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Final Report:

MIT2012 - 05 Protected Species Bycatch Newsletter

Bycatch Bylines

June 2014

Executive summary

Twelve issues of *Bycatch Bylines* have been produced through Conservation Services Programme (CSP) project MIT2012-05 since September 2012. The scope of the newsletter comprises protected species issues relevant to New Zealand commercial fisheries using the trawl, longline, set net, and purse seine fishing methods. Editions have included material covering protected species (seabirds, marine mammals, protected fish, and benthic protected species), bycatch reduction measures, legislative changes relevant to protected species, research on mitigation, and global contexts for these issues. Currently, the newsletter is distributed directly to 996 recipients. This includes 812 fishers who receive the newsletter by email or in hard copy, 16 regional offices of the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) where Fisheries Officers are located, 10 industry associations and Commercial Stakeholder Organisations (CSOs), 145 CSP stakeholders, and 13 other recipients including seafood industry workers and scientists, who have been added to the distribution list on request. In addition, MPI and CSOs are invited to promulgate the newsletters to fishers in their areas, for example, by making them available to office visitors. Finally, the newsletter is available online through the Department of Conservation website. Between 2012 and 2014, nine recipients have updated their delivery details (e.g., when moving house or office) to ensure they continued to receive the newsletter, and eight recipients included in initial distributions have requested removal from the mailing list.

Respondents can submit feedback on the newsletter at any time using an email address provided on each edition. To solicit specific feedback at the end of the project term, a 10-question survey was electronically distributed to 576 recipients including fishers, CSOs and MPI regional offices. Survey responses were received from 3.1% of recipients (16 fishers and two CSOs). Three recipients opted out of the survey and emails delivered to 16 recipients were bounced due to overloaded or discontinued mailboxes. Amongst respondents, 50% said that others they knew read the newsletter. All considered it interesting, at least sometimes. More than half (56%) had accessed a link in the newsletter to find more information about a story. Respondents mostly (78%) deemed bimonthly circulation appropriate. When asked to rank current content from most (1) to least (6) preferred topics, individual responses varied, but newsletter sections scored almost the same when considered across all respondents (summed rank scores: 15 – 17). Comments included that updated information and relevance were the best features of the newsletter, the publication was good overall and didn't require improvement, and that the focus on protected species could be broadened given the scope of issues fishers are dealing with.

Other feedback received during the project included fisher comments on mitigation measures, general support for the newsletter content and style from practitioners working on bycatch, and government fisheries observers advising that the newsletter has been seen on vessels at sea and that it is being read and discussed by fishers. Recommendations for future editions include:

- updating the distribution list to exclude discontinued email accounts;
- confirming whether email recipients would prefer to receive a direct-delivered hard copy;
- confirming the viability of distribution arrangements with CSOs and MPI regional offices;
- liaising with MPI offices individually to seek their views on the content and form of the newsletter;
- considering expanding the scope of the newsletter content; and,
- exploring combining distribution with Seafood New Zealand communications.

Introduction

The management of marine protected species occurs in a dynamic context that involves ongoing developments in legislation, government policies, science, research, and management approaches. Similarly, methods to reduce the incidental capture of protected species in fishing gear are developed continuously. To ensure that captures of marine protected species are minimised, fishers must maintain their knowledge of bycatch avoidance and reduction measures relevant to their fishing method and the species their gear may interact with. Therefore, the process of communicating new developments relevant to reducing marine protected species bycatch with fishers is an ongoing one.

To address this communication challenge, the newsletter entitled *Bycatch Bylines* was developed under Conservation Services Programme project MIT 2012-05. The objective of this project was to prepare and distribute a newsletter on protected species bycatch to commercial fishermen. This report describes the first two years, and 12 issues, of *Bycatch Bylines*. It also presents the results of an online survey that solicited recipients' feedback on the newsletter. Finally, the report includes recommendations for future editions.

The newsletter

The scope of the newsletter includes commercial fisheries using the fishing methods listed below.

- Trawl
- Longline
- Setnet
- Purse seine
- Troll
- Trotline
- Pots and traps
- Minor net methods (inshore drift net, Danish seine, beach seine, ring net)

Given their dominance amongst New Zealand commercial fisheries, most content has addressed the trawl and longline methods in 2012-2014.

A description of the sections of the newsletter follows.

Page One

Banner: This included the newsletter title, issue, and a topical illustration. The illustration in the banner was changed each year of the newsletter's production. An annual change to the banner image balanced brand continuity and freshness of format and could also be used to highlight trending issues through time.

Headline: Named both for the top profile news story and the headline of a trawl net, this section appeared on the front page of the newsletter. It was the main story of the edition, with at least one photo. The Headline section focused on mitigation or a current protected species issue.

