

FAQs for draft NPOA-Seabirds 2020 consultation

1. What are some of the practical measures in this plan? (What are the goals and objectives specifically?)

The proposals in the plan involve fishers using evidence-based and effective methods to reduce incidental capture of seabirds. This plan will support and guide fishers to use effective bycatch mitigation practices. These vary by the type of fishing method, and include bird scaring lines, weighting longlines, fishing at night, avoiding areas important to seabirds and reducing discharge that attracts birds to fishing boats. The plan also describes a range of research and monitoring approaches to fully understand the quantity of bycatch, what can contribute to the risk of bycatch events, and to be able to report on how many fishers are using mitigation measures and how well they are working.

2. Which agencies and businesses have been involved in developing this plan?

The plan has been developed jointly by Fisheries New Zealand and DOC, with input through an advisory group with representation by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Te Ohu Kaimoana, commercial fishing industry organisations, environmental NGOs, and the recreational fishing sector.

3. How will this plan protect seabirds?

This plan addresses one of the key threats to many species of seabirds, fisheries bycatch. It aims to ensure all fishers understand the risks to seabirds from fishing and do the best they can to avoid bycatch. This complements work to protect seabird breeding sites from threats such as invasive predators.

4. What changes in behaviour are needed from fishers?

Many fishers have made good strides towards preventing seabird capture, and this should be acknowledged.

We expect all sectors to implement effective bycatch mitigation. Fishers on the water will need to be supported to implement effective mitigation, and learn how to respond to bycatch events and/or aggressive seabird behaviours.

5. How will you know if this plan is working? How will you monitor it?

Fisheries New Zealand and DOC will report on the plan's performance measures at least annually, and will monitor them on an ongoing basis. Over the duration of this plan, we expect transformational change in the data available on at-sea fisher behaviour, which will greatly enhance our ability to monitor and measure risk to seabirds from fishing.

6. How many seabirds are caught in New Zealand fisheries?

In the 2017-18 fishing year there were an estimated 3,328 seabird captures in commercial trawl and longline fisheries. This include both birds killed and captures where birds were released alive. However, not all bycatch can be observed, and allowing for additional cryptic mortality gives a total estimate of potential fatalities of 14,400 birds per year. However, this estimate is highly uncertain because of the lack of understanding of seabird capture rates in areas that have had low monitoring in the past. Under this plan we will be able to measure and report on progress towards reducing fishing-related risk to seabird populations.

7. What are the challenges still to be worked through from the last plan?

There is no single solution to the bycatch problem and a suite of techniques are need to try to mitigate against bycatch. Some of the remaining challenges that are being addressed in this plan, include:

- identifying and implementing effective bycatch mitigation across small inshore vessels that have a high degree of variability in their operation
- measuring and reporting bycatch to demonstrate progress and allow for adaptive management
- Influencing behaviour in areas beyond New Zealand waters