

# LIAISON PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

MIT2020-02 (2020-21 Fishing Year)



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## Purpose

This is a mid-year progress report for the Liaison Programme, which describes the progress towards delivering actions set out in the 2020-21 CSP Annual Plan<sup>1</sup>. This report covers the start of the 2020-21 fishing year from 01 October 2020 – 28 February 2021.

## Background

In order to effectively reduce the risk of interactions with protected species, it is important for vessels to be using best practice mitigation and to follow steps laid out by both regulatory and non-regulatory measures. With the support of Fisheries Inshore New Zealand (FINZ), the Conservation Services Programme (CSP) Protected Species Liaison Project aims to increase uptake of best practice mitigation for inshore and Highly Migratory Species (HMS) fishing vessels. This is achieved by building one-on-one relationships, providing advice, and educating fishers on protected species information.

The Liaison Programme began in 2014-15 (MIT2014-03) with a focus on surface and bottom longliners. Over the years the programme has expanded to include inshore trawl and set net fleets, with opportunistic engagement in dredging, jig and Danish seine. Annual reports and research summaries for previous years can be found on the DOC-CSP webpage<sup>2</sup>.

A fundamental component of the Liaison Programme is the deployment of Liaison Officers (LOs). Their role (Figure 1) is to support and educate fishers on recommended mitigation strategies and develop vessel-specific Protected Species Risk Management Plans (PSRMPs). LOs also provide a vital interface between skippers, government, and researchers. The programme's Liaison Coordinator manages liaison activities, organises and provides materials, engages with stakeholders, manages data from LO-fisher interactions, and ensures there is follow-up with vessel operators (especially in regard to trigger point events and observer audits).

During this reporting period, the Liaison Programme had four Liaison Officers (LOs): N. Hollands (Northland, Leigh and the Coromandel), B. Leslie (Auckland, Bay of Plenty, Napier and Gisborne), J. Cleal (Wellington region, top of South Island down to Lyttleton as well as Greymouth), and G. Parker (southeast South Island from Timaru down to Bluff). Moving forward, the Liaison Programme plans to increase both liaison effort and LO numbers.

Inter-agency collaboration is critical to the success of the Liaison Programme. Regulatory compliance checks by Fisheries Officers and non-regulatory auditing of PSRMPs by FNZ Fisheries Observers verify the steps that the vessel is taking to meet mitigation measures and serves to highlight areas for improvement. Additionally, the notification of trigger points (notable protected species captures) from fishers and MPI help the Liaison Programme and its LOs work through potential improvements in fishing practices.

The National Plan of Action – Seabirds 2020 outlines a suite of Mitigation Standards that will be implemented for each relevant fishing method and will be reviewed annually by the Seabird Advisory Group (SAG). The Liaison Programme plays a central role in the implementation of these standards

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/conservation/marine-and-coastal/marine-conservation-services/plans/final-csp-annual-plan-2020-21.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/conservation-services-programme/>

through the development of PSRMPs on each vessel. PSRMPs reflect how vessels demonstrate the use of best practice mitigation, and includes actions to reduce or eliminate captures of other protected species taxa (e.g. marine mammals, turtles, sharks and rays) as relevant to the fishery. More information on the NPOA-Seabirds, associated Implementation Plan and supporting documents can be found on the MPI website<sup>3</sup>.

