

3rd Meeting of the Scientific Committee

Port Vila, Vanuatu
28 September - 3 October 2015

SC-03-DW-03

**New Zealand notification of amendments to the status of blocks within its
bottom fishing footprint
*Ministry for Primary Industries***

New Zealand notification of amendments to the status of blocks within its bottom fishing footprint for trawl

1. Purpose of paper

This paper is to advise members of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO) Scientific Committee of an interim approach for New Zealand vessels midwater trawling for benthopelagic species in the SPRFMO Convention area.

2. Background

At its meeting on 1-7 October 2014 the SPRFMO Scientific Committee agreed that:

- midwater trawling for benthopelagic species (e.g. alfonsino) falls under the description of "bottom fishing" as defined in paragraph 4 of CMM 2.03;
- *midwater trawling for benthopelagic species has a low impact on the physical and biological habitat;*
- *midwater trawling for benthopelagic species is unlikely to cause significant adverse effects on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs).*

The Scientific Committee also recommended:

- *The Commission should modify CMM 2.03 to take into account the relative impact on VMEs of different fishing methods and practices, and to specifically address midwater trawling for benthopelagic species.*

New Zealand is committed to develop a robust scientific evidence base to develop a risk-based framework that accounts for the relative risk of different fishing methods to VMEs.

The priority is to develop a comprehensive bottom fishing measure (encompassing bottom fishing/trawling, midwater trawling for benthopelagic species like alfonsinos, and other methods that touch the seabed, such as potting and dredging) for the consideration of the Scientific Committee as soon as possible.

In the interim period, New Zealand will restrict its vessels to midwater trawl for benthopelagic species within its existing bottom fishing footprint.

To enable utilisation and to better protect VME's, New Zealand is amending the status of three blocks within its footprint as an interim measure until the more comprehensive changes are in place.

3. Approach

New Zealand is:

- Changing the existing status of blocks 1 and 2 within New Zealand's bottom trawling footprint from an area open to bottom trawling and midwater trawling but subject to the move-on rule to an area closed to bottom trawling and midwater trawling;

- Changing the existing status of block 18 from an area closed to bottom trawling and midwater trawling, to an area open to bottom trawling and midwater trawling, but subject to the move-on rule.
- Midwater trawling for benthic-pelagic species in all other areas of our footprint will be restricted to the same areas and VME evidence process as for bottom trawling.

The proposed approach is based on our consideration that, based on best available scientific information, this change will help to prevent significant adverse impacts to Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) by lowering New Zealand's overall impact on VMEs due to the within our bottom fishing footprint.

The analysis in Annex 2 indicates:

- From 1990-2013 there were 106 trawl tows and a significant catch of alfonsino in box 18 (at an average of about 1.6 tonnes per tow);
- About 10% of the total New Zealand catch of this species from the SPRFMO Area has been taken from box 18. This catch was taken mostly by midwater trawl between 2011 and 2014 before the SPRFMO Scientific Committee classified such trawling as included in the definition of bottom fishing;
- Observers on board trawlers have recorded very little benthic bycatch in box 18 and there is, therefore, little evidence of the presence of VMEs in the areas fished in box 18;
- Over the same time period, there were 86 trawl tows in boxes 1 and 2 with a smaller catch of alfonsino (0.6 tonnes per tow);
- Observers on board trawlers have recorded substantially more benthic bycatch in boxes 1 and 2, including many species indicative of the presence of VMEs (black corals, gorgonian corals, sponges, etc.).

Based on the above assessment, New Zealand is confident that the change will help to prevent significant adverse impacts to VMEs by lowering our overall impact on VMEs (i.e. by disallowing effort in boxes that have shown and continue to show evidence of VMEs and into a box that does not show much evidence of VMEs).

New Zealand will be implementing and enforcing the changes through its High Seas permit conditions and will have 100% observer coverage on vessels using midwater trawls.

