

LIAISON PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

June 2020

This is the first official progress report for the DOC Protected Species Liaison Programme project MIT2017 – 01

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Background

In order to effectively reduce the risk of interactions with protected species, it is important for vessels to be using best practice mitigation and to follow through with steps laid out by both regulatory and non-regulatory measures. With the support of Fisheries Inshore New Zealand (FINZ), the Conservation Services Programme (CSP) Protected Species Liaison Project aims to increase uptake of best practice mitigation onboard both inshore and surface longline fishing vessels, by building relationships, assisting and educating fishers.

The current Liaison Programme began in 2017/18 and had previously been trialled with different formats in both the surface longline and some bottom longline fisheries to reach the structure that it has now.

A fundamental part of the Liaison Programme is the deployment of Liaison Officers (LOs). Their role (Figure 1) is to support and educate fishers on recommended mitigation strategies and to set up vessel-specific Protected Species Risk Management Plans (PSRMPs). LOs also provide a vital interface between skippers, government, and researchers. The programme's Liaison Coordinator helps to manage liaison activities, organise and provide materials, manage data from LO-fisher interactions, and ensure there is follow-up with fishers (especially in regards to trigger point events and observer audits).

Furthermore, Protected Species Risk Management Plans are audited by MPI Fisheries Observers, which serve to describe adherence to the plans as well as highlight areas for improvement. Interdepartmental collaboration is critical to the success of the Liaison Programme. An initial implementation plan as well as departmental roles can be found in the NPOA Seabirds 2020- Supporting Document¹. Inter-agency information flow and process maps will be updated for the coming year and reflected in the Liaison Programme manual.

¹ <https://www.fisheries.govt.nz/dmsdocument/38054-national-plan-of-action-seabirds-2020-supporting-document>