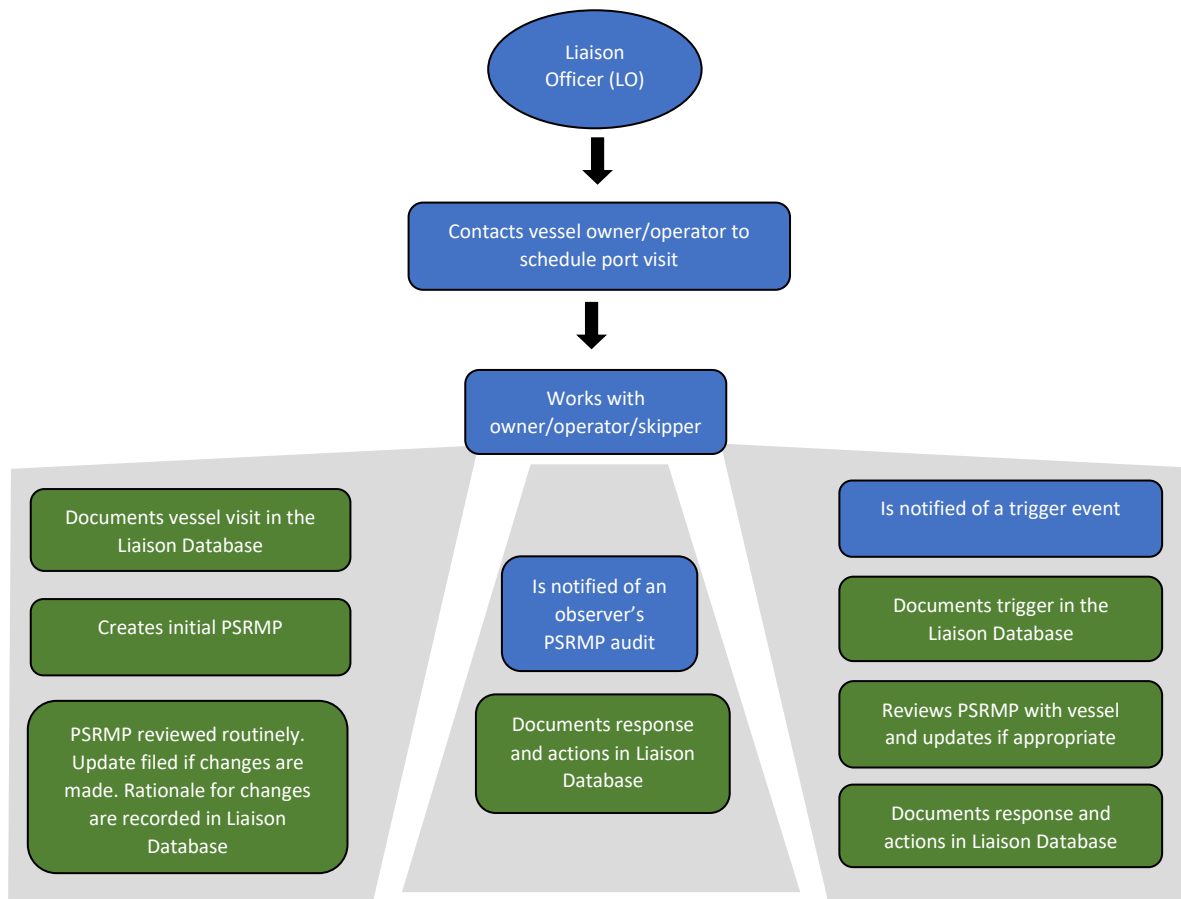


Figure 1: Workflow for Liaison Officers showing documentation completed. Green indicates a stored record.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/fishing-aquaculture/sustainable-fisheries/protecting-marine-life/reducing-deaths-of-seabirds/>

## Programme Summary: 2020-21 Fishing Year

**\*Disclaimer: The numbers and figures included in this report are tentative, as the current fishing year is still in progress.**

### i. Protected Species Risk Management Plans (PSRMPs)

In the first half of the 2020-21 fishing year (from 1 October 2020 to 28 February 2021) the Liaison Programme updated 56 PSRMPs and created 11 new PSRMPs for inshore / Highly Migratory Species (HMS) vessels (Table 1).

