Fisheries New Zealand
Tini a Tangaroa

Fisheries (Seabird Mitigation Measures – Bottom longlines) Circular 2021

Requirements for vessels between 7 and 20 metres (excl. autoliners)

The development of the National Plan of Action for Seabirds 2020 prompted Fisheries New Zealand and the Department of Conservation, in conjunction with stakeholders, to formulate a set of non-regulatory Mitigation Standards for bottom longline vessels to reduce risks to seabirds. The Fisheries (Seabird Mitigation Measures – Bottom Longlines) Circular 2021 better aligns the mandated measures with the 'best practice' mitigation standards.

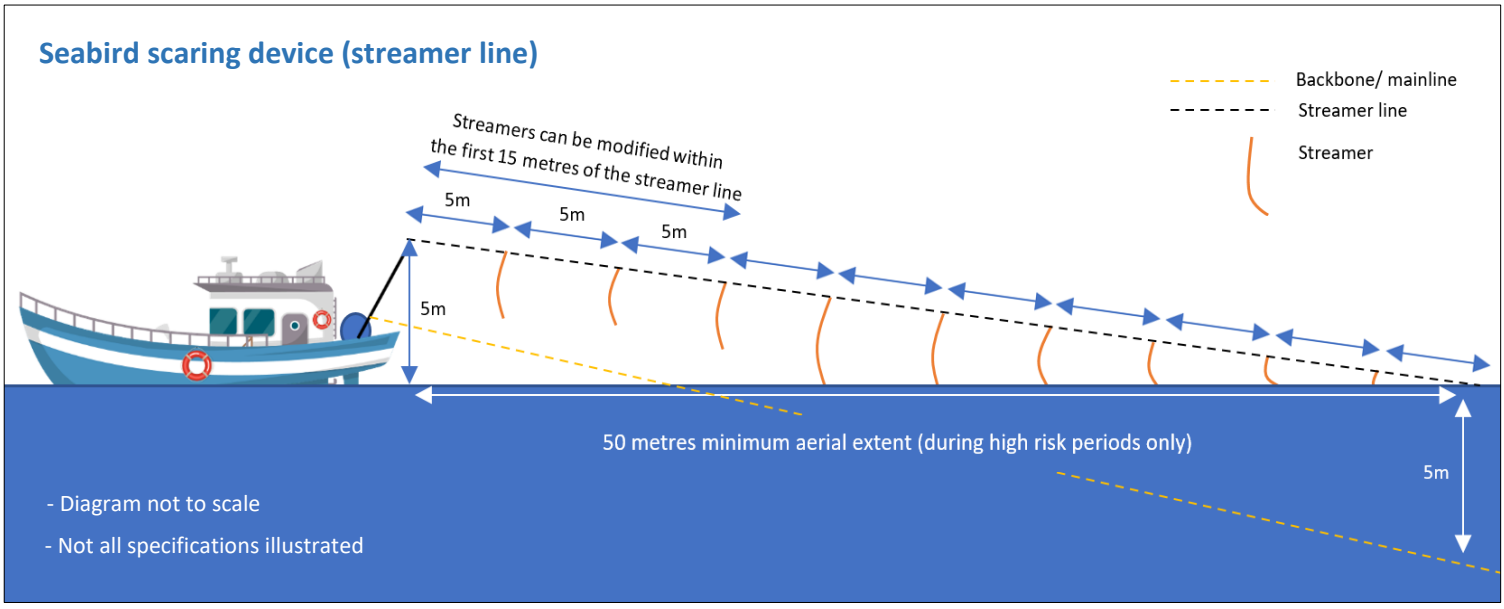
Streamer Line Specifications

All bottom longline vessels that are between 7 and 20 metres in overall length (excl. autoliners) must deploy a streamer line during the setting of bottom longlines that meet the following specifications:

- The streamer line must be attached to the vessel at a point 5 metres above the surface of the water in the absence of swell.
- The streamer line must be attached such that when deployed, baits are protected by the streamers, even in a crosswind.
- Streamers must be brightly coloured.
- Streamers must be spaced a maximum of 5 metres apart, beginning no more than 5 metres from the stern of the vessel and extending the full aerial length of the streamer line.
- When deployed, each of the streamers must reach the sea surface in the absence of wind and swell. Streamer length will vary depending on the height of their attachment point above the water.
- However, streamers on the first 15 metres of the streamer line may be modified to avoid tangling with the backbone as long as a minimum length of 1 metre is maintained.
- The streamer line must achieve a minimum aerial extent of 50 metres when fishing during high risk periods (i.e. during daylight hours or for 3 days either side of a full moon).[1]
- **Note**: Vessels using the method of Dahn lining are not required to use a streamer line.

