

BLACK PETREL BRIEFING NOTE: MINISTERS AND ADVISORS

Black Petrel Background

1. Black petrels breed on Great Barrier Island and Little Barrier Island in the outer Hauraki Gulf
2. Breeding pairs on the main colony site have declined from 6000 in the mid-90s when population research began, to just over 1000 this year
3. There are many more juveniles at sea in the East Pacific but only 10% reach breeding age (4yrs approx.)
4. Available data indicates black petrels are being caught in numbers that far exceed what the population can sustain – it is the most at risk seabird from fishing in NZ
5. Protecting breeding birds in NZ waters is therefore the focus for saving this species from extinction
6. Breeding birds forage in areas of FMA1 overlapping with fishing between November and May every year

Current black petrel protection and research activity

1. MPI officials have stated in the NPOA-Seabirds and in the recent Inshore Environmental Engagement Forum that action is required to reduce black petrel deaths
2. However proposed action via a draft Black Petrel Action Plan under the new NPOA-Seabirds is not adequate to prevent unsustainable deaths in the next breeding season
3. Planned activity is focused on education and awareness, with some mention of individual vessel plans and enforcement of regulation
4. Current mitigation regulations are not sufficient – technical advisory group members and seabird experts agree that there is sufficient data to change these now
5. There has to date been no enforcement in FMA1 of the 77 long line vessels operating there (Source: parliamentary question responses to J Ardern 2012)
6. Electronic monitoring is available and proven but not planned for use in FMA1 for Nov 2013-May 2014 despite fisher support (Sandfords and others)
7. MCS (DOC) have allocated approximately \$400k to 4 projects which will improve BP by-catch rates but none will prevent deaths through by-catch this breeding season (Observer programme - \$190k, population research - \$60k, Kellian line-setter trials \$110k, and bottom long line small vessel research - \$40k)

Action required by the Ministry of Primary Industries in 2013 to save the black petrel

1. Revise current regulations to require use of 3 mitigation methods as follows: no discharge of offal while setting or hauling, use of twin Tori lines, and line weighting; and amend guidance on night setting – black petrels feed at night; add guidance on minimising deck lights
2. Enforcement of the above regulations from Nov-May annually on all vessels in FMA1, beginning in November 2013

3. Vessel plans for all 77 vessels operating in FMA1 for Nov 2013 - May 2014 focused on minimizing black petrel deaths for the season, in conjunction with fishers
4. Work with the largest vessel and fleet owners as a priority to engage them in developing innovative ways to minimise black petrel bycatch and self-regulate
5. Urgent creative thought from MPI on how to replace the \$190k of increased observer coverage for SNA1 (covers only a proportion of the active vessels) with a research project which targets actual prevention of by-catch as the outcome. Include testing various prevention scenarios on different vessel types, areas, times and sea conditions. The objective is to reduce black petrel by-catch by the greatest degree, rather than to measure it more effectively. The time for the latter is well past.
6. Trial of a temporary exclusion zone in February and March 2014 (critical chick rearing time) – specific limited geographic areas within FMA1 to be defined in consultation with Elizabeth Bell (black petrel expert) and technical advisors based on foraging and fishing effort data that is currently being analysed.
7. Revise the draft Black Petrel Action Plan to include the above actions and agree an evaluation process for June 2015 involving all stakeholder in preparation for 2014/5.

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