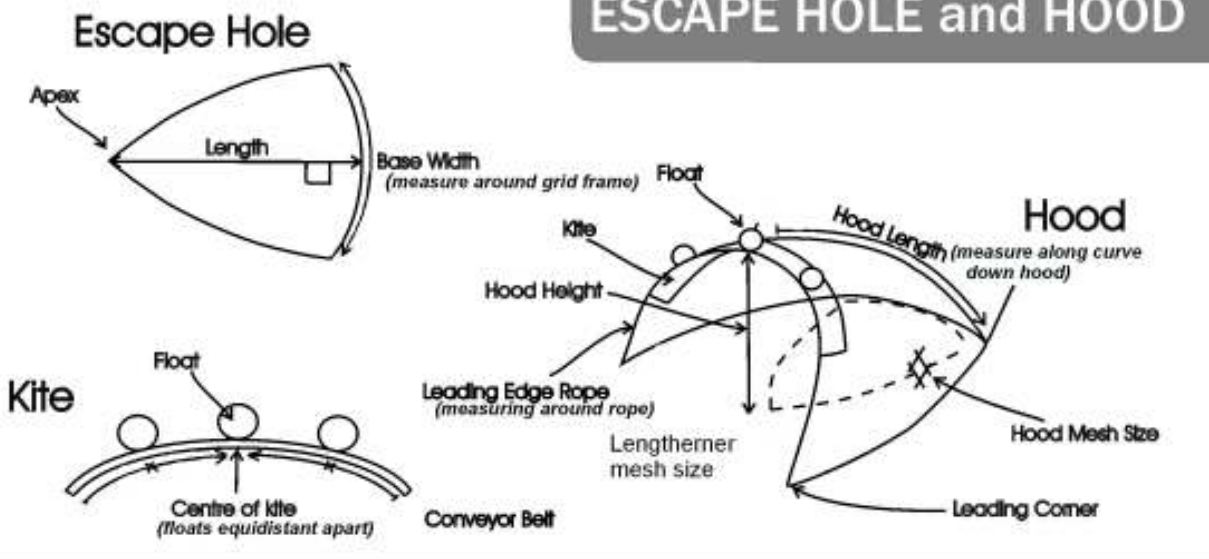
SLED TERMS



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 MFish Observer Programme.
Fax Number: 04 819 4775;
Email: observer@fish.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.

Deepwater Group Ltd Reporting Form

[illegible]

Fax to: Deepwater Group Limited, Nelson, Fax 03 545 7021	Vessel		
By 5:30 PM every Monday and Thursday OR daily if requested	Call sign		
	Person Completing Form		

Date

Tow Number	Area	MFish observer present?	Independent/Co. observer present?	SLED used?	Cover net tied down?	Number of sealions caught?	Status of sealions caught?	Location of sealion?	Sealions captured on warp?	Sealions captured in net?	Type of mitigation used?
Start of fishing	[illegible]	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Number	Alive/Dead	[illegible]	Number	Number	[illegible]
1											
2											
3											
4											
5											
6											

Date

Tow Number	Area	MFish observer present?	Independent/Co. observer present?	SLED used?	Cover net tied down?	Number of sealions caught?	Status of sealions caught?	Location of sealion?	Sealions captured on warp?	Sealions captured in net?	Type of mitigation used?
Start of fishing	[illegible]	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Number	Alive/Dead	[illegible]	Number	Number	[illegible]
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Date

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Start of fishing	[illegible]	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Number	Alive/Dead	[illegible]	Number	Number	[illegible]
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Seabird Mitigation codes: [illegible]