

Recommendation paper

Title: Loligo fishery: Fisheries Management when MMO's are unable to deploy

Date: 6th May 2021

Report of: Director of Natural Resources

1. Background:

- 1.1 The Falkland Islands Government has been managing the impacts of the global pandemic Covid -19 since early March 2020. There has been an evolving response determined by the level of risk that has been faced nationally. Currently the Falkland Islands remains Covid-free (regarding community transmission) and the only cases to date have been found in quarantining arrivals (contained) and one contained outbreak in the medical team at MPC.
- 1.2 It is clear, from known medical facts, that to reduce the risk of contracting Covid-19, personnel must be quarantined for 14 days, a policy that FIG has been following since mid-2020.
- 1.3 During the second Loligo season of 2020, Marine Mammal Observers were unable to be deployed on the first day of the fishery (29th July). FIFD implemented the license condition that SEDs were deployed from day 1 as there was no MMO aboard. Once MMOs were deployed (7th August), a total of 11 seal corpses (decomposition and markings indicated they had been handled within the timeframe of the fishery opening and by man) were recovered during fishing operations. These decomposing corpses found within the Loligo fishing grounds, indicated that either SEDs were not deployed across the entire fleet, or that there were technical issues with SEDs. No seal mortalities were reported to FIFD.
- 1.4 During the mobilisation of vessels for the first Loligo season 2021, 3 vessels had issues with COVID outbreaks on board. Following discussions with industry, the Strategic Pandemic Management Group and MLAs, an approach was developed to ensure vessels were able to start fishing when the fishery opened even if they were still in the 14-day quarantine period. SEDs were compulsory for any vessel without an MMO.
- 1.5 It is important that the fishery can continue to operate in a sustainable manner whilst managing the challenges of convalescing COVID cases and/or the inability of MMOs to deploy on vessels operating in the fishery.

2. Presentation and consultations:

- 2.1. A briefing was provided to the fishing industry on 5th February regarding the current FIG regulations and policy on quarantine and release from isolation; known medical facts about the manifestation and passage of Covid-19 virus through an average individual and the requirements for quarantine upon arrival in the Falklands. A further briefing was provided on 9th April with the CMO in attendance.
- 2.3 The Management Decision made for the first season 2021 indicated that no fishing would be permitted in the second season if there was no MMO deployed on a vessel (see 1.3). Industry have requested that FIFD-LPG find a way to allow fishing to continue in the absence of an MMO. LPG have submitted a solution to FIFD for consideration.

3. Recommendation:

- 3.1. Having considered all of the facts and feedback from industry the below is recommended:
 - 3.1.1 In the event that MMOs are unable to deploy on a fishing vessel on day 1 of the fishery as a result of travel/transit issues, a Fishing Licence will be awarded on the below conditions:
 - 3.1.1.1 That the SED is deployed for every shoot from day 1 of the fishing season
 - 3.1.1.2 That a photograph of every shoot and haul, that is time and date marked, is sent to FIFD (Licensing Officer/Operations Manager) on a daily basis.
 - 3.1.2 In the event that a COVID convalescing vessel seeks to take up its fishing license, a fishing license MAY be awarded remotely (using remote licence briefing and inspection), subject to consideration on a case-by-case basis by the Director. In the event that a license is issued the conditions at 3.1.1.1 and 3.1.1.2 will apply.

As soon as MMOs are deployed on a vessel, there will be no requirement for the daily submission of time and date marked photographs.

These recommendations build on t those made previously, and the underlying objectives remain that we can facilitate the successful operation of the fishery whilst ensuring that public health in the Falklands is not compromised.

The challenges for the crew and fleet managers continue to be understood, but it is felt that the above approach can provide the assurances required to enable the fishery to operate with the lowest possible risk to all parties.

Approved:



Dr. Andrea Clausen
Director of Natural Resources