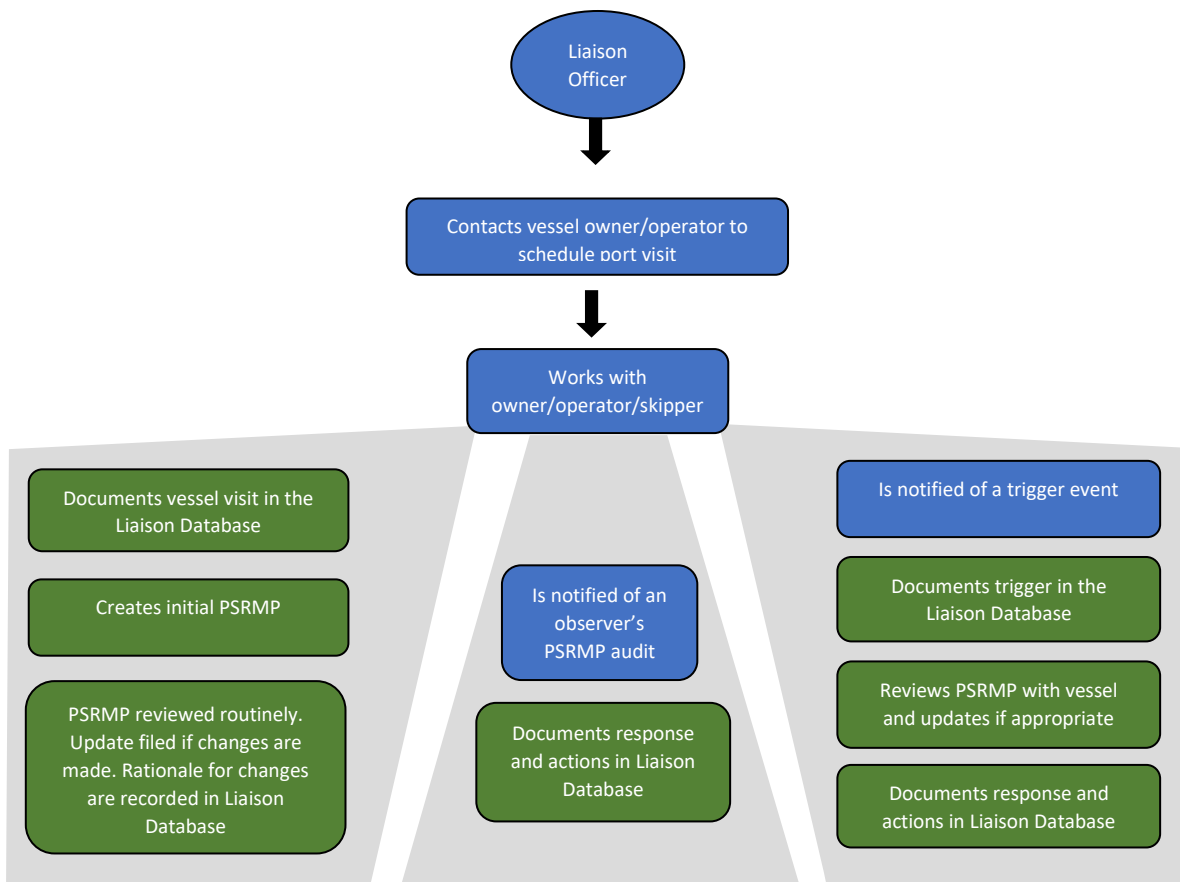


Figure 1. Work flow for Liaison Officers showing documentation completed. Green indicates a stored record.

We currently have three Liaison Officers: Nigel Hollands (Coromandel, Northland, Leigh), Ben Leslie (Bay of Plenty and Auckland, Napier, Gisborne), and John Cleal (top of South Island down to Lyttleton as well as the Greymouth and Wellington regions) with arrangements for a fourth officer to cover the south and southeast portion of the South Island. Moving forward the Liaison Programme plans to increase both LO effort and numbers.

Refer to page ten of this report and the draft CSP Annual Plan 2020-21² for further details on upcoming plans and the proposed rollout of next year's programme with a focus on the Seabirds NPOA.

² <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/conservation/marine-and-coastal/marine-conservation-services/plans/draft-csp-annual-plan-2020-21.pdf>

The following Liaison Programme project objectives and deliverables are cited from the 2019-20 CSP Annual Plan³.

Project Objectives (MIT2017-01)

1. To provide Liaison Officers to the relevant inshore fishing fleets, to assist those fleets in reducing their protected species bycatch.
2. To coordinate the Liaison Officer roles with wider efforts targeted at protected species bycatch reduction in relevant fisheries to achieve the greatest reduction in bycatch possible.

Project Deliverables (MIT2017-01)

1. Database of progress, including number of PSRMPs installed, vessels visited, and mitigation materials issued.
2. Regular communication and meetings, as appropriate, with relevant agencies, industry bodies and other parties to coordinate bycatch reduction activities and report progress.
3. Monthly short form reports back to relevant advisory groups detailing progress and any developments which have come from the fleet.
4. Annual written report detailing interactions with fishers and steps taken to enhance mitigation.

Programme Summary July 2017- September 2019

There has been a steady increase in PSRMPs since the programme first began (Table 1). The 2017-18 year was largely focused on surface longline (SLL) and bottom longline (BLL) vessels, while the aim for 2018-19 was to expand to trawlers and set net vessels. There have also been opportunistic PSRMPs in dredging, jig and Danish seine fishing methods. Please note that some vessels use multiple fishing methods, therefore we've made a distinction between the number of PSRMPs and the number of PSRMP-covered vessels. By the end of the 2017-18 fishing year, the Liaison Programme covered 90 vessels with PSRMPs, and by the end of the 2018-19 fishing year, coverage increased to 196 vessels.

³ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/conservation/marine-and-coastal/marine-conservation-services/plans/final-csp-annual-plan-2019-20.pdf>

Table 1: Number of PSRMPs per fishing year per fishing method.

	New PSRMPs 2017/18	New PSRMPs 2018/19	Updated PSRMPs 2018/19	Total PSRMP-covered vessels by the end of 2018/19
SLL	34	6	23	40
BLL	38	11	25	49
Trawl	19	79	1	101
Set Net	0	15	0	15
Dredging	0	1	0	1
Jig	0	1	0	1
Danish Seine	0	3	0	3
Total PSRMPs	91	116	49	196

Over the last 12 months the programme has put a large focus on tidying up historical information and procedures. Data collected has been converted from free text to more quantifiable reporting metrics, which has helped identify areas for improvement as well as enable easier and more streamlined reporting. Additionally, a lot of time has gone into investigating and developing the current list of active fishing vessels applicable to the Liaison Programme. The current database has made great improvements, but still has its limitations and undergoes refinement regularly.

While this work is underway, there has been a combined project with DOC and FNZ to develop a shared platform database. The completion of this database will enable detailed and automated reporting, allow for more efficient data processing and tracking, and will create the ability to measure the overall success of the programme on a finer scale.

Using our compiled list of active vessels, Figure 2 represents the amount of historical effort from fishing year's 2017-18 and 2018-19 and the amount covered by Protected Species Risk Management Plans created during those years. In the surface longline fleet, the small lack of PSRMP coverage (0.63%) was due to a change in vessel name. This PSRMP has since been renewed with the appropriate vessel name in the 2019-20 fishing year.

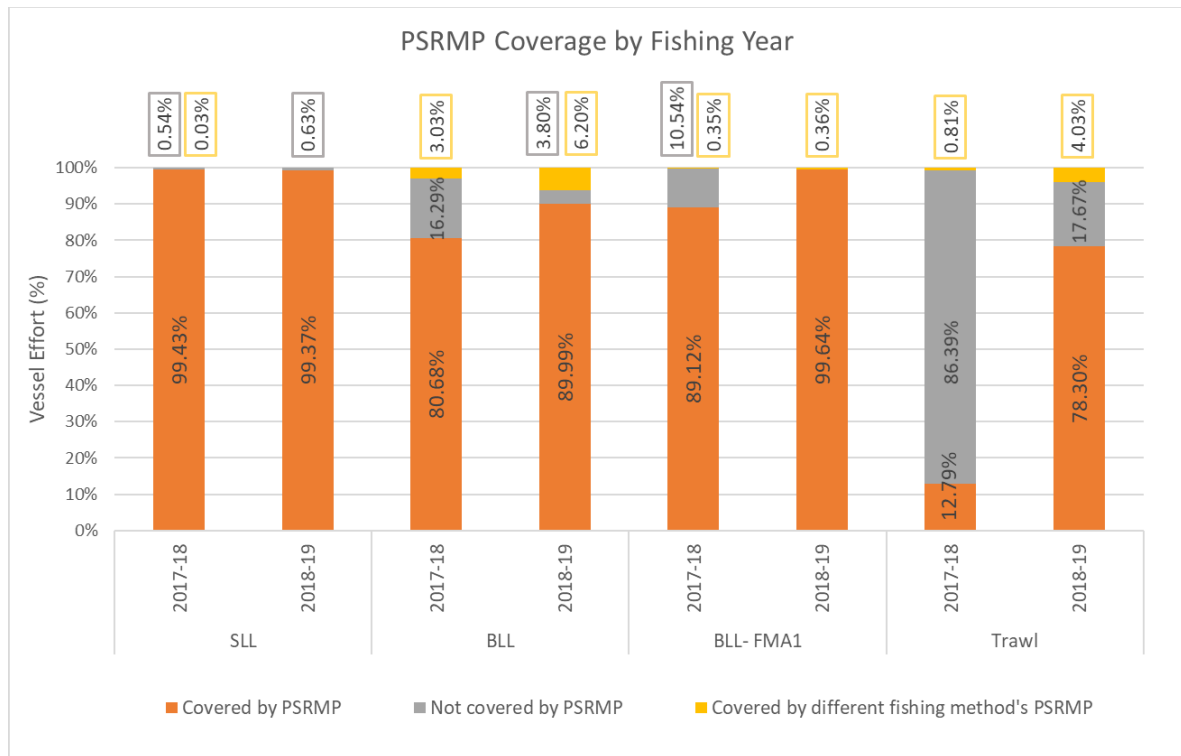


Figure 2: Historical fishing effort (1 October 2017- 30 September 2019) and amount of PSRMP coverage per fishing year. Inshore vessels and effort were identified using a list of vessels known to the Liaison Programme with refinement by target species (data supplied by FNZ RDM).

Programme Summary October 2019 - May 2020

Since the start of the new fishing year until now (01 October 2019- 31 May 2020) we have reviewed 64 PSRMP's and updated 48 PSRMPs. An additional 11 new PSRMPs (3 BLL, 4 Trawl, 2 Set Net and 2 Danish Seine) have been created, 9 of which were for vessels new to the programme. See Figure 3 for PSRMP coverage for vessels active this year. For the surface longline fleet, the 0.05% not covered by a PSRMP this year is due to a new vessel joining the fleet. It is expected to be covered next month. The 0.07% in bottom longline (FMA-1) is from a vessel only covered by a surface longline PSRMP. The remaining trawl vessels are largely made up of those with low fishing effort. Liaison Officers will continue working towards getting them covered with a risk management plan.

Engagement with set net and trawl fishing in some areas was delayed due to the progression of the Hector's and Maui dolphins Threat Management Plan (TMP) and replacement of the Southland Liaison Officer.

