



## Policy to Protect Marine Habitats

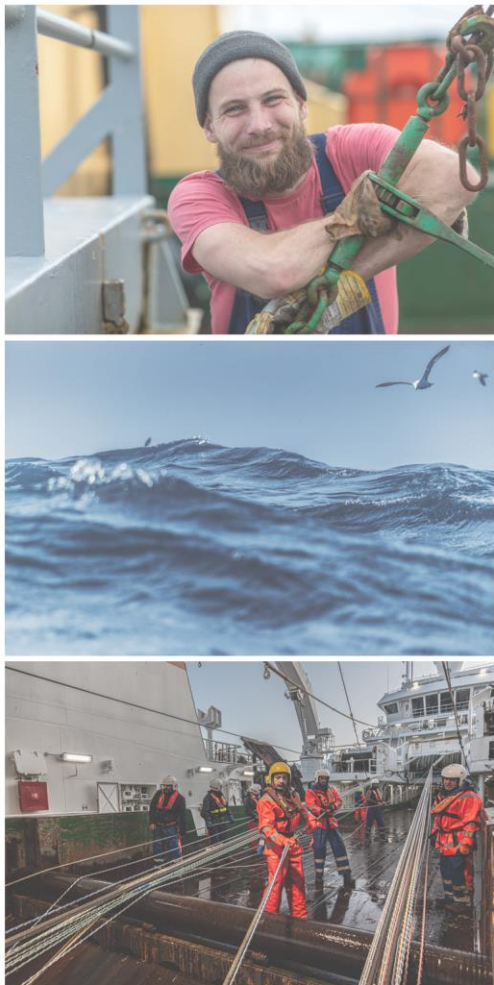
As PP Group we acknowledge that our fishing activities, just as all human activities, have an impact on the planet and the marine environment especially. At the same time we feel that we are stewards of the marine ecosystem and see it as our duty that the next generation inherits a marine ecosystem that, at least, is in the same condition, but preferably better condition. Therefore we take initiatives to limit the impact of our fishing activities on the habitats and the broader marine ecosystem. This is a continuous process and not a time limited exercise.

As part of our healthy oceans pillar we strive for all fisheries in which fishing vessels of PP Group participate are certified against a sustainability standard. Principle 2 of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) sustainability certification standard covers the protection of marine habitats. According to the standard a fishery cannot be MSC certified if it causes serious damage or irreversible impact on the structure and function of a seafloor habitat. The MSC Standard defines irreversible impact as damage from which a habitat will take 20 years or longer to recover.

In all of PP Group's MSC certified fisheries activities and measures are taken in order to comply with principle 2 of the MSC standard. These actions can all be found on the MSC website in the public certification reports and annual audit report in relation to our MSC certified fisheries. Below we provide a brief, not complete, overview of habitats related issues for the different types of fisheries we are involved in.

### **Pelagic fishing:**

PP Group uses pelagic trawls for its pelagic fishing activities. The key characteristic of pelagic trawls is that they are designed to fish in the water column and are not intended to touch the seabed (the gear would sustain damage if it did touch the seabed). The position of the trawl and trawl doors in the water column is monitored by transponders mounted on the fishing gear, which is used to ensure that both the fishing gear is at the right depth to catch the fish, and also to ensure that there is no interaction between the fishing gear and the seabed ([source: Public Certification Report for the reassessment of the PFA, SPSG, SPFPO, DFPO and DPPO North Sea Herring fishery, page 98](#)). Therefore pelagic fishing causes no damage to the seafloor habitat.





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### **Demersal fishing:**

Bottom trