Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Meeting:	Conservation Services Programme Technical Working Group
Date:	29 May 2026
Time:	9:00 am – 11:20 am
Place:	Microsoft Teams Meeting
Chair:	Katie Clemens-Seely (Programme Manager, Conservation Services Programme)

Attendees: Katie Clemens-Seely, Hollie McGovern, Mel Young, Kat Manno, Hannah Hendriks, Jordana Whyte, Lydia Uddstrom, Cat Barnett, Lyndsey Holland, Jody Weir Charlie Barnett, Ros Cole, (DOC), Diana Macpherson, Jaret Bilewitch, Amelia Connell (ESNZ), Alasdair Hall (Hall Marine Consulting), Ben Steele-Mortimer (SNZ), Chelsea McGaw (Forest & Bird), Jack Fenaughty (SRL for Sanford), Greg Lydon, Alexander Arkhipkin (FNZ), Hanna Ravn (University of Otago), Rochelle Constantine, Barry Weeber (ECO), Janaki Kallidae (Independent)

Presentations:

9:05 am	POP2023-05 Auckland Islands New Zealand sea lions	DOC
9:50 am	INT2022-03 Identification, storage and genetics of cold-water coral bycatch specimen, 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025	ESNZ

1. POP2023-05 Auckland Islands New Zealand sea lions

Kat Manno (DOC) presented on the 2025-26 New Zealand sea lion monitoring at the Auckland Islands.

Discussion:

BSM Will the DOC led projects be presented through CSP?

> **KM** No as they are not CSP, but reports will be shared with the sea lion mailing list and posted on the ftp server. Still trying to figure out the methods for some of the projects. Will be continuing with Ivermectin treatment for a while before analysing the data.
>
> **BSM** It's useful to see the other work going on in relation to sea lions to build up a picture. Has happened with other species not funded through CSP.

MY There is a Wānanga in September where we will present some of the information from those projects; it will also feed into some masters and PhD projects, so may take a while before we get final results.

HR Were the females that arrived later at Sandy Bay still pupping?

KM The pup peak is pretty consistent with previous years, so don't think so.

JW Anecdotally it did seem births were happening later this year, not at a higher concentration but did notice it. Would have to look further into data to determine whether there were more females pupping later than usual.

HR What was the reason for cruise ship blackout dates being removed?

KM Not sure, that sits with the DOC Murihiku team.

HR Who runs the visitor impact monitoring work?

MY The work is done in accordance with the Conservation Management Strategy which is led by the DOC Murihiku team. The primary focus for Enderby Island is hoiho, but we are also collecting incidental information about sea lions. This was year 1 of a 3 year project.

SM What was pup mortality like after tagging?

MY We conducted post-mortems on 17 pups, and are still waiting on final results. Anecdotally, it didn't look like disease, more trauma/starvation issues. The report will be put on the FTP server in due course.

2. INT2022-03 Identification, storage and genetics of cold-water coral bycatch specimen, 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025

Diana Macpherson, Amelia Connell and Jaret Bilewitch (ESNZ) presented the draft annual report for this project.

Discussion:

BW Can you clarify a table that refers to CF for a range of species, are those undescribed species?

DM The use of CF is to indicate some level of uncertainty, not necessarily new species. In this case, we decided to use CF due to slight differences in branching.

BW And what about the use of Acanthogorgiidae 1,2 and 3?

JB Evidence from previous CSP project shows at least three species amongst Acanthogorgiidae but couldn't match them up to described species, so for the time being until we figure out if new species or existing species, we just call them 1, 2 and 3 for now.

BW Have you looked at differences between genetic information for different sites?

JB Need to look more at genetic analyses. Have looked at higher level relationships, but now getting into populations within species that are mixing or interbreeding. Now we've got a better dataset than previous years.

BW Are these species brooders or broadcasters?

DM Don't know but has been highlighted that this needs to be investigated.

LH Wanted to say thanks for your work on this project, and thanks for three-year summary of the project, great to see you've looked at nearly 10,000 images, found out that the more you look using genetics the more diversity there is in our coral bycatch, and that all the observer resources and training has paid off too given better accuracy of ID rates. Thinking about next contract, we need to get a better understanding of the trends we are seeing in relation to observer coverage rates and target species, and make the information more applied, or be able to extrapolate it. We did this in INT2021-02 (looked at proportion of observed tows with an observer and reporting bycatch), but haven't yet done that for these results. Also, it would be good try to understand if barriers for observers bringing back physical specimens is still an issue.

JB During observer training sessions we actively encourage them to send as much material as possible back.

LH With amount of new codes in ID guides, would also be interesting to do an analyses of how quickly observers are uptaking those new codes. Have also applied new thresholds of large coral captures which triggers further examination based on the large captures project.

BW Are there plans for the future to look at inshore coral captures via cameras? And would there be any industry return as part of that consideration?

LH We have had some corals come back through the CSP port-based sampling programme, so how those samples will be looked at is a consideration for the next three year contract. There is not a process for reviewing camera coral data yet, but we are working on that. Most coral bycatch is offshore anyway (so no cameras), but we are seeing a surprising amount through the port-based programme from inshore fisheries.

BSM Did you look at probability of life status as part of this analysis? If so, how easy is it to identify between live and dead coral?

JB Very straightforward for octocorals and black corals.

DM Stony cup corals tend to be easy, just look inside the cup for tissue. In that case we take a subsample for genetics.

AC Life status not relevant anyway under Wildlife Act as they are protected whether alive or dead. Abrasion is another way to look at whether stony corals have been long dead or not. Some branching stony corals can be a bit more challenging.

JB Bamboo corals typically lose a lot of tissue while being trawled up so may give the appearance of being dead, so can be tricky.

BSM Do you provide observer guidance on how to determine life status and is that reported through observer programme?

DM There is a document on the life status of corals in the Observer Manual, and the life status is captured through observer reporting but we do not look at that through this project. We touch a little bit about life status in the observer briefings, but don't focus on it for this project.

Any additional comments should be provided to by 5pm, 12th June 2026. Close of Meeting @ 10:30 am