Your Voice: Also on the front page, a section entitled 'Your Voice' reported opportunities for fishers to share their views and knowledge relevant to protected species. It also showcased fishers leading

mitigation practice, included responses to questions from readers, and publicised mitigation competitions, awards and funding opportunities.

What's Up?: This section featured short bullet points of current issues and news relating to protected species. Examples of content included highlighting seasonal bycatch risks, new research findings and government initiatives relevant to the newsletter's scope.

Page Two

Word on the Street: This section presented different views on controversial topics relating to protected species interactions with commercial fisheries. It was intended to stimulate discussion amongst fishers, and present views (with rationale) which fishers may not otherwise encounter. Opinions were presented alongside factual information and key references.

Who's Who?: This section was included to personalise the field of protected species bycatch by profiling a leading local or international (with relevance to New Zealand) practitioner. It followed an interview-style question and answer format, with both professional and personal interest questions.

Want to Know More?: This section provided 4-5 key sources of additional information relevant to the stories in the newsletter.

World Watch: This section placed New Zealand in a global context by covering international issues in the mitigation / protected species arena. For example, topics included relevant international management developments, international research programmes on mitigation measures and relevant marine species.

What the FAQ?! This section appeared on the first and second page in the past two years. It included a collection of short facts on a protected species, or species group, and an image.

Feedback: To provide the opportunity for readers to submit feedback at any time, an email address was included in the footer of the newsletter. Recipients used this email to enquire about news stories, update their address details, and follow up on the origin of the newsletter (i.e., the CSP project).

Distribution network

The direct recipients of *Bycatch Bylines* number about 1,000, with a wider circulation expected through secondary distribution (e.g., from CSOs to their constituents and via MPI offices). Recipients include:

- Commercial fishers (812 fishers)
- Fishing companies, fishers' associations, CSOs (10 points of contact)
- Stakeholders of the Conservation Services Programme, Department of Conservation (145 points of contact)
- Ministry for Primary Industries regional offices (16 offices)
- Individuals on request (13)

Fishers were identified through a data request to the Ministry for Primary Industries. Email and mailing address details were requested for fishers using the fishing methods above to land > 1,000 kg of catch, from more than one trip per year.

Between 2012 and 2014, nine recipients have updated their delivery details (e.g., when moving house or office) to ensure they continued to receive the newsletter, and eight recipients have requested removal from the mailing list.

Feedback

Based on a survey of recipients and feedback from the CSP Technical Working Group, a series of recommendations were made to develop the *Ocean Guardian*, the newsletter that preceded *Bycatch Bylines* (Pierre 2012). These recommendations have been addressed in various ways during the production of *Bycatch Bylines*, as summarised below:

- Continue the newsletter as an important component of bycatch mitigation approaches.
 - 12 issues of *Bycatch Bylines* have been produced
- Expand the scope of the newsletter to include commercial fishing methods additional to the initial focus of trawl and longline.
 - *Bycatch Bylines* has a scope including trawl and longline, but also purse seine, set net, and other methods (see above).
- Maintain a focus on protected species bycatch reduction, but also include topics suggested by respondents, and material on the wider environmental context of commercial fishing (where funding provisions allow).
 - The focus of the newsletter has remained marine protected species that interact with New Zealand commercial fisheries. Stories have included bycatch reduction measures, and also broader protected species issues, such as seasonal protected species risks, handling protected species, National Plans of Action, legislative changes, and international issues affecting New Zealand protected species. Respondents have suggested topics e.g., the bird baffler, which have been taken up.
- Include an occasional opinion piece, in which two people with divergent views exchange their perspectives on a topical issue.
 - A section reflecting divergent views on controversial issues relevant to marine protected species was introduced into *Bycatch Bylines*. For example, stories on

electronic monitoring, shark finning and the National Plan of Action-Seabirds featured in this 'Word on the Street' section in 2012-2014.

- Provide key references either in the newsletter, or online when the newsletter is posted on DOC's website, to facilitate access to additional, more detailed, information.
 - This material has been incorporated in *Bycatch Bylines* since its inception.
- Consider complementing the newsletter with stories in other publications with industry audiences and investigate reducing postage costs by including the newsletter in other industry publications (e.g. *Seafood* magazine).
 - These suggestions were not actioned during the term of *Bycatch Bylines*, due to a significant restructure of the Seafood Industry Council. The restructure has been completed and Seafood New Zealand is established. It is recommended that this suggestion is revisited.
- Reduce the number of hard copies distributed to industry representatives, and focus hard copy distribution on individual fishers.
 - This recommendation was implemented from 2012-2014.
- Conduct another evaluation after more issues of the newsletter have been produced.
 - In accordance with this recommendation, the findings of a survey of readers' views of *Bycatch Bylines* are included in this report.
- Consider offering an incentive for responding to future evaluations of the newsletter.
 - This suggestion was not actioned.
- Consider following up with survey respondents who are not reading the newsletter, to ascertain why that is.
 - All recipients surveyed indicated that they were reading *Bycatch Bylines*.

