Seismic Survey Code of Conduct Review

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Marine Species and Threats
Introduction


• Voluntary.

• Stated intent to review the Code in three years.

• Revised slightly for incorporation by reference into Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf (Environmental Effects – Permitted Activities) Regulations 2013.
Review

- Commencing as stated.
- Implementation issues to be addressed include those raised by DOC, industry, environmental consultants, academia.

- Code not fully enforceable under EEZ Act.

- Will consider patchwork of regulation across regions and sanctuaries.

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Process

Steering Group Launch


Technical Working Groups

Seismic Code Review Group: Revised Code Review

DOC Drafting

Final Code

Steering Group

DOC Drafting

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Iwi

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Provisional Timeline

- August 2015: Review Group Meets
- August 2015: Seven Working Groups Meet
- September 2015: Two Working Groups Meet
- January 2016: Working Groups Reports
- Approx February 2016: Return to HS&E
- Feb/Mar 2016: Drafting Completed
- Mar/Apr 2016: Review of Revised Code
- April 2016: Draft Edited and Finalised
Scope & Basis

- This review is limited to the contents and implementation of the Code.

- The need for oil, seismic surveys and their general locations are not within the scope of the discussions.

- Bycatch, ship noise and other impactful activities are beyond the scope of the discussions.

- There is no evidence of population-level impacts of seismic surveys on marine mammals as there have been no studies capable of detecting these. Thus there is also no evidence that there are no population-level impacts of seismic surveys on marine mammals. Such statements are not relevant to this review.

- Seismic surveys impact marine mammals and the Code represents an attempt to reduce these impacts in surveys that have been authorised by other Agencies.
Role of the TWG

- To consider and discuss assigned issues that were raised through experience with, and the review of, the current Code.
- To produce a report containing one or more options for resolving each assigned issue, or advice for how to approach them if discrete solutions may not be possible. DOC and the Steering group will draw heavily from this advice when revising the Code.

- This is an advisory role. Consensus is valuable, but not required. Varying opinions should be incorporated in the report. All opinions will be considered during the drafting phase.
- DOC and the Steering Group will make decisions based upon the advice of the SCRG and the suggestions of the TWGs. However, due consideration will also be given to long-term goals, available resources, wider legal and policy frameworks and various other factors when drafting and finalising the text of the revised Code.
Key Areas to Address

- requirements for visual observers and passive acoustic monitoring operators
- data collection and analysis (including QC/QA, observer auditing, reporting chain, etc.)
- application of the Code to non-seismic noise sources and non-standard seismic surveys, such as vertical profiling
- propagation modelling and in-field ground-truthing
- improved consistency across the regulatory landscape in New Zealand
Future-proofing

- alternatives to observation/mitigation-based guidance are also under consideration
- Objective-orientated management
Future-proofing: Detection Techs

Minimum detection rates?
- E.g., >=90% detection inside mitigation zone?
Future-proofing: Source Techs

Maximum threshold levels?

- Weighted?
- Certain frequency bands?
- Tighter Sanctuary restrictions?
Benefits of future-proofing

Benefits:

• less prescription on detection methods could improve detection rates and reduce mitigation costs.
• threshold-at-distance-based regulations may move protections beyond direct acoustic injury to also reduce sub-injurious exposures.
• Including such alternatives would allow the Code to better address disturbance and continue NZ’s global leadership role in the management of seismic activities.
Any Questions?