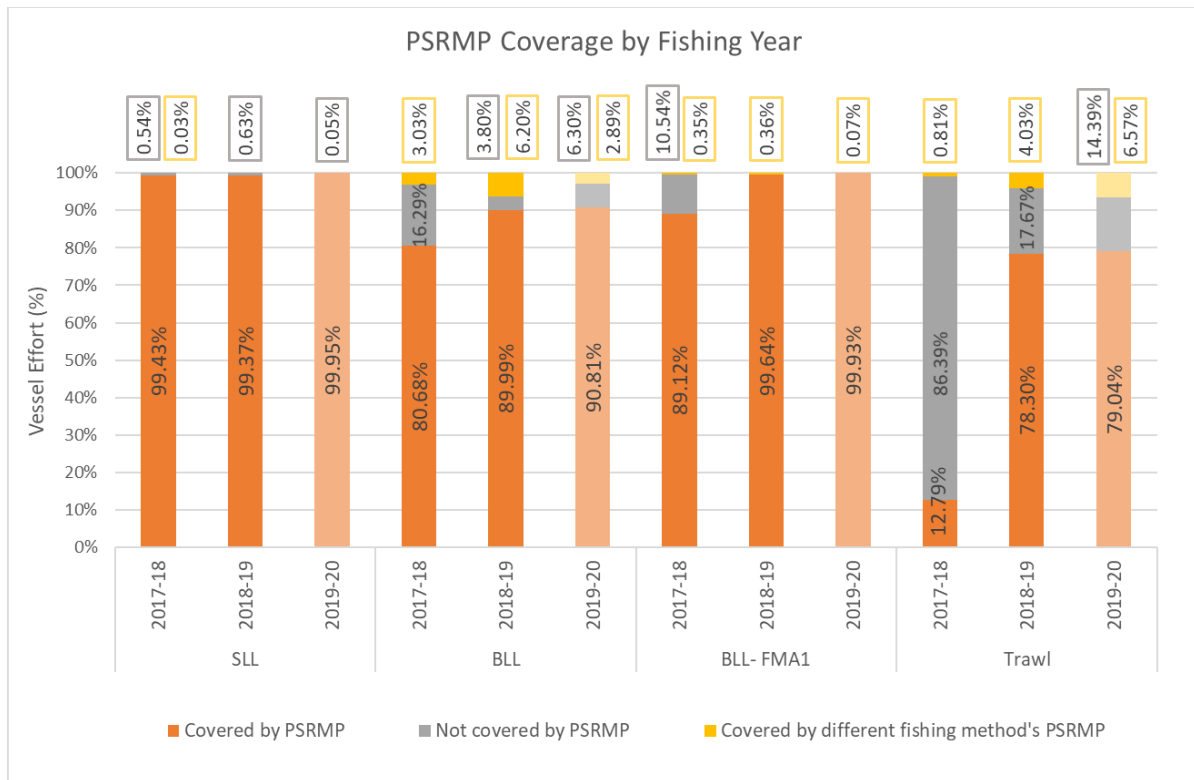


Figure 3: Fishing effort (1 October 2017- 31 May 2020) and amount of PSRMP coverage per fishing year. The faded bars for the 2019-20 fishing years signify that the data for this time period is still in progress. Inshore vessels and effort were identified using a list of vessels known to the Liaison Programme with refinement by target species (data supplied by FNZ RDM).

Trigger events were developed as a risk management tool, to prompt vessel operators to re-evaluate their mitigation strategies, when catching at-risk species. They are either reported by observers or self-reported to Liaison Officers or FNZ via electronic reporting. Specifics on what constitutes a trigger event are discussed and agreed to by government and stakeholder groups.

The Liaison Programme is notified of trigger events by MPI Observer Services or by fishers directly contacting a Liaison Officer. Data on unobserved trigger events reported to FNZ are not available to the Liaison Programme at this time. Between 01 October 2019 and 31 May 2020, we received 39 triggers from 16 different vessels (Table 2). These largely comprised SLL and BLL methods and were mostly in relation to black petrels and flesh footed shearwaters. With the exception of one vessel (who was not in the programme), all vessels with a trigger event were contacted by Liaison Officers, where they suggested potential ways bycatch mitigation could be improved. The majority of suggested changes have been in

relation to the quality and functionality of the tori line, however they have also included adding additional weighting to the line, shifting to night-setting, and changing fishing locations.