*Table 1: Number of Protected Species Risk Management Plans (PSRMPs) by fishing method developed between 1 October 2020- 28 February 2021. Active vessels were included if ≥50% of their fishing effort was spent inshore or HMS (per fishing method).*

	Updated PSRMPs	New PSRMPs	Total active vessels with PSRMPs	Total active vessels without PSRMPs
SLL	4	1	14	0
BLL	14	1	60	13
Trawl	34	5	105	10
Set Net	4	4	23	133
Dredging	0	0	-	-
Jig	0	0	-	-
Danish Seine	0	0	-	-
<b>Total</b>	56	11	199	150

### i. Fisheries Observer Audits

Fisheries Observer audits of vessel practices are essential in monitoring a vessel's progress and determining adherence to their non-regulatory Protected Species Risk Management Plan (PSRMP). A total of 47 PSRMP audits were completed by Observer Services between 1 October 2020- 28 February 2021 and forwarded on to the Liaison Programme. These were comprised of two surface longline audits, 10 bottom longline audits, 26 trawl audits and nine set net audits. None of the surface longline vessels audited were using hook-shielding devices.

*Table 2: Summary of Fisheries New Zealand observer audits and vessel adherence to PSRMPs between 1 October 2020- 28 February 2021. Adherence to a vessel's PSRMP was classified as 'Unknown' if there were blanks or uncertainty in the observer audit.*

	Observed Trips	Number of PSRMP Audits Received	Adherent	Non-adherent	Unknown	% Adherence
SLL	2	2	1	1	0	50%
BLL	10	10	7	1	2	70%
Trawl	26	26	16	6	4	62%
Set net	9	9	6	0	3	67%
<b>Total</b>	47	47	30	10	7	<b>64%</b>

Overall, observer audits confirmed that 64% of observed vessels were following every aspect of their PSRMP. Table 2 gives the percent of adherence in each fleet. The one non-adherent surface longline audit was due to the continuous discharge of used baits during hauling. The one non-adherent bottom longline audit was due to a tori line not being deployed for one set and not meeting proper tori line specifications. The set without a deployed tori line was in darkness and adverse weather conditions, and the tori line streamer spacing was repaired during the trip (after nine sets). Six inshore trawlers were shown to be non-adherent during their observer audit. The most common issue here was not deploying primary warp strike mitigation as per their PSRMP. Additionally, a couple vessels did not control their spotlights and one vessel did not carry the appropriate mitigation documents (*i.e.* PSRMP, Operational Procedures and 10 Golden Rules). No set net vessels were observed as being non-adherent to their PSRMPs.

Additionally, about 15% of observer audit results had to be classified as 'Unknown' because of blanks or observer uncertainty. Observers sometimes had trouble answering questions related to the presence of spare tori lines and parts on board, tori line attachment height, presence of mitigation documentation on board, management of fish waste as per the PSRMP, and determining if there was proper handling and reporting of protected species captures.

## ii. Trigger Point Events

Trigger events were developed as a risk management tool to prompt vessel operators to re-evaluate their mitigation strategies when catching high-risk protected species. They are either reported by observers or self-reported to Liaison Officer's (LOs) and Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) via electronic reporting. Specifics on what constitutes a trigger event are discussed and agreed to by government and stakeholder groups. Trigger points followed up by LOs in the Protected Species Liaison Programme include the following:

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### **Any 24 hr period**

- (Alive or Dead) Any great albatross, penguin, dolphin, sea lion or basking shark
- (Alive or Dead) First turtle of the fishing year (Oct- Sept)
- (Alive or Dead) 3 large (e.g. albatross/mollymawk, giant petrel, gannet), or 5 small (e.g. petrel/shearwater) seabirds, or 2 fur seals
- (Dead) Any black petrel or flesh-footed shearwater

### **Any 7-day period**

- (Alive or Dead) 10 protected seabirds of any type, or 3 turtles, or 5 fur seals
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The Liaison Programme is notified of trigger events by MPI Observer Services or by fishers directly contacting a Liaison Officer. As of December 2020, FNZ began sending data for unobserved self-reported captures to the Liaison Programme on a weekly basis.

Between 01 October 2020 and 28 February 2021, we received 60 triggers from 24 different vessels (Table 3). These were largely comprised of black petrels and flesh-footed shearwaters, however it is

also important to note the high level of turtle captures in the surface longline fishery during the summer months of this fishing year. Only the first turtle capture of the fishing year is classified as a trigger for the Liaison Programme. This is due to the limited mitigation options and advice that Liaison Officers can provide vessel operators in these capture events. Liaison Officers ensure vessels and their crew carry turtle bycatch kits and are familiar with handling and release procedures.