To solicit feedback on *Bycatch Bylines* after two years of circulation, a 10-question survey was distributed electronically to 576 recipients including fishers, CSOs and MPI regional offices. Fishers comprising this distribution list were those who normally receive the newsletter by email. Questions included in surveys and responses received are shown below (Table 1).

Survey responses were received from 3.1% of recipients including 16 fishers and two CSOs. Three recipients opted out of the survey and emails delivered to 16 recipients were bounced due to overloaded or discontinued mailboxes. The rate of response to emailed surveys was comparable to the survey conducted to solicit feedback on the *Ocean Guardian* (Pierre 2012).

Amongst respondents, 50% said that others they knew read the newsletter. All considered it interesting, at least sometimes. More than half (56%) had accessed a link in the newsletter to find more information about a story. Respondents mostly (78%) deemed bimonthly circulation appropriate. When asked to rank current content from most (1) to least (6) preferred topics, individual responses varied, but newsletter sections scored almost the same across all respondents (summed rank scores: 15 – 17). Comments included that updated information and relevance were the best features of the newsletter, the publication was good overall and didn't require improvement, that the focus on protected species could be broadened given the scope of issues fishers are dealing with, and an enquiry as to whether the newsletter was sent to NGOs. Fishers who responded preferred their copies of the newsletter to be mailed to them directly in hard copy

Table 1. Questions and responses circulated amongst recipients of *Bycatch Bylines*.

Question	Responses
All recipients:	
Have you read <i>Bycatch Bylines</i> ?	Yes No
Have others you know read it?	Yes Don't know No
Do you find the newsletter interesting?	Yes Sometimes No
What sort of content do you like the most (rank 1) to the least (rank 6)?	-Bycatch mitigation updates and ideas -Updates on government activities relating to marine protected species -International stories relevant to NZ issues and protected species -Interview-style stories with people involved in protected species and fisheries work -Snapshots of information on protected species -Discussion pieces on controversial topics
Have you ever checked the links provided for more information on a topic or story?	Yes Can't remember No
What other content would you like to see? <i>Bycatch Bylines</i> is produced bimonthly. Is this timing:	Free text response About right Not often enough Too often
What do you like best about the newsletter?	Free text response
How can we improve the newsletter?	Free text response
Fishers:	
What's your preferred method for receiving the newsletter?	-Emailed to me -Paper copy sent to me -Paper copy picked up from MPI office -Paper copy picked up from my CSO -Other (please specify)
CSOs and MPI office contacts:	
You are sent hard copies of the newsletter and asked to make these available to industry members. We are interested in whether you think this is an effective way to reach people.	-The method is effective. Copies are picked up. -The method is effective but I have copies leftover. -The method may be effective but delivering to people directly would be better. -The method is not effective. I don't reliably have contact with industry members. -An electronic version would be easier to forward than hard copies. -Don't know. -Other (please specify)

(12.5%) and by email (87.5%). However, given the online format, the survey method was biased against those who received the newsletter in hard copy. The two CSOs who responded had different views on distribution. One noted that the copies they were sent were picked up, and considered the method of distribution to be effective. The other reflected that contacts had already received copies and so the copies they were sent did not reach additional recipients.

Additional feedback received on the newsletter during the project included fishers' comments on mitigation measures and government fisheries observers advising that the newsletter is being seen on observed vessels, as well as read and discussed by fishers. Ministry for Primary Industries staff in regional offices have also made contact to request more detail about the newsletter (e.g., how it originated and the scope). In addition, general support for the content and format has been expressed by several practitioners in the bycatch arena.

Recommendations

Recommendations for future terms of *Bycatch Bylines* include:

- updating the distribution list to exclude discontinued emails;
- confirming whether individual email recipients would prefer to receive a hard copy;
- confirming the viability of distribution arrangements with CSOs and MPI regional offices;
- liaising with MPI regional offices individually to seek views on the content and form of the newsletter;
- considering expanding the scope of the newsletter content; and,
- exploring combining distribution with Seafood New Zealand communications.

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References

Pierre, J.P. 2012. The Ocean Guardian: Report on MIT2011-05 Protected Species Bycatch Newsletter. Final project report held by the Department of Conservation, Wellington.