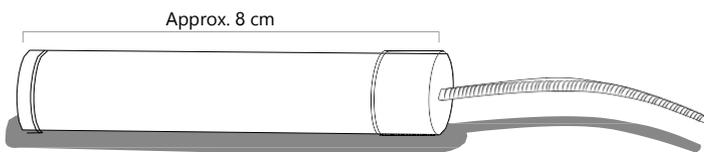


Seal Control Units in the Lakes and Coorong Fishery

WHAT IS A SEAL CONTROL UNIT?

A Seal Control Unit is a small acoustic device, made up of an 8 cm-long cardboard cylinder with a waterproof fuse on one end. They are weighted with sand at the other end to make them sink. A Seal Control Unit may also be referred to as a Seal Cracker or Underwater Deterrent Device.

Seal Control Units offer a non-lethal method of preventing Long-nosed fur seals from damaging commercial fishers' nets and eating their catch.



Seal Control Unit

HOW DOES A SEAL CONTROL UNIT WORK?

Seal Control units are used to temporarily discourage seals away from commercial fishing gear without harming them. Setting off a seal control unit under water creates a shock wave, which causes the seal discomfort and makes it swim away.

It is expected that correct and repeated use of the crackers will change the behavior of the seal over time and may be effective in deterring them from commercial fishing gear.

ARE THEY SAFE TO USE?

The Seal Control Units are safe for both fishers and seals when they are used as directed. The shock wave created doesn't injure the seal or other animals in the vicinity and the device is inaudible on the surface.

WHERE ARE THEY CURRENTLY BEING USED?

Fishers are permitted to use the Seal Control Units in any area of the commercial Lakes and Coorong Fishery, which encompasses the waters of the Coorong, Lake Alexandrina, Lake Albert and coastal waters between Goolwa and Kingston.

Seal Control Units have been used in Tasmania for 20 years to minimise interactions within fisheries and the aquaculture industry. Between 25,000 and 30,000 units are deployed in Tasmania each year.

CAN ANYONE USE THEM?

The use of Seal Control Units is regulated in South Australia. Only commercial fishers in the Lakes and Coorong Fishery who have been trained and accredited by the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) are authorised to use them. Fishers have to comply with approved protocols for the use of Seal Control Units to ensure safe, effective and humane wildlife management outcomes. Fishers are also required to hold an appropriate permit under the *Explosives Act 1936*.

ARE SEAL CONTROL UNITS EFFECTIVE?

A research project on the effectiveness of Seal Control Units was completed in June 2016 in conjunction with fishers from the Lakes and Coorong Fishery. The project was led by scientists from the South Australian Research and Development Institute and funded by the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, Primary Industry and Regions SA and DEW.

The study showed that Seal Control Units can be useful in deterring seals from fishing gear in certain situations.

Seal Control Units are part of an integrated approach to minimise the impacts of Long-nosed fur seals on the Lakes and Coorong Fishery. Other methods that have been tested include changes in fishing practices and methods. Modifications have also been made to the Tauwitchere barrage to reduce the number of seals hauling out.

For more information

Visit:

http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/managing-natural-resources/plants-and-animals/Living_with_wildlife/seals

or contact DEW Abundant Species Unit:

Email: SealControlUnitEnquiries@sa.gov.au



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