*Table 3: Number of trigger events by fishing method between 1 October 2020- 28 February 2021. Triggers include seabirds, reptiles, marine mammals and protected fish species. (FNZ- Fisheries New Zealand, LP- Liaison Programme)*

	Observed Trigger Events		Unobserved Trigger Events		Totals	
	FNZ reported to LP	Fisher reported to LP	FNZ reported to LP	Fisher reported to LP	Trigger events	Vessels with trigger events
<b>SLL</b>	7	57%	2	50%	9	3
<b>BLL</b>	4	25%	38	71%	42	14
<b>Trawl</b>	2	50%	4	0%	6	6
<b>Set net</b>	2	50%	1	0%	3	2
<b>Total</b>	15	47%	45	62%	60	24

### iii. Liaison Officer Engagement

The Liaison Programme prioritises fleets known to have significant captures and a high spatial overlap with protected species. Furthermore, as of September 2020, the Liaison Programme now incorporates inshore / HMS fishing effort to inform areas of focus for Liaison Officers.

The programme also recognises the need to include protected species capture information and other metrics in this risk rating moving forward. In the future, the programme will look to tailor a risk matrix that can better inform engagement with higher-risk vessels.

*Table 4: Liaison Officer (LO) Contact for inshore/HMS vessels between 1 October 2020- 28 February 2021. Fishing methods have been targeted in the order shown. Over time, and with increased capacity in the programme, there will be more engagement for methods lower down in the table. (data supplied by FNZ RDM)*

Vessels Contacted in the Current (2020-21) Fishing Year			
	Vessels Engaged	Active Vessels Not Engaged	Total Active Vessels
<b>SLL</b>	14	6	14
<b>BLL</b>	28	47	73
<b>Trawl</b>	49	67	115
<b>Set Net</b>	8	149	156
	99	257	349

Table 4 documents Liaison – fisher engagement up through February of the 2020-21 fishing year. While this indicates some of the LO engagement with fishers this year, it is not an exhaustive representation of all the phone calls, emails, texts and face to face time the LOs have invested.

#### iv. Bycatch Mitigation Materials

Since the start of this fishing year, the Liaison Programme has deployed a further 4,500 hook-shielding devices to four different surface longline vessels. This was comprised of two full sets, one batch for top-up, and one small batch for a vessel to trial.

Although interest and requests for hook-shielding devices were relatively high initially, actual implementation was lower than anticipated. Feedback from industry, has led DOC to submit an order for 10m release Hookpods, as opposed to the standard 20m release. With this order of 10,000 Hookpods on the way, DOC hopes to encourage further uptake in the fleet, especially for those that target at shallower fishing depths.

## Further Information

Appendix 1 describes the Liaison Programme project objectives and deliverables cited from the 2020-21 CSP Annual Plan<sup>4</sup>. More information on the Liaison Programme can be found in the most recent (2019-20) annual report<sup>5</sup> and Liaison Programme Manual<sup>6</sup>.

For more information on fleet-specific bycatch mitigation, see the list of current mitigation documents developed in collaboration with FINZ, FNZ and DOC (Appendix 2). These are available on the Fisheries Inshore New Zealand (FINZ) website<sup>7</sup>.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress and developments within the programme over the current fishing year. DOC welcomes any feedback and suggestions to the Liaison Programme through [Liaison@doc.govt.nz](mailto:Liaison@doc.govt.nz).

