

Pelagic longline workshop

6th May 2008
10 am – 3 pm

Mount Ocean Sports Club,
Mt Maunganui

Present:

Wayne MacFarlane	Tuna Fishing Co (Rebecca May)
Arthur Hore	MFish, Auckland
Graeme McGregor	MFish, Auckland
Peter Ballantyne	Solander, NZJT
Gary Levy	Moana Pacific Fisheries
Nathan Walker	MFish, Wellington
Steve Harvey	Hawkes Bay Seafoods (Ocean Wanderer)
David Kreutz	Seanet Australia
Nino D'Esposito	Hawkes Bay Seafoods
Niki McCulloch	Hawkes Bay Seafoods (Ocean Odyssey)
David Macale	Hawkes Bay Seafoods (Ocean Dawn)
Robert Aitken	Gisborne Fisheries (Stromboli)
Steve Haddock	Zambucca Fishing Co
Dave Kellian	Ichi
Paul Brewer	Fiftysouth
Greg Lydon	SeaFIC
Igor Debski	Department of Conservation
Trevor Jensen	Leigh Fisheries
Nikki Hunia	Leigh Fisheries
Julie Palmer	Leigh Fisheries
Gary McAneny	MFish, Tauranga
Dale Coker	Blue Ocean Fish (Pegasus II)
Wayne Kusabs	Oceanic Fishing (Western Leader)
Steve Keeves	Sanford, Tauranga
Stephanie Hill	MFish, Auckland
Steve Hornby	MFish observer services
Shelton Harley	MFish, Wellington

Apologies:

Mike Geros	Max Marine
Stu Morrison	Tasman Tuna
Kerrin Nalder	Nalder Fishing Partnership

1) Introductions and welcome

The high turn out for the meeting was good to see. MFish is proposing regular workshops, probably two times a year in May and October. The meetings would include updates from MFish, and provide a chance for fishers to raise issues of concern.

2) Southern bluefin tuna tagging

MFish is proposing options to put in place a tagging system for southern bluefin tuna. The purpose of the system would be to enable tracking of fish from catching to

market. At the moment, MFish is focussing on trials and discussions to develop a workable system. The intention in the future would be to extend the existing Trade Information Scheme so that it could incorporate information on individual tagged fish, and also so that fish going to domestic markets would be covered. These features would increase the ability to identify legally caught fish, which is very important internationally due to previous concerns about overfishing.

Key components of a scheme that need to be agreed on:

- Timing of implementation (focus at present will be trials, but regulated requirements could be put in place for the next season; approach will be to allow maximum flexibility if details of the scheme need to be altered)
- Type of tag (e.g. cow ear tag; pull-through seal)
- Who would tag fish? (fisher tagging fish at sea is preferred option internationally, but this may present problems for smaller vessels, so LFR another option to consider)
- What information is collected? (balance between achieving objectives of scheme – i.e. collecting info to help positively identify legally caught fish, versus avoiding duplication of what is already recorded)
- Who weighs / measures the fish? When? (suggestion is that LFR supplies actual length/weight, but if fisher is applying tag they might also estimate length/weight)

Questions/comments:

When tagging fresh fish, the neck could break through allowing the tag to slip off.	For this reason a cow ear style tag (which is applied with an applicator) may be more secure.
Would recreational fishing be incorporated into scheme?	It is not New Zealand’s intention to do so although there is Japanese interest in all fishing (including recreational) being covered. MFish is monitoring the developing recreational bluefin fishery.
Will there be market controls so Japan (and other markets) won’t accept untagged fish?	Japan has recently changed its legislation so that it won’t accept southern bluefin that isn’t accompanied by correct Trade Information Scheme Documentation. This has been influential in helping control catches and encouraging countries to cooperate with CCSBT management measures. If a catch tracking scheme is agreed amongst members, market controls would be an important component (so in the future Japan may not accept untagged fish).
Southern bluefin tuna may be misidentified as juvenile Pacific bluefin.	It was suggested this problem could be dealt with by extending the tagging requirement to Pacific bluefin; or allowing tagging to occur at LFRs where they can be more confident of correctly identifying the fish.
Need to make sure the scheme is not duplicating systems already in place. LFRs already record information about individual fish	MFish will work with LFRs on recording and reporting information to ensure double-ups are avoided where possible.

