



Ministry of  
**Fisheries**  
Te Tautiaki | nga tini a Tangaroa

## Bottom Fishery Impact Assessment

Bottom Fishing Activities by New Zealand Vessels Fishing in the High Seas in the SPRFMO Area during 2008 and 2009



## CONTENTS

1.	Introduction .....	1
2.	Description of Proposed Fishing Activities .....	2
2.1	Fishing Methods .....	2
2.1.1	Bottom Trawling Methods .....	2
2.1.2	Bottom Line Fishing Methods .....	7
2.2	Depth Ranges to be Fished.....	9
2.2.1	Bottom Trawling Fishing Depths.....	9
2.2.2	Bottom Line Fishing Depths.....	9
2.3	Target and Likely Bycatch Species .....	10
2.3.1	Bottom Trawling Target Species.....	10
2.3.2	Bottom Line Fishing Target Species.....	11
2.4	Intended Period and Duration of Fishing.....	12
2.4.1	Bottom Trawling Fishing Season .....	12
2.4.2	Bottom Line Fishing Season .....	12
2.5	Effort Indices .....	13
2.5.1	Bottom Trawl Fishing Effort.....	13
2.5.2	Bottom Line Fishing Effort.....	14
2.6	Information on Vessels to be Used .....	15
3.	Mapping and Description of Proposed Fishing Areas .....	16
3.1	Definition of Fishing Areas .....	16
3.2	Data Preparation & Summary .....	17
3.3	Mapping of 'Currently Fished Areas' .....	18
3.4	Effort Stratification of the Bottom Trawl Footprint.....	22
4.	Evaluation of Expected Interaction with VMEs and Ecosystem Impacts .....	24
4.1	Mapping of VMEs in Proposed Fishing Areas.....	24
4.1.1	Distribution of Seamounts in the SPRFMO Area.....	25
4.1.2	Distribution of Seamounts in Relation to the New Zealand Trawl Footprint.....	28
4.2	Ranking of Expected Impacts by Gear Class.....	30
4.3	Evidence of VMEs Within the Trawl Footprint .....	30
5.	Status of the Deepwater Stocks to be Fished .....	33
5.1	Historic Catch and Effort Trends .....	33
5.1.1	Catch and Effort Summaries.....	33
5.2	Stock Assessments or Fishery Surveys .....	38
6.	Information Gathering and Reporting .....	41
6.1	Commercial Catch and Effort Returns.....	41
6.2	Scientific Observer Coverage and Data Collection .....	42
6.3	Implementation of Vessel Monitoring Systems .....	42
6.4	Provision of Data to the SPRFMO Secretariat .....	42
7.	Management and Mitigation Measures .....	44
7.1	Precautionary Closures and the 'Move-On' Rule .....	45
7.1.1	Three-Tier Effort Classification of the New Zealand Trawl Footprint.....	45
7.1.2	Three Tier Management of the New Zealand Trawl Footprint.....	46
7.2	Seabed Topography of Open, Move-On and Closed Footprint Blocks .....	49
7.2.1	Selection of Additional Block Closures .....	50
7.2.2	Topographic Analysis of Open, Move-On and Closed Blocks.....	50
7.2.3	Evaluation of the Representivity of Block Closures .....	51
7.2.4	Limited Availability of Trawlable Area on Seamounts.....	61
7.3	Detection of 'Evidence of VMEs' .....	62
7.3.1	Selection of Taxonomic Groups to Constitute 'Evidence of a VME' .....	62
7.3.2	Threshold Weight Determination .....	62
7.3.3	Rationale for the Proposed VME ID Form .....	66
7.3.4	Incorporating Species Diversity .....	66