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/conservation/marine-and-coastal/marine-conservation-services/plans/final-csp-annual-plan-2020-21.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/conservation/marine-and-coastal/marine-conservation-services/reports/final-reports/mit2017-01-liaison-programme-final-annual-report-2019-20.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/conservation-services-programme/other-publications/protected-species-liaison-programme-manual/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.inshore.co.nz/operational-procedures/>



## Appendix 1: MIT2020-02 Liaison Programme Project Description

Conservation Services Programme Annual Plan 2020/21

### 4.3 Protected Species Liaison Project

**Project Code:** MIT2020-02

**Start Date:** 1 July 2020

**Completion Date:** 30 June 2021

**Guiding Objectives:** CSP Objective A; CSP seabird plan 2017; National Plan of Action – Seabirds, National Plan of Action – Sharks.

**Project Objective:**

Grow liaison capacity across inshore fleets around the country including trawl, set net, bottom longline and surface longline fisheries.

**Rationale**

In order to effectively reduce the risk of interactions with protected species, it is important for vessel operators to use best practice mitigation and take all necessary steps, whether they are regulatory or non-regulatory, to avoid interactions. To achieve ongoing reductions in bycatch towards zero, there needs to be consistent use of the most effective mitigation measures currently available, while still encouraging continual improvement through innovation.

It is proposed through the Draft National Plan of Action – Seabirds 2020 that a suite of best practice mitigation standards will be implemented for each fishing method and will be reviewed annually by the Seabird Advisory Group. It is envisaged that the Liaison Project will play a central role in the implementation of these standards through the development of Protected Species Risk Management Plans (PSRMPs) on each vessel.

The purpose of the PSRMPs will change within this next phase, using best practice mitigation measures that the vessel will be implementing to demonstrate their achievement of the relevant mitigation standard, rather than just outlining the vessel's current practices. Auditing of these plans by MPI Fisheries Observers and compliance checks will then verify the steps that the vessel is taking to meet the mitigation measures outlined in the plan and highlight where there is still work to be done. PSRMPs will also cover mitigation actions to reduce or eliminate other protected species taxa (e.g. marine mammals), as relevant to the fishery.

Within the coming years the capacity of the program is expected to grow substantially in size to provide full outreach to all relevant inshore fisheries. The role of the liaison officers will largely remain the same, supporting and educating fishers in best practice mitigation and providing a vital interface between skippers, government, and researchers. The growth of the program will consist of additional Liaison Officers to expand into more fisheries and areas, increased contact with high risk vessels and fleets and development of training plans for crew on protected species and bycatch mitigation. The project will also expand the role of the liaison coordinator to ensure the operational oversight of the program and improve reporting.

Measuring success and constraints in reporting capability have been identified as improvements required in the rollout of this next phase of the project. This will be addressed through database development and standardisation of processes. There will also be increased engagement with quota holders to support the uptake of the plans and mitigation measures.

**Outputs**

1. Database of liaison activity, including PSRMPs developed and updated, vessels visited, trigger responses and mitigation materials and training provided.
2. Creation of a government working group involving DOC and multiple aspects of FNZ

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Conservation Services Programme Annual Plan 2020/21

(Fisheries Management, Compliance and The Observer Programme) to ensure feedback loops and work through challenges within the Liaison Programme.

3. Development of management responses to triggers.
4. Training plans for fishers on mitigation and handling procedures.
5. Quarterly reports back to relevant stakeholders (including industry and eNGO's) detailing progress and any developments which have come from each fleet.
6. Annual reporting will be provided as part of the proposed Seabirds - Annual Research Report.
7. Yearly review of progress and implementation will be conducted through both DOC's CSP Technical Working Group and the Seabird Advisory Group as part of the NPOA - Seabirds.

**Note:** A one-year term is proposed

**Indicative Research Cost:** \$240,000 (Note: it is intended that additional Crown funds from the Biodiversity 2018 budget will also be used to grow liaison outreach into additional fisheries and provide more effort for high risk vessels in order to work towards zero bycatch).