Table 2: Number of trigger events by fishing method from 1 October 2019- 31 May 2020 (as notified to the Liaison Programme via the MPI Observer Programme and self-reporting to Liaison Officers). Triggers include seabirds, reptiles, mammals and protected fish species. (FNZ- Fisheries New Zealand, LO- Liaison Officer, LP- Liaison Programme)

	Observed Trigger Event		Unobserved Trigger Event		Totals	
	FNZ reported to LP	Fisher reported to LO/LP	FNZ reported to LP	Fisher reported to LO/LP	Total trigger events	Total Vessels with trigger events
SLL	12	1	-	1	13	2
BLL	9	0	-	13	22	10
TR	2	0	-	2	4	4
Total	23	1	-	16	39	16

Fisheries Observer Audits

Fisheries Observer audits of vessel practices are essential in monitoring a vessels progress. These are currently being analysed and a breakdown of these audits will be provided in the next liaison progress report.

Liaison Coordinator Role

The focus for the Liaison Coordinator this 2019/20 year has been:

- Following up with Liaison Officers on trigger and audit responses and data entry
- Tidying up historical records and working with Liaison Officers to do this
- Extracting data to identify where further improvements in data collection and collation are needed
- Engaging with MPI managers and FINZ

Risk Based Approach

Previously, the risk approach and vessel prioritisation focused on fleets known to have significant captures and a high spatial overlap with protected species. This year, the programme has started to incorporate fishing effort ranging back to 2017 (Figure 2), which allows us to formally prioritise vessels by effort. First, within each fishing method, vessels are sorted from highest to lowest effort and ranked. Then vessels are categorised as **high** effort/priority if they are ranked in the top third of their fishing method, **medium** effort/priority if they are in the middle third, and **low** effort/priority if they are in the bottom third. The

programme also recognises the need to include protected species capture information and other metrics in this risk rating moving forward. A data sharing agreement is currently being drafted between DOC and FNZ to access and use capture information for prioritisation and management purposes. Once this agreement is finalised, more timely and relevant information can be utilised by the programme for the effective management of high-risk vessels.

Additionally, Liaison Officers have traditionally only kept some records for newly created PSRMPs, recently updated PSRMPs and trigger notifications. However, to more accurately track engagement with each fleet, we have worked on improvements to record keeping and expanded our data collection to include other forms of engagement and follow-up. This will be documented in coming reports.

Table 3 documents Liaison – fisher engagement from 1 October 2019- 31 May 2020 using the available 2019-20 fishing effort information. While this indicates some of the engagement with fishers this year, it is not an exhaustive list. To improve reporting and management of the programme in this respect, access to near real time fishing data is necessary.

Table 3: LO Contact (1 October 2019 to 31 May 2020). Inshore vessels and effort were identified using a list of vessels known to the Liaison Programme with refinement by target species (data supplied by FNZ RDM). Total active vessels were ranked by their total effort for this 2019-20 fishing year and divided into thirds (ie. High, Medium, Low). LOs have contacted 95 of the 205 total vessels with fishing effort this 2019-20 fishing year.

Active Vessels Contacted in 2019-20				
	SLL	BLL	BLL-FMA1	TR
High Effort	100%	91%	95%	31%
Medium Effort	100%	77%	67%	32%
Low Effort	100%	30%	71%	20%
Vessels Contacted/ Active Vessels	25/25	44/67	33/41	33/120

Notable Events

The programme has noted two significant capture instances below.

One vessel captured nine seabirds over seven longline fishing events. An observer was onboard and identified five black petrels, all of which were dead, and four flesh-footed shearwaters, all of which were released alive and uninjured. The vessel was contacted by the

Liaison Programme, which confirmed they were using a tori line and night setting. The Liaison Officer suggested line weighting, increasing attachment height of tori line and changes to hauling operations (speed and angle) to reduce birds access to the hooks. The captures occurred during a full moon, which may have increased the visibility of the baited hooks during the night set. The vessel also confirmed they had stopped using aft flood lighting during setting.

The second observed vessel captured four Antipodean albatross and two southern royal albatross over two longline fishing events, identifications have been confirmed by necropsy. The vessel was using a tori line and line weighting. A Liaison Officer was contacted, and the vessel moved area and switched to night setting. The vessel had an attachment point for the tori line of over 9 metres and the birds appeared to be holding around 100m behind of the vessel. The vessel was using 60g weights within two metres of the hook.

On both occasions the vessels were following seabird bycatch mitigation regulations. Since these incidents, improved mitigation standards have been set under the National Plan of Action – Seabirds 2020. The standards document what is required of effective mitigation practices, and vessel operators must use measures that meet the standards. For surface longline fisheries this includes the use of either hook-shielding devices or the combined use of night setting, line weighting and a tori line. Improved specification of line weighting has also been identified to help prevent future incidents.

