



**Meeting:** Conservation Services Programme Research Advisory Group

**Date:** 7 December 2017

**Time:** 13:00 pm – 16:00 pm

**Place:** GO.1 Conservation House, 18-32 Manners St, Wellington.

**Chair:** Kris Ramm

**Attendance:** Jim Roberts, Di Tracey, Krista Hupman, Giacomo Giorli (NIWA), Anton Van Helden (Forest & Bird), Nathan Walker, Jo Lambie, Ben Sharp, Lyndsey Holland, Martin Cryer (MPI), Richard Wells (DWG, FINZ, Resourcewise Ltd), Sharleen Gargiulo (DWG), Amanda Leathers (WWF), Janice Molloy (SSST), Johanna Pierre (JPEC ltd.), Barry Weeber (ECO), Igor Debski, Katie Clemens-Seely, Kris Ramm, Freya Hjørvarsdóttir, Graeme Taylor (DOC).

**Apologies:** David Thompson & Malcolm Francis (NIWA), Tom Clark & Oliver Wilson (FINZ).

## Introduction

KR general reminder of the purpose and scope of the December RAG meeting was presented. ID outlined that the planned routine refresh of the CSP Strategic Statement will be postponed to 2018 in order to reflect developments from other reviews and developments (e.g. NPOA and TMP reviews).

## Update on medium term research plans

ID presented the draft CSP seabird medium term research plan 2017, research progress & gaps.

- There was discussion around the problems with using the risk scores to prioritise species in the plan.  
ID explained the process and how the risk scores were used for initial prioritisation and then these priorities are discussed during RAG meetings.
- There was also discussion around mark-recapture reviews, and how these reviews are set up to assess projects on whether the results and/or methods are sufficient, and if the project should continue in the current state or if there are changes that need to be made.
- The importance of considering the mode of captures and how it needs to be assessed as a risk factor was highlighted.  
ID explained that although this isn't separated in the risk assessment figures used to develop the plan, CSP looks at mode of captures when developing mitigation projects.
- **JM** highlighted that SSST has potential funding for further tracking of juvenile black petrels.
- Discussion around black petrel risk scores for Bluenose and Snapper Bottom Longline fisheries. This continues to be a high priority and should have a higher risk score. It was agreed that this needs further work.
- Discussion around the importance of mode of captures and how it needs to be assessed as a risk factor as well.

Although this isn't separate in the risk assessment, CSP looks at mode of captures when developing mitigation projects.

The need to act on the information that's been collected for mitigation for net captures was highlighted.

KR presented on the CSP protected fish medium term research plan.

- Discussion on how the medium term research plan is connected to the NPOA and how CSP can better feed into the objectives of the national plan.  
MPI and DOC will have a further discussion on the topic.

KCS presented on the draft CSP marine mammal medium term research plan.

- AVH Highlighted that the name of the marine mammal table should be changed and that IUCN threat classification should be included in the table.
- Discussion on including vagrant species in the plan as well.
- The uncertainties around population size and population structure of the species that may or may not be of high risk was highlighted.
- Timeline for comments on the marine mammal plan was extended until the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 2018.

**Presentation on the draft CSP Annual Research Summary 2016/17, status and recommendations of projects.**

- Discussion around observer data and observer data request issues and where they are coming from.
- The possibility of creating a project around improving these processes was highlighted.
- There was a discussion around the basking shark project recommendation and if it was possible to create forms for the fishers on how to collect the necessary data on bycaught basking sharks.
- The issue of retaining small bycaught basking sharks was highlighted, as there is a permit needed.
- Discussion around the importance of comparing what fishers and observers collect/report, and how it could be important information that could feed into the camera monitoring programme.

**Presentation on non-CSP projects**

- There was a discussion around the gaps in marine mammal research, and the need for analysing existing data.
- Lack of research on Bryde's whale population was highlighted, even though it was on the top of the marine mammal plan list.
- Further coral projects through the Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VME) work were highlighted.

**Presentation on preliminary results from the observer programme**

- There was a discussion on how the reporting is done, and if there was a possibility to include further information, such as effort and observer coverage by month.
- It was suggested that more detailed reporting on the observer programme be provided, even if this meant a later reporting date.

