

Southern Seabird Solutions

News Updates



NEWSLETTER SOUTHERN SEABIRD SOLUTIONS

Conservation through International Co-operation

**Newsletter Issue One
September 2002**

First Newsletter

Greetings. This is the first newsletter reporting on the activities of members of Southern Seabird Solutions. I plan on producing a newsletter every two months to keep you informed. Drop me a note if you have anything you would like others to hear about.

Best Wishes
Janice Molloy
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Update on Southern Seabird Solutions Projects

You will recall we developed seven projects at the Nelson workshop to form the basis of our activities over the next year. Here is an update on each project:

Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Chris Anderson, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade is taking the lead on this project. Officials from DOC and Ministry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade are currently in Germany attending a meeting of the parent organisation of the Agreement (Convention on Migratory Species). They are using this opportunity to hold informal meetings with other countries interested in joining the agreement.

Communications Strategy for Southern Seabird Solutions

Cushla Managh of DOC is leading the development of the strategy. Two meetings have been held to identify desired outcomes, target audiences, key messages and actions. The draft outcomes developed to date are:

- Fishing industries (New Zealand and overseas) apply and are advocates of seabird safe fishing practices
- Consumer preference is for seabird safe products

- The public is satisfied that action is being taken to address incidental capture of seabirds.

The draft strategy makes it clear that action must start here in New Zealand so that we can lead by example.

A number of actions have been suggested to achieve the goals, including articles profiling role model skippers, a sister ship scheme between countries, using fish products to obtain sponsorship and raise awareness, annual awards for responsible vessels, and a travelling road show.

Cushla plans to complete a first draft based on the ideas generated at the two meetings and circulate the draft to members of Southern Seabird Solutions for comment.

Development of a Seabird Bycatch Database

Barry Baker, Environment Australia, is taking the lead on this project. He has begun talking to people who may be able to assist with development of a database, and will get back to us with an outline of the project for the next newsletter.

International Industry to Industry (and Skipper to Skipper) Programme

We have a meeting scheduled for 23rd October, here at 65 Victoria Street Wellington (10am – 4.30pm) to begin developing this and two other related projects (see below).

Seabird/fisheries Training Programme for Skippers and Crew

This project aims to assist countries who are interested in developing training programmes. This will be discussed further at our 23rd October meeting.

Simon Reid of the Seafood Industry Training Organisation is currently leading the development of a unit standard for New Zealand vessel operators that provides training in methods for the mitigation of incidental capture of seabirds during commercial fishing operations. Individuals who become accredited in this unit standard will understand the impact of fishing on seabirds, appreciate the importance of using mitigation measures and will be fully conversant with the suite of measures that are available. Simon hopes to have the unit registered with the New Zealand Qualification Authority by Christmas. Initially, the unit standard will be incorporated into the pre-sea training that new recruits to the fishing industry undertake. Ways to encourage existing skippers and crew to sit the unit standard are being investigated.

Implementation of Mitigation Measures – collaboration with other countries

This project will be scoped out in more detail at our 23rd October meeting.

Meanwhile a collaborative experiment is planned to occur in New Zealand in November on the Sealord vessel “Janas”. Malcolm McNeill, Sealord and NZ Longline Ltd , Graham Robertson of Australian Antarctic Division and Ed Melvin of the Washington Sea Grant Programme have been hoping to test the effectiveness of weighted autoline gear in reducing seabird capture for some time, but no lead core autoline has been available to do this. However with the encouragement of these three, the fishing gear manufacturer Fiskevegn has produced some lead core autoline for this experiment.

This experiment is being jointly funded by Sealord and NZ longline Ltd, Gourock, Australian Antarctic Division and through a grant from IATTO (see IATTO story). If these trials are effective, this method will be very useful not only in New Zealand waters, but also in CCAMLR waters and other areas around the world where seabird capture is an issue. Ed Melvin is conducting similar trials in Alaska.

Clean Up Our Own Backyard

Ross Tocker, General Manager Operations, Sealord Group Ltd, and Chair of the Hoki Fishery Management Company is taking the lead on this project. As you will recall the primary outcomes sought under this project are finalisation of the National Plan of Action – Seabirds, completion of Codes of Practice for all longline and trawl fleets and establishment of a high level focus group.

The Ling Longline Working group have recently produced their Code of Practice for the Mitigation of Incidental Seabird Capture in the ling fishery, as well as a Ling Fishers Training Manual. A key feature of the code is constant improvement – the effectiveness of the code will be reviewed each year and when new measures are developed these will be incorporated into the code.