Both vessels have now been supplied with hook shielding devices.

In conjunction with Fisheries Inshore New Zealand and Fisheries New Zealand we have rolled out a total of 10,000 hook-shielding devices to 12 different vessels. We still have about 2,000 in storage, ready for deployment and are expecting another order from Hookpods Ltd. in the coming months. Many of the vessels that have received hook shielding devices have only just integrated them into their gear due to Covid-19 delays. Feedback from Liaison Officers indicates there are five vessels currently using these devices. Future collection of logbooks will inform progress on this mitigation tool. So far, general reviews have been mixed, yet mostly promising.

Upcoming Programme Plans and the National Plan of Action - Seabirds

The new National Plan of Action – Seabirds 2020 outlines a suite of mitigation standards that will be implemented for each fishing method and will be reviewed annually by the Seabird Advisory Group (SAG). The Liaison Programme will play a central role in the implementation of these standards through the development of Protected Species Risk Management Plans (PSRMPs) on each vessel.

Moving forward, the development of Protected Species Risk Management Plans will reflect how vessels demonstrate the use of best practice mitigation measures and meet the relevant mitigation standards. Compliance checks and auditing of these plans by MPI Fisheries Observers will then verify the steps that the vessel is taking to meet the mitigation measures outlined in the plan and highlight where there is still work to be done. PSRMPs will also cover mitigation actions to reduce or eliminate other protected species taxa (e.g. marine mammals), as relevant to the fishery.

Within the coming years the capacity of the programme is expected to grow to provide full outreach to all relevant inshore fisheries. This will consist of additional Liaison Officers to expand into more fisheries and areas, increased contact with high risk vessels and fleets and development of training plans for crew on protected species and bycatch mitigation. Still, the role of the Liaison Officers will largely remain the same, supporting and educating fishers in best practice mitigation and providing a vital interface between skippers, government, and researchers.

The project will also expand the role of the Liaison Coordinator to ensure operational oversight of the programme and improved reporting. Measuring success and constraints in reporting capability have been identified as improvements required in the rollout of this next phase of the project. This will be addressed through database development and standardisation of procedures. There will also be increased engagement with quota holders to support the uptake of the plans and mitigation measures.

The following Liaison Programme project objectives and deliverables are cited from the draft 2020-21 CSP Annual Plan⁴.

⁴ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/conservation/marine-and-coastal/marine-conservation-services/plans/draft-csp-annual-plan-2020-21.pdf>

Project Objectives (MIT2020-02)

1. Grow liaison capacity across inshore fleets around the country including trawl, set net, bottom longline and surface longline fisheries.

Project Deliverables (MIT2020-02)

1. Database of liaison activity, including PSRMPs developed and updated, vessels visited, trigger responses and mitigation materials and training provided
2. Creation of a government working group involving DOC and Fisheries New Zealand/MPI (Fisheries Management, Compliance and the Observer Programme) to ensure feedback loops and work through challenges within the Liaison Programme.
3. Development of inter-agency trigger and management responses.
4. Training plans for fishers on mitigation and handling procedures.
5. Quarterly reports back to relevant stakeholders (including industry and eNGO's) detailing progress and any developments which have come from each fleet.
6. Annual reporting will be provided as part of the NPOA- Seabirds 2020 Report.
7. Yearly review of progress and implementation will be conducted through both DOC's CSP Technical Working Group and the Seabird Advisory Group as part of the NPOA – Seabirds.

More information on the Liaison Programme can be found in the most recent (2018-19) annual report⁵ and Liaison Programme Manual⁶, which will be updated for the 2020-21 year. Please note that previous annual reports were aligned with the financial year, while the final reporting will be aligned with the fishing year for Seabirds NPOA reporting⁷.

For more information on fleet-specific bycatch mitigation, please see the Operational Procedures developed by FINZ in consultation with FNZ and DOC, which can be found on the FINZ website⁸.

The purpose of this report is to provide regular updates on progress and developments within the program. DOC welcomes any feedback and suggestions on the program through CSP@doc.govt.nz.

⁵ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/conservation-services-programme/csp-reports/201819/protected-species-liaison-project-2018-19/>

⁶ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/conservation-services-programme/other-publications/protected-species-liaison-programme-manual/>

⁷ The fishing year is 01 October- 30 September, while the financial year is from 01 July- 30 June

⁸ <https://www.inshore.co.nz/operational-procedures/>