7.3.5	Performance of the VME Protocol Using Existing Observer Data.....	66
7.3.6	Comparison with Known Seamounts with Various Invertebrate Densities.....	68
7.3.7	Potential Bias in Identification of Evidence of VMEs .....	68
7.3.8	Analytical Process to Identify Actual Existence of VMEs .....	69
7.4	Operational Measures to Minimise Benthic Effects.....	70
7.5	Review of 2008 Implementation of SPRFMO Management Measures.....	73
7.5.1	Description of 2008 Bottom Trawling Operations .....	73
7.5.2	Conclusions Regarding 2008 Implementation of Management and Mitigation Measures .....	74
8.	Environmental Impact Assessment .....	75
8.1	Identification of Potential Adverse Impacts .....	76
8.1.1	Adverse Impacts on Benthic VMEs .....	76
8.1.2	Over-Exploitation of Low Productivity Deepwater Species.....	78
8.1.3	Incidental Mortality of Deepwater Elasmobranchs .....	80
8.1.4	Loss of Fishing Gear.....	81
8.1.5	Seabird Injuries and Mortalities .....	82
9.	References.....	84
10.	Appendices .....	87
10.1	Appendix A. Details of New Zealand vessels issued with high seas permits during 2008/09. ....	88
10.2	Appendix B. Examples of commercial catch and effort returns and observer data collection forms used to monitor New Zealand high seas fisheries.....	91
10.3	Appendix C. VME Identification Form and associated VME Species Identification Guide implemented on New Zealand high seas bottom trawlers.....	95
10.4	Appendix D. Record of stakeholder consultations held in preparation of this assessment	98

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(Cover photo: Orange roughy swimming over deepwater benthic community dominated by the fragile habitat forming scleractinian coral *Solenosmilia variabilis* covering steep, rocky habitat in the Graveyard Seamount complex on the Chatham Rise. Photographed in 2004 using the RV *Tangaroa* Deep Towed Imaging System. © NIWA and Ministry of Fisheries, New Zealand)

# Bottom Fishery Impact Assessment

## Bottom Fishing Activities by New Zealand Vessels Fishing in the High Seas in the SPRFMO Area in 2008 and 2009

### 1. Introduction

Participants in the negotiations to establish a South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO) have adopted interim conservation and management measures in order to achieve the sustainable management of fish stocks and the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems of the SPRFMO Area<sup>1</sup> (SPRFMO 2007a), pending the entry into force of the SPRFMO Convention. These include specific measures applicable to management and assessment of bottom fisheries.

The main requirements of the SPRFMO interim measures for bottom fisheries are:

- To limit bottom fishing effort or catch to average annual levels over the reference period 2002 - 2006, and to limit fishing to the specific areas fished over that period (as mapped in the joint SPRFMO bottom fishing footprint map).
- To assess whether bottom fishing activities will have significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs), and to implement measures to manage fishing activities to prevent such impacts.
- To specifically implement measures to detect and document encounters with VMEs during fishing operations, and to prevent significant adverse impacts to VMEs known or likely to occur, or encountered during fishing.

New Zealand is committed to implementing these measures. To facilitate implementation, the SPRFMO interim measures have been gazetted under New Zealand law, to give them the legal status of an international arrangement. New Zealand commenced the process to implement these measures shortly after they were gazetted, and progress made with implementation of the measures is summarised in Penney *et al.* (2008).

This document constitutes the New Zealand Bottom Fishery Impact Assessment required by the interim measures, and has been prepared in accordance with the guidelines provided in the SPRFMO Benthic Assessment Framework adopted at the 4<sup>th</sup> SPRFMO meeting, held in Noumea, New Caledonia, in September 2007 (SPRFMO 2007b).

This assessment covers all New Zealand high seas bottom fishing activities within the SPRFMO Area in the interim period from 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2009. New Zealand intends to review this bottom fishery impact assessment in 2010 when it will review its implementation of the interim measures in 2010 more fully. This ties into the provision to open new regions of the SPRFMO Area in 2010 on the basis of an assessment (interim measure paragraph 3).

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<sup>1</sup> The area is under negotiation, but for the purposes of the interim measures and this assessment it is the high seas area south of the Equator, north of the CCAMLR Convention area, east of the SIOFA Convention Area and west of the areas of fisheries jurisdictions of South American States.