**Cost Recovery:** F(CR) Item 4 (100% Industry)

**Fish stocks:**

Objective/Species	Indicative Cost	Fish Stocks
1. Surface Longline	\$60,000	ALB1, BIG1, STN1, SWO1
2. Bottom Longline	\$60,000	BIG1, BNS1, HPB1, SNA1
3. Inshore Trawl	\$60,000	BAR1, 7, FLA1, GUR1, JDO1, LIN1, 2, RCO3, SNA1, 2, TAR1, 2, 3, TRE1, 7
4. Setnet	\$60,000	SCH3, 5, SPO3, ELE3, 5, MOK3, SPD5

## Appendix 2: Tracking Sheet for Current Bycatch Mitigation Documents

This is a comprehensive list of all the mitigation documents handed out to fishers through the Protected Species Liaison Programme. PDF Documents are downloadable at the FINZ website: (<https://www.inshore.co.nz/operational-procedures/>)

### Surface Longline (SLL)- March 2021

	Version
1. 10 Golden Rules – Small Vessel SLL	2.0
2. 10 Golden Rules for NFPSCR	Sept 2020
3. Small Vessel SLL Operational Procedures	2.1
4. Fisheries Seabird Mitigation Measures - SLL (Circular 2019 and Corrigendum)	2019
5. SLL Tori Line Design Guide	Mar 2021
6. Small Vessel Surface Longline Crew and Vessel Safety Guide	x
7. ACAP Hook Removal from Seabirds Guide	x
8. Turtle Handling and Release and Crew Safety Guide	x
9. Fur Seal Handling and Release and Crew Safety Guide	x
10. MPI Black Petrel Factsheet	Nov 2020
11. MPI Shark Factsheets 1-4	Feb 2020

### Bottom Longline (BLL)- August 2021

	Version
1. 10 Golden Rules – BLL	1.0 July 2020
2. 10 Golden Rules for NFPSCR	Sept 2020
3. Bottle Test Guide	July 2021
4. Bottle Test Record Sheet	2.1 July 2021
5. BLL Operational Procedure- North Island	1.2 Oct 2018
6. BLL Circular	2020
7. BLL Mitigation Standards- hand bait	June 2019
8. Observer Audit Form	x
9. ACAP Hook Removal from Seabirds Guide	x
10. Black Petrel Factsheet	Nov 2020

### Purse Seine- November 2020

	Version
1. 10 Golden Rules – Purse Seine	1.0 Nov 2020
2. 10 Golden Rules for NFPSCR	Sept 2020
3. Purse Seine Operational Procedures	1.0 Nov 2020

### North Island Trawl- August 2021

	Version
1. 10 Golden Rules – Coastal Trawl	Sept 2020
2. 10 Golden Rules for NFPSCR	Sept 2020
3. NI Coastal Trawl Operational Procedures	2.1 Aug 2021
4. <28m Trawl Mitigation Standards	June 2019
5. Observer Audit Form	x
6. Hector's and Maui dolphins TMP Factsheet- North Island	June 2020
7. Seabird Risk Policy Framework	x

### South Island Trawl- November 2020

	Version
1. 10 Golden Rules – Coastal Trawl	Sept 2020
2. 10 Golden Rules for NFPSCR	Sept 2020
3. SI Coastal Trawl Operational Procedures	1.5 Oct 2020
4. Warp Strike Risk and Mitigation + Tier Rating	x
5. Warp Mitigation Options- Design Guide	x
6. <28m Trawl Mitigation Standards	June 2019
7. Observer Audit Form	x
8. Seabird Risk Policy Framework	x

### Set Net- January 2021

	Version
1. 10 Golden Rules – Coastal Setnet	2.1 Sept 2020
2. 10 Golden Rules for NFPSCR	Sept 2020
3. Coastal & Harbour Setnet Operational Procedures	2.0 Sept 2020
4. Observer Audit Form	x
5. Acoustic Pinger Info	x
6. MPI Shark Factsheets 1-4	Feb 2020
7. YEP Factsheet	Nov 2020
8. FINZ Hector's dolphin Factsheet- SI	Dec 2020
9. Hector's and Maui dolphins TMP Factsheet - North Island	June 2020
10. Hector's and Maui dolphins TMP Factsheet - South Island	June 2020
11. Maps of Commercial Setnet restrictions	Dec 2020