Fish Waste Management

During hauling of bottom longlines, any live fish or dead fish (those which can be legally discarded) that are larger than 30 centimetres in fork length may be discharged on the side of the vessel where the hauling station is located, as long as a hauling mitigation device is deployed. A hauling mitigation device physically deters or blocks seabirds from flying or swimming directly into the area where lines are being hauled, without causing harm to birds. All other fish waste must be discarded on the opposite side of hauling station.



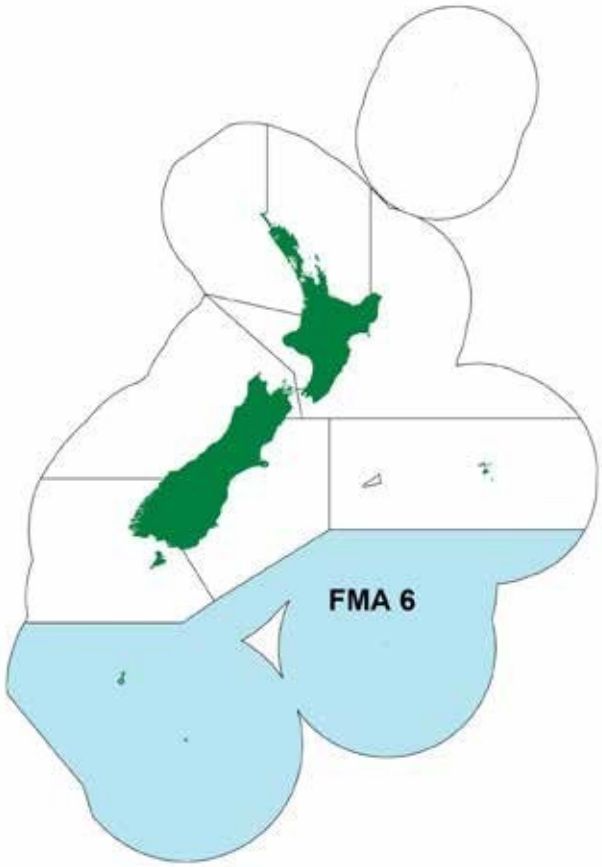
[1] There is no aerial extent requirement outside of high risk periods

Line Weighting Regime

When bottom longlining, lines must be weighted so that the slowest sinking hook[1] can be demonstrably shown to reach a depth of 5 metres within the protection of the aerial extent of the streamer line.[2] Sink rates must be measured at regular intervals (defined as once per calendar month or when gear setup significantly changes) and the information recorded and retained for one year. This data must be made available upon request by Fisheries Compliance Officers and Observers.

Fishers can measure sink rates either through bottle tests or using time-depth recorders (TDRs). While TDRs are considered to provide more accurate information, they are more expensive. Bottle tests provide a cheap and easy way of measuring sink rates. A bottle test is conducted by clipping an empty biodegradable bottle[3] to the mainline using rope/monofilament line of a known length. Once the bottle has been pulled underwater, the mainline will have sunk to a depth equal to the length of the rope/monofilament line. By measuring the time it takes for the bottle to sink, setting speed and aerial extent of the streamer line, it is possible to calculate the sink rate of the mainline and determine whether the desired depth was reached within the aerial extent of the streamer line. Materials on measuring sink rates have been developed by Fisheries Inshore New Zealand and Department of Conservation Liaison Officer Programme (bottle test guidelines).

The requirements for line weighting are proposed as an intermediary solution that enables fishers to continue their operations with minimal impacts on seabirds while additional data is collected on sink rates of hooks using various gear set ups. Once more data is available, these regulations will be revisited and a more permanent solution developed, in conjunction with stakeholders.



Area Specific Line Weighting

All bottom longline vessels operating in FMA 6 (Sub-Antarctic) between 1 November and 31 May must use integrated weight lines (IWL) with a lead core of at least 50 grams per metre. This is to reduce the risk of seabird captures during the seabird breeding season when birds are foraging more aggressively to feed their chicks. Evidence has shown that the use of integrated weight lines may reduce the incidental capture of seabirds and since many vessels that are active in the area already utilize IWL, the impact of requiring this gear is considered low.

[1] For the purpose of the Bottom Longline Circular 2021, the slowest sinking hook means the mid-way point between two weights near the centre of the line.
[2] Vessels using the method of Dahn lining do not have to meet the sink rate requirement.
[3] Fisheries New Zealand encourages the use of biodegradable bottles and asks that care is taken to retrieve bottles following testing. Biodegradable water bottles can be found at Compostable Bottle, Bottle Made From Plants: For The Better Good.