**Discussion on research gaps**

- BW There was a project on genetic differences in fur seals a few years ago, was that never followed up?  
KCS That was a part of a PhD that has been finalized. We will look into following up on this.
- DT Would it be a possibility to include in the observer reporting what coral species were caught, in what volume, where and during what season?
- DT There is a need for a more frequent mapping of coral catch than is currently done.
- GT The banding of flesh-footed shearwater chicks should be continued for at least three more years. Re-censuses of key colonies could be conducted alongside this.
- AL Is there a way of looking into what information exists on data deficient marine

- mammals as a start to prioritising these species.
- **NW** Bycatch of flesh-footed shearwaters off Taranaki, might be worth looking into that.
  - **BW** There's a need for more work on net capture mitigation  
**KR** MPI currently has a project on characterising net captures which will then feed into developing mitigation methods.
  - **BW** There's a need to look into live captures and what the reason is for these captures.  
**ID** We currently have a project looking into small vessel longline haul captures which result in a high proportion of live captures. Extending this to other fisheries may be warranted.
  - **AL** We need to find a way to feed all of these recommendations into the camera monitoring project. Could create new opportunities to make improvements to catch reporting etc.
  - **BW** Opportunity to compare observers and IEMRS, for example a project on comparability of IEMRS and observer data?  
**KR** That's a proportion of the current camera trials.  
**NW** The initial results show that the cameras are pushing fishers to report more on captures, whether this continues for another summer is a different question.
  - **JM** There's a need for another camera monitoring trial in a different fishery.
  - **BS** Applying the results of the risk assessment for marine mammals. Population size and population structure of orca is a giant uncertainty, same goes for bottlenose dolphins. We get spatial data sometime next year, but we are still extremely limited by the biological data.
  - **JM** Possibility to set up a final trial/test for the line setter?
  - **LH** Would like to see CSP maintain research in the coral space, especially black coral as genetic population structure estimates really suffer and there might be an opportunity to chip in on other projects.
  - **BW** Development of setnet mitigation methods for penguins.  
**KR** SSST did a characterisation that didn't show a lot of options for setnet mitigation for seabirds. MPI is currently doing a characterisation on setnet fisheries as well.  
**JM** Adding light to the gear seems to be the most promising method which they have started trialling.
  - **AL** Look into bottom trawl gear characterisation on what type of gear is most gentle on benthic habitat and corals.
  - **AL** Look into Precision Seafood Harvesting techniques and if there's a way to look into identifying marine mammal species that enter the net

### Project Proposals/research gaps identified during the RAG.

Further tracking of juvenile black petrels (noting potential SSST project).
Further work on black petrel bycatch in the bluenose and snapper bottom longline fisheries.
To act on the information that's being collected for mitigation of net captures.
The uncertainties around population size and population structure of marine mammals of high risk was highlighted.
Project proposal on improving observer data processes, both with regards to photographs as well as data extracts.

To create forms for fishers that describe how to collect the necessary data on bycaught basking sharks.
Comparison of fishers reporting of bycatch and observer reporting.
Analysis of existing marine mammal acoustic data held by NIWA.
Population size and movement of Bryde's whales.
There is a need for more frequent mapping of coral bycatch and fishing effort than what's currently being done.
Mark-recapture study of flesh-footed shearwaters should be continued annually for at least three more years.
Need to look into what information exist on data deficient marine mammals as a start to priorities research directions on these species.
Estimate population size of flesh-footed shearwater colony off Taranaki, where there has been recent bycatch. Currently a proposed MPI project.
Further investigation into live captures and what the reasons are behind these interactions.
Opportunity to compare observers and IEMRS, for example a project on comparability of IEMRS and observer data. Need for another camera trial in a different fishery.
Population size and structure of orca as well as bottlenose dolphins is a giant uncertainty. We are extremely limited by the lack of biology data.
Final trial/test of the underwater line setter for bottom longline.
Genetic population structure estimates for black corals. Might be an opportunity for leverage of existing projects.
Development of setnet mitigation methods for penguin captures.
Bottom trawl gear characterisation to assess the degree of damage by different types of gear on the benthic habitat.
Investigation into precision seafood harvesting techniques and if there's a way to look into identifying marine mammal species that enter the net.