

Seabird Safe Fishing Transparency Scheme for Hauraki Gulf fishers

Organisation	Awarded
<i>Southern Seabird Solutions</i>	\$50,000

In May 2017, Southern Seabird Solutions was granted \$50,000 to investigate the potential of a seabird-safe fishing transparency scheme, to encourage commercial longline fishers to adopt ‘seabird smart’ fishing practices in the Hauraki Gulf and beyond.

The scheme would provide incentives to commercial longline fishers to follow safe fishing practices to minimize seabird mortalities. It would also allow consumers to reward fishers adopting these practices by choosing to buy ‘Seabird Safe’ accredited fish.

The Hauraki Gulf is an internationally important biodiversity hotspot for seabirds. Of the 27 species that breed in the Gulf, ten are listed as threatened, several critically. The black petrel only breeds in the Gulf and only 2,700 breeding pairs remain – it is the highest risk seabird on the government’s fisheries impact list. The mauri of seabirds is an indicator for that of the wider Hauraki Gulf. Seabirds import nutrients from the sea to land and they play a crucial role in the marine ecosystem as predators at the top of the food chain. This project aims to support Hauraki Gulf seabirds to thrive by minimising fishing-related mortalities.

The work involved assessing existing seabird safe assurance programmes to identify what could work in the Hauraki Gulf, scoping a potential framework and identifying how it could be managed, administered and promoted. The potential framework was then assessed against other methods, including regulation.

Southern Seabird Solutions worked collaboratively with the Black Petrel Working Group in all stages of the project, including its partner organisations (WWF-NZ, Seafood NZ, Department of Conservation, Ministry for Primary Industries, Te Ohu Kaimoana), Forest and Bird, the Hauraki Gulf Forum, Fisheries Inshore NZ, Sanford Ltd, Leigh Fisheries Ltd, Moana NZ, Leigh Commercial Fishermen’s Association, Coromandel/Whitianga Commercial Fishermen’s Association and the Snapper 1 Commercial Group.

Southern Seabirds and the Black Petrel Working Group drew on the experience of central North Island beef farmers, who created the Taupo Beef

brand. This brand positions beef from the area as a premium product, which helps to offset the costs incurred by farmers changing their practices to protect Lake Taupo’s water quality. These farmers see this kind of approach as the way of the future (see <https://www.taupobeef.co.nz/copy-of-our-farmers>).



Snapper longline vessel, photo Gareth Eyres

“ During the project I went to Great Barrier and worked on the black petrel colony. It really brought home to me how precarious that population is – the birds are making incredible journeys to find food. Lots of fishers have been to the breeding ground - keeping close to the issue by experiencing it is crucial.”

Janice Molloy, Southern Seabird Solutions ”



Black petrel, photo Philip Griffin

“We need to break the ongoing degradation cycle and make progress in an integrated way, by linking initiatives together for greater impact, such as those around sedimentation, farming and fishing practices.

Janice Molloy

”

cameras on boats, to accurately reflect the implementation of seabird mitigation measures and provide transparency around black petrel bycatch. They also reiterated their commitment to the Black Petrel Working Group pledge and to working with stakeholders to meet shared aims.

Southern Seabird Solutions has learned the importance of meeting with stakeholders individually before collective meetings, to gain information that might not be shared in a wider group. Showing how the scheme could look in practice via the mock website was key to engaging people, as was reporting back to the group visually via PowerPoint rather than wordy reports.

A strength of the project was having a compelling goal that everyone genuinely shared: ensuring seabirds thrive alongside a thriving fishery. There was good trust among the diverse Black Petrel Working Group as Southern Seabird Solutions had already been working with this group for two years. Having an experienced facilitator for the process from outside the fishing sector helped. He was able to build rapport, share learning from other sectors, and be impartial. Having a flexible timeframe with GIFT also helped, as relationships and engagement needed to go at their own pace to maintain stakeholder engagement.

Changes in working group membership were at times disruptive, requiring time to bring new people up to speed. The new government was a curve ball as the former government was committed to implementing cameras on boats and the new government hasn't committed to this yet. The Black Petrel Working Group is now working with government on this issue.

The Minister of Conservation has however prioritised the Hauraki Gulf and [Sea Change](#) goals, which is a positive signal.

In essence, the groundwork has been laid for this scheme, if in the future stakeholders in the Black Petrel Working Group see value in its implementation.

For Janice, “This precious bird is essential to the mauri of the Gulf”. Southern Seabird Solutions recently obtained non-GIFT funding to track black petrel fledglings to see where they go – they are in it for the long haul to protect the seabirds of the Hauraki Gulf.

For more on Southern Seabird Solutions, [click here to visit their website.](#)

Achievements of this collaboration between Southern Seabird Solutions and the Black Petrel Working Group are as follows.

- ◆ The key elements of a seabird-safe fishing transparency scheme were collectively developed. Such a scheme would be ground-breaking nationally and internationally. The scheme leverages off existing programmes that the fishing industry already pays for, to keep costs low and maximise existing infrastructure, staffing and monitoring systems.
- ◆ A mock website for the scheme was created, to show fishing companies the benefits for them in terms of building a social licence to fish in the Gulf.

Ultimately, the fishing companies decided not to proceed with implementation of a formal assurance scheme at this time, proposing instead that an action plan is developed that has elements of the scheme within it. The companies wish to continue with electronic monitoring trials of



Snapper fisher Adam Clow helping scientists at the black petrel colony, photo Bruce Foster