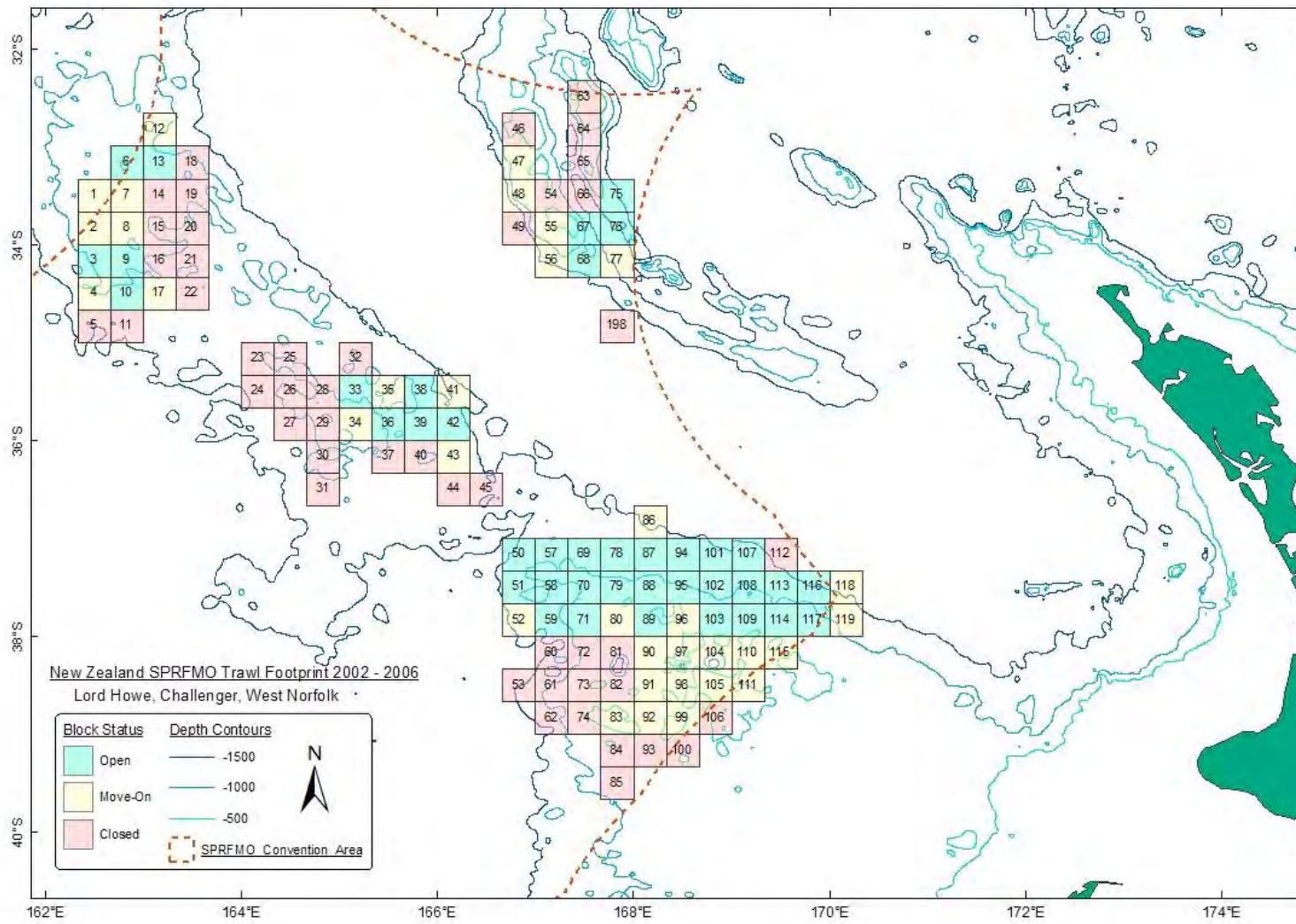
Vessels using midwater trawls will be subject to the same VME evidence process that New Zealand currently applies to vessels using bottom trawls within its footprint.

4. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Scientific Committee:

- **notes** that New Zealand has amended the status of three blocks within its bottom fishing footprint for trawl to reduce possible impact on VMEs while providing for increased utilisation opportunities for benthic-pelagic species.

Annex 1: New Zealand's bottom fishing footprint showing current status of blocks



Annex 2: Comparison of catch and benthic bycatch (evidence of VMEs) in the blocks under consideration

Box 18 – Status to be changed from Closed to Open but subject to the move-on rule

	Tonnes ORH	Tonnes BYX
Catch in box:	0.0	173.1
Total SPRFMO catch:	56,480.3	1,846.8

	Tows by year and gear	
	6 BT	100 MW
Total	6	100
1990	0	0
1991	0	0
1992	0	0
1993	0	0
1994	0	0
1995	0	0
1996	0	0
1997	0	0
1998	4	0
1999	1	0
2000	0	0
2001	0	0
2002	0	0
2003	0	0
2004	0	0
2005	0	0
2006	1	0
2007	0	0
2008	0	0
2009	0	0
2010	0	0
2011	0	27
2012	0	26
2013	0	47

Non-fish benthic bycatch records from this box				
Year	Code	Common name	Scientific name	Scientific name
2011	COB	Black coral	Antipatharia (Order)	Antipatharia (Order)
2011	ROK	Rocks stones	Geological specimens	Geological specimens

Boxes 1 and 2 – Status to be changed from Open but subject to the move-on rule to Closed

	Tonnes ORH	Tonnes BYX
Catch in box:	-	55.8
Total SPRFMO catch:	56,480.3	1,846.8

	Tows by year and gear	
	BT	MW
Total	67	19
	BT	MW
1990	0	0
1991	0	0
1992	1	0
1993	0	0
1994	1	0
1995	0	0
1996	0	0
1997	0	0
1998	21	0
1999	3	0
2000	0	0
2001	0	0
2002	0	0
2003	0	0
2004	0	0
2005	1	0
2006	2	0
2007	0	0
2008	0	0
2009	0	0
2010	13	1
2011	25	10
2012	0	7
2013	0	1

Non-fish benthic bycatch records from these boxes			
Year	Code	Common name	Scientific name
2010	COB	Black coral	Antipatharia (Order)
2010	COB	Black coral	Antipatharia (Order)
2010	GOC	Gorgonian coral	Gorgonacea (Order)
2010	GOC	Gorgonian coral	Gorgonacea (Order)
2010	GOC	Gorgonian coral	Gorgonacea (Order)
2010	GOC	Gorgonian coral	Gorgonacea (Order)
2010	COB	Black coral	Antipatharia (Order)
2010	CLG	Callogorgia spp.	Callogorgia spp.
2010	GOC	Gorgonian coral	Gorgonacea (Order)
2010	COB	Black coral	Antipatharia (Order)
2011	MOC	Madrepora oculata	Madrepora oculata
2011	GOC	Gorgonian coral	Gorgonacea (Order)
2011	OSI	Ophiocreas sibogae	Ophiocreas sibogae
2011	GOC	Gorgonian coral	Gorgonacea (Order)
2011	GOC	Gorgonian coral	Gorgonacea (Order)
2011	GOC	Gorgonian coral	Gorgonacea (Order)
2011	BRG	Brisingida (Order)	Brisingida
2011	GOC	Gorgonian coral	Gorgonacea (Order)
2011	GRM	Sea urchin	Gracilechinus multidentatus
2011	GOC	Gorgonian coral	Gorgonacea (Order)
2011	SLT	Orange fat finger sponge	Stelletta spp.
2011	ERO	Deepwater branching coral	Enallopsammia rostrata
2011	ONG	Sponges	Porifera (Phylum)
2011	GOC	Gorgonian coral	Gorgonacea (Order)
2011	ONG	Sponges	Porifera (Phylum)
2011	GOC	Gorgonian coral	Gorgonacea (Order)
2012	GOC	Gorgonian coral	Gorgonacea (Order)