

Recommendation paper

Title: Review to seal mortality mitigation measures in the Loligo Fishery

Date: 01 April 2021

Report of: Seabird and Marine Mammal Scientific Officer

1. Background:

Currently, Part 2 of Licence conditions require:

1.1 If a vessel has a Marine Mammal Observer on board (MMO), the vessel will not be required to deploy a Seal Exclusion Device (SED) at the start of the fishing season.

1.2 If a vessel does not have a MMO on board at the start of the fishing season, the vessel will be required to deploy an approved SED from the start of the fishing season.

1.3 Following the mortality of 2 marine mammals between all vessels with an MMO on board, SEDs are to be immediately deployed and to continue to be used for the remainder of the season.

1.4 If there are 2 seal mortalities (or more) on any individual vessel, the Master must immediately deploy their SED, without waiting for formal confirmation from FIFD. Master of the vessel should then notify FIFD through their local fishing company representatives of the occurrence and confirm the immediate deployment of the SED. FIFD will send a formal notification to all vessels at this time following the MoU protocol.

2. Second fishing seasons 2016-2020 (X Licence):

2.1 An increment on the interactions of seals with the LOL fishery was first noticed in season 2016-X (Iriarte & Pompert, 2016), while high mortality numbers lead to the implementation of SEDs and full MMO coverage during season 2017-X (Iriarte et al, 2020).

2.2 MMO monitoring throughout 2018-2020 evidenced seal attendance to vessels, interactions and mortalities are much higher during the second fishing seasons (Table 1).

2.3 Since 2018 the SED implementation trigger date has reduced, reaching a peak in season 2020-X, with 11 seal mortalities recorded by 14:00 on the first MMO monitoring day (Table 1).

2.4 After delayed MMO embarkation in season 2020-X, there were indications of possible non-compliant fishing activities by some unidentified Loligo vessels, which

questioned the validity of allowing fishing in the Loligo Box without the presence of MMOs aboard (Iriarte, 2020).

Table 1. Seal interactions per season 2018-2020 and SED implementation per calendar fishing day.

| Season | Seals sighted (Total) | Bycatch (Total) | Observed mortality | SED escapees | Deck releases | SED north 52°S | SED south 52°S |
|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 2021-C | - | - | - | - | - | 19/3 (day 22) | 5/3 (day 8) |
| 2020-X* | 6623 | 69 | 13 | 40 | 16 | 7/8 (MMO day 1) | 7/8 (MMO day 1) |
| 2020-C | 1767 | 14 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 6/3 (day 14) | 18/3 (day 27) |
| Total 2020 | 8390 | 83 | 18 | 47 | 18 | - | - |
| 2019-X | 4800 | 48 | 6 | 30 | 12 | 30/7 (day 2) | 30/7 (day 2) |
| 2019-C | 1052 | 11 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 16/3 (day 21) | 29/3 (day 34) |
| Total 2019 | 5852 | 59 | 13 | 33 | 13 | - | - |
| 2018-X | 11300 | 127 | 16 | 58 | 53 | 7/8 (day 10) | 5/8 (day 8) |
| 2018-C | 2120 | 12 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 26/4 (day 61) | 3/5 (day 68) |
| Total 2018 | 13420 | 139 | 22 | 58 | 59 | - | - |

*Due COVID-19 pandemics, MMO embarkation was delayed for 7 days. Under licence conditions SED use remained mandatory for the whole fleet, including the two vessels that had a FIFD observer aboard.

3. Recommendation:

3.1 Due the success in seal mortality mitigation relies heavily on compliance to conservation measures, MMO monitoring should be carried out from the start of the fishing season.

3.2 SED use should be compulsory from the beginning of the second season.

Approved.



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