for market purposes, as well as filling out Trade Information Scheme forms. Other fisheries have also done work on tagging that should be drawn on if possible.	
How would tags be managed e.g. what about tag losses?	Tags that went missing would have to be recorded as lost. Those tag numbers would then be marked as null and void, and could not be used even if the tags were found again.
Why can't the Trade Information Scheme document incorporate the required information?	The existing TIS has been agreed amongst members of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna, but New Zealand is working towards agreement on modifications to the form. At present, filling in the TIS is voluntary (although it is a Japanese market requirement). Would also need to consider how its coverage could be expanded to include the domestic market.
Why should tagging occur on board vessels instead of at the LFR?	Tagging on land would require an exemption or an exception to the rule for New Zealand in comparison to what is expected of other countries. If tagging did not occur at sea for large scale longline vessels, there would be a risk of untagged fish transhipped, which would be difficult to monitor. However, it may be possible to argue for different treatment depending on the size of the vessel (i.e. smaller vessels would not have to tag at sea). In general most of those present viewed tagging at the LFR as more practical, although it would be useful to trial both systems. Because catch tracking will be done in conjunction with other countries that fish for SBT, New Zealand will have to balance the requirements of a system that is practical for our fishers, with a system that is sufficiently robust to adequately track global catches.

3) Update on scientific tagging results (southern bluefin, Pacific bluefin)

Shelton Harley gave a presentation on recent research on movements of southern and Pacific bluefin. An article will be published in *Fishing News* in July that will outline key results. The article may also appear in *Seafood* magazine. Shelton indicated that this was the final year of the tagging programme and no further tagging is currently planned. Fishers should consider whether or not they would like further tagging work to occur.

4) Seabird mitigation

- a) safe weights

Igor Debski outlined the results of a recent trial to compare conventional line weighting with safe leads. The report noted improvements in safety for safe leads, but still included recommendations to reduce the risk of injuries associated with weighted snoods. The report can be viewed on the DOC website (<http://www.doc.govt.nz/templates/MultiPageDocumentTOC.aspx?id=46392>).

Some other comments about safe leads:

- As part of the trials (below), Dale Coker has been using safe weights on his vessel, and found them easy to use, safe, and good for seabird mitigation
- cost is still relatively high (prototypes \$2 each, but expected to be around \$1 each in production)
- the rubber perishes, so currently only last around 6 months
- Australian fisheries have been experimenting with use of safe leads over 8 months, with positive results in terms of mitigation and practicality (although similar concerns about the rubber perishing). Only 3 birds were observed caught in the Australian tuna and billfish fishery last year, for an estimated total of 29-31 birds for the whole fleet. Dave will make the results of the trials available.

b) blue dyed bait trials

DOC and MFish are running trials in conjunction with SeaFIC to investigate blue dyed bait as a mitigation measure. The trial involves use of a special permit to allow daylight setting without use of line weighting during experimental treatments. The 3 treatments are: (i) use of unweighted hooks with blue dyed bait; (ii) use of unweighted hooks with undyed bait (control); and (iii) use of weighted hooks with undyed bait. A tori line was used for all sets.

Initial results indicated that birds were soaring but not diving on the blue dyed bait, and also for the weighted hooks. Quite a few birds were diving on the undyed baits, and in the end 4 albatrosses were captured on 'control' hooks. More discussions will now occur about how to continue the experiment in a way that minimises further seabird deaths but still continues to collect information that may strengthen the support for blue dyed bait as a mitigation technique.

Participation of other vessels in the trial would also be welcomed. One suggestion was that if fishers are losing more baits under the 'control' treatment, and therefore decreasing fishing success, this should be compensated in recognition of their participation in the trial.

Other comments on dyed bait:

- it may be important to retain baits, in case birds otherwise get used to the dyed bait and learn to recognise it as food. Unused bait can be dumped at night time.
- use of thawed bait is important, as it doesn't sink as well if still partly frozen
- could other dyed baits in use in the fishery (e.g. red, green, yellow) also be tested? Bait colour could be changed from time to time so birds can't get used to it.

c) Code of practice

Some initial work had been done on a code of practice for surface longline fisheries after the last workshop, with limited response from fishers. The draft COP draws on an existing one that is now a bit out of date. Advantages to having a COP are:

- to strengthen the position of fishers in demonstrating the measures they already have in place to mitigate seabird catch; and
- to provide guidance to new entrants to the fishery

Printed copies of the draft COP will be posted out shortly.

d) Tori line specifications

Some fishers are still concerned the existing tori line specifications are impractical. MFish noted it has tried to revise the specifications to ensure they are effective but practical, and acknowledges this may be an ongoing task. There is provision for approving an alternative design if fishers feel their tori line is effective but doesn't meet the specifications. The main concern appears to be around the length of the line (minimum 150m). For comparison, Western and Central Pacific specifications are for a minimum length of 100m; if the line is less than 150m in length, a towed object must be used to increase the line's aerial extent.

5) Turtle regulations

Graeme outlined the new turtle regulations, as follows:

- Regulations effective from 1 April 2008 will require uninjured sea turtles caught accidentally by commercial fishers, irrespective of fishing method, to be released immediately to the sea.
- Any sea turtle captures must be reported within 48 hours of the arrival of the vessel in port. This is an interim arrangement and will be replaced with new reporting provisions linking to non-fish bycatch and the reporting of all catches generally when amended Fish Reporting Regulations are implemented on 1 October 2008.
- There is no longer any requirement for injured sea turtles caught in nets to be delivered to approved institutions for care, or that dead sea turtles caught in nets be offered to Te Papa.
- Injured or drowning marine turtles must be treated in accordance with standards and specifications issued by the chief executive from time to time. New guidelines for treating drowning, and releasing hooked, sea turtles are proposed from 1 Oct 2008.

Some members of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission continue to have a strong interest in sea turtles, and will likely continue to push for binding measures. For the New Zealand fishery, ensuring survival of any turtles that are caught is probably most important. Dave Kellian and Dave Kreutz described the dehooking gear they use, which has proved useful for a range of species including marlin, sunfish, and sharks as well. However, the cost of the gear is high. DOC is currently in discussions in relation to providing some dehookers for the New Zealand fishery. Dave Kreutz will also supply a set to Arthur.

6) Update on the fisheries plan for large pelagics

Work is underway on a fisheries plan for large pelagic fisheries (including commercial longline fisheries and also recreational gamefisheries). The process provides opportunities for stakeholders to get involved, either directly through the fisheries plan advisory group (members include Dave Kellian and Peter Ballantyne),

or through commenting on work the group is doing. Agendas, meeting notes, and other resources are on the web at <http://fpcs.fish.govt.nz/FishPlanComplex.aspx?ID=27>.

It will be useful for fishers to keep up-to-date with the process, particularly because the plan is likely to address some contentious issues in the fishery.

7) Other business

Deemed value for swordfish

Arthur confirmed that swordfish deemed values will be reviewed before the start of the next fishing year (1 October 2008).

Distribution of information to fishers

Several items that had been sent to fishers did not seem to have been received. MFish will investigate the mailing/email list that has been used to make sure it is up-to-date.

Developing recreational fishery for Pacific and southern bluefin

Fishers were concerned this fishery should be closely monitored and controlled if necessary. Fishers would not like to see a situation in which the country allocation for southern bluefin is increased, but increasing recreational catches limit the ability for commercial catches to expand.

Southern bluefin tuna country allocation

Is New Zealand still on target to have its country allocation increased to 1000t for 2010? New Zealand has had the position in relation to allocations re-confirmed at the last annual meeting, but the Commission operates by consensus and all members will need to agree on the change for it to be implemented. The outcome would be an increase of the TAC to 1000t. The level at which the TACC was set would depend partly on an assessment of the overall status of the fishery. Any increase to the TACC would be prorated amongst quota holders.

Dispensation to land fish outside of New Zealand

MFish was asked if fish taken in NZ waters could be landed overseas. A response on the exact provisions of the Fisheries Act and the process of application was deferred at the meeting but is outlined below.

Section 110 of the Fisheries Act requires that fish taken in NZ fisheries waters is landed in NZ. The Chief Executive may approve the landing of fish outside of NZ and this approval may be subject to conditions. Applications for approvals under s110 may be sent to:

Fisheries Communication Centre
BY FAX to 04 801 5381
BY Email to fcc@fish.govt.nz

Next meeting: proposed for October 2008