

PELAGIC UPDATE



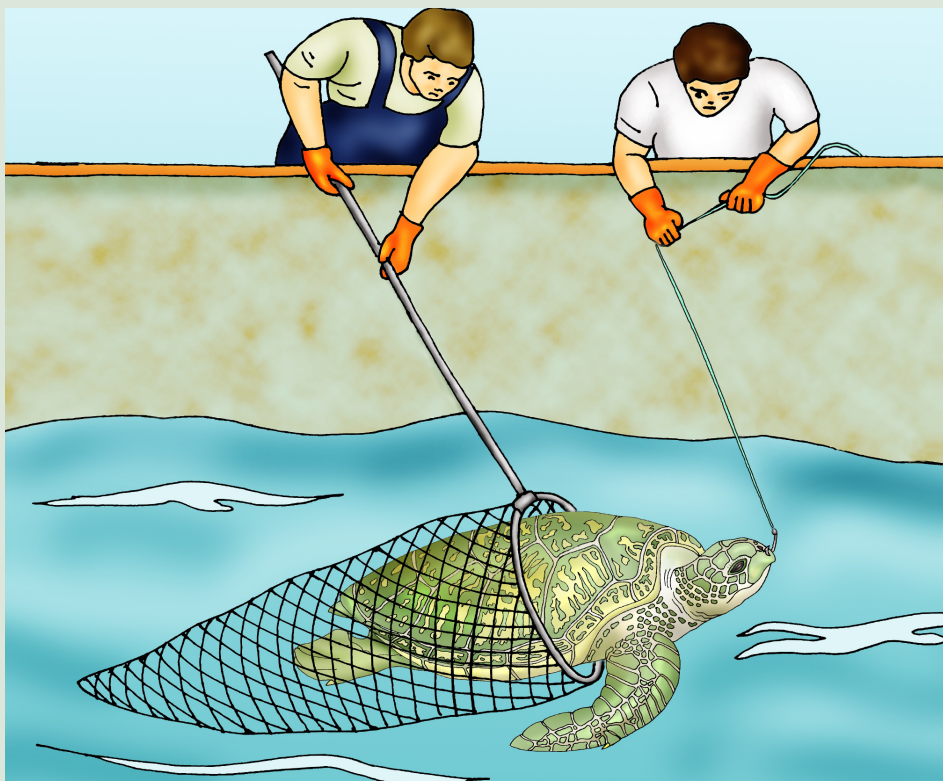
News from the Ministry of Fisheries' highly migratory species team

March 2009

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Turtle mitigation equipment: dehookers



Sea turtles are accidentally hooked or entangled by longliners from time to time

Next pelagic workshop coming up in April

The next chance for pelagic longliners to get together with the Ministry of Fisheries and discuss what's happening in their fishery will be in April.

The meeting will be held Thursday 23rd of April.

Most pelagic longliners have probably already received their set of turtle mitigation equipment, supplied by the Department of Conservation. But if you haven't yet got a set, some are still available.

As a result of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission meeting in December last year, all longline vessels fishing in the convention area have to carry and use line cutters and dehookers to handle and release sea turtles – this is your chance to get the required gear free of charge.

Dehookers are very effective at removing hooks from turtles, but also large fish bycatch (eg, sunfish), as well as seabirds, fur seals etc.

They also save you from losing gear, because hooks can be retrieved safely from animals.

The first trial distribution set of dehookers are free for fishermen.

Sets are worth about \$1,300 and come with a decent sized dip-net, line cutter, two dehookers of different sizes, spare blades, and poles to extend the length and reach of these tools.

The sets come in large sturdy zip-up carry bags to make them easy to get on and move around your vessel.

To get a set of dehookers, please contact Steph Hill at hills@fish.govt.nz or by phone, 09 820 7785.

Catch Documentation Scheme for southern bluefin tuna



A tagged southern bluefin tuna

In October last year, the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna agreed on a Catch Documentation System (CDS) for southern bluefin tuna to be implemented by 1 January 2010.

A feature of the CDS will be that all southern bluefin tuna taken for sale will be required to be tagged and their length and weight recorded.

Documentation will also be required for both domestic and export sales (sample forms are included with this newsletter).

MFish is currently consulting on the regulations to implement the CDS agreement. For more detail, see the [MFish website](#) under hot topics > Review of Regulatory Measures 1 October 2009.

The proposed approach is to have:

- General requirements of the scheme in regulation ie, southern bluefin tuna must be tagged before landing (in most circumstances), fish must be weighed and recorded and,
- Specific details in notices issued by the Chief Executive: ie, type of tag, how fish should be measured etc.