Revision of the National Plan of Action - Seabirds has been completed by DOC and Min Fish, following the Ministers of Fisheries and Conservation's request for this to occur. It is hoped that the plan will be resubmitted to Ministers in October prior to a consultation round. In February 2003 fishing countries involved in fishing will report to the UN Committee of Fisheries on the state of progress in implementing their National Plan of Action.

Other News

International Coalition of Fisheries Associations (ICFA) supports Southern Seabird Solutions

Alastair McFarlane, Seafood Industry Council, and Bruce Young, Moana Pacific Ltd, recently returned from an ICFA meeting in Iceland. They took a draft resolution with them for ICFA's consideration, and were successful in obtaining the following resolution:

“ICFA Supports the efforts of Southern Seabird Solutions to foster the widespread use of seabird safe fishing practices in longline fleets that overlap with the foraging areas of albatrosses and petrels that breed in New Zealand;

- Welcomes Southern Seabird Solutions' forging of alliances between the fishing industry and other groups with an interest, including Government;
- Supports the development and adoption of industry driven Codes of Practice that provide practical ways to avoid seabird capture; and
- Encourages responsible longline fishers in the southern oceans to work with Southern Seabird Solutions to develop practical fishing strategies that avoid incidental seabird capture.”

Competition for Fishermen

Carles Carboneras told us about the competition when he participated in our Nelson workshop. Here is an update from Carles:

“ SEO/BirdLife, the partner organisation in Spain, is launching a competition of ideas in order to get fishermen from all over the world involved in the development of new mitigation measures that will hopefully contribute to reducing incidental capture of seabirds. The competition is open to fishermen and experienced seamen from all countries and ideas can be provided in any format. A single 18,000 euro (c. USD 18,000) prize will be awarded to the best idea. Preference will be given to those proposals where proof is given that they have been successfully tested at sea. An international panel of seabird experts, conservationists, fishermen and experienced sea-goers will judge the proposals.

Over 100,000 leaflets advertising the competition will be widely distributed in several languages, plus 5,000 posters in Spanish. Fishermen wishing to enter the competition will be sent one a booklet containing information on the currently-known mitigation measures, with additional notes on behaviour of seabirds at sea and some suggestions of possibilities that might be worth exploring.

The competition will run from December 2002 till the end of March 2003 and the prize will be awarded in a public event in Spain in June 2003.”

Antarctic tourists donate funds to conserve seabirds

Graham

Robertson, Australian Antarctic Division, has thought of an innovative way to inform visitors to Antarctica of the seabird issue and to raise funds. In 2001 he prepared a slide presentation for delivery to tourists on board the 70 or so southern ocean cruises that occur each year. He also established a fund that these tourists could make contributions to, after hearing the presentation. This money is for such things as design of new seabird safe fishing gear, outreach programmes for fishermen and research on threatened seabirds. An advisory group made up of Graham, myself, Sally Poncet (Falkland Islands/Malvinas), John Croxall (British Antarctic Division), Euan Dunn (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, UK) and Marco Favero (University of Mar del Plata, Argentina) has been established to oversee the fund. Delivery of the presentations is co-ordinated through the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IATTO).

Despite a few teething problems in the first year, a total of \$US 5,500 was raised. The advisory group has awarded this to the New Zealand Ling Longline Working group to help fund the line weighting experiment (see previous story). The advisory group felt that of the applications received, the outcomes from this project could have the biggest and most immediate benefit to fishing and seabird conservation.

Marine Stewardship Council Tuna Outreach Officer

Duncan Leadbitter reports that the Marine Stewardship Council is about to appoint a Tuna Outreach Officer. This person will be employed for three years and is funded by Sainsburys (a supermarket in the UK). The person's brief is to get around to as many fleets as possible to generate interest in certification. Those that take an interest will be assessed by a certification team and this will include assessing the incidental capture of seabirds in the fishery.

Co-ordination of Southern Seabird Solutions Projects

Stacy Moore has joined me at DOC to assist in co-ordinating the activities of Southern Seabird Solutions. Stacy is volunteering her time and in the office three days a week. She has a background in environmental education and teaching wildlife biology.

Upcoming Events

International Fishers Forum II, Hawaii, 19th-22nd November. The Forum will provide us with an opportunity to talk about the draft Southern Seabird Solution projects with contacts from the countries we share albatrosses and petrels with.

Next Issue

An update from Australia

Report back from IFF II

Progress on the projects