MFish is planning to visit the main ports where southern bluefin tuna is landed, to talk to fishers and fish receivers about the requirements.

Your input will help make the scheme as practical and workable as possible.

Notification about requirements for surface longline fishing

Notification provisions were put in place in the surface longline fishery in 2007, to help get better Observer coverage in this fishery.

Fishers intending to go surface longline fishing have to provide notification at least five days in advance to the Ministry of Fisheries Observer Programme.

The rule helps the Ministry plan Observer coverage of the surface longline fleet.

The most important outcome is for the Observer Programme to know when vessels have entered the surface longline fleet from other fisheries, or if they have left the fleet (ie, started fishing using a different method).

To meet the requirement fishers can provide quarterly fishing plans including the following information:

- Vessel name and registration,
- Skipper's name
- Skipper's contact phone and fax
- Intended area of fishing
- Intended ports of unload
- Expected trip durations.

Albacore tagging project underway on West Coast

An international tagging project is underway to dart tag 3000 albacore off the West Coast, South Island.

The *Genesis* has been chartered to do the tagging.

Tags are either white or yellow, which relates to whether the whole fish should be returned

(white tags) or just the tag (yellow).

For further details see the tagging poster circulated to LFRs where albacore is landed.

Each returned tag could fetch fishers between US\$20 and

US\$100 depending on the type of tag.



Fisheries plan nearing completion

What: Throughout 2008, an advisory group of commercial, recreational, and customary fishers, alongside environmental reps, has been working on a fisheries plan for large pelagic species.

Commercial reps on the group are Dave Kellian, Peter Ballantyne, Doug Loder, John Phillips, and Andrew Bond.

Why: The plan sets out what stakeholders want to achieve from the fishery.

Existing management of the fishery is assessed to see how well it is doing.

This has helped identify areas where more work is needed, or where changes need to be made.

What it means for you: The plan sets out how large tuna, oceanic sharks, and gamefish will be managed over the next five years.

Some key actions are summarised below, but you can also take a look at the plan on the [MFish website](#) under Fisheries Plans > Highly Migratory Species.

What's next: The advisory group that developed the plan thinks it's now at the point where it's ready to be discussed more widely with others who fish for large pelagic species.

Formal consultation with interested stakeholders will occur before the plan is approved by the Minister of Fisheries.

Once approved, the Minister will take the plan into account when he makes certain types of decisions (eg, catch limits).

Key actions proposed in the plan

Ecosystem:

- Setting and monitoring against seabird bycatch limits, including

limits for any particularly vulnerable species.

- Developing and implementing a framework for vessel-specific seabird mitigation (including vessel-specific penalties).

Use and values:

- Actions to improve cost recovery arrangements.
- Review domestic catch limits and other international catch and/or effort controls as required (eg, for southern bluefin tuna – likely 2009).
- Establishing a process to identify and manage any areas of inter-sector conflict as required.
- Action for managing/preventing discarding of dead sharks.
- Monitoring of the Pacific bluefin fishery (ie, charter boat reporting of catches and tag/release info).

Management:

- Discussing with stakeholders and reviewing management of marlin.
- Ensuring the conversion factors in use are accurate and internationally consistent.
- Developing a specific domestic compliance strategy.
- Implementing a catch documentation scheme for southern bluefin tuna, as agreed at CCSBT in October 2008.
- Modifying high seas permit conditions so the shark finning provisions also cover vessels less than 24 m in length.
- Reviewing high seas reporting regulations.

Code of best practice for fishing in New Zealand pelagic longline fisheries

SeaFIC and MFish have been working with fishers on a code of practice for pelagic longline fishing.

Copies were sent out to fishers towards the end of last year. The purpose of the code is to:

- list the mitigation measures that are being used to minimise the accidental capture of protected species (including seabirds)
- outline best practice, and
- provide guidance to new entrants to the fishery.

SeaFIC will be collecting signatories to the code at the next pelagic longline workshop.

For any questions, you can contact Greg Lydon at greg@seafood.co.nz or 04 802 1845.

Changes to high seas permit conditions

MFish will soon be writing to holders of high seas permits to let them know about new conditions required to implement decisions made at the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission meeting in December last year. For more information, see <http://www.wcpfc.int/decisions>.

More information

If you would like more information on any of the items in this newsletter,

please contact Steph Hill: hills@fish.govt.nz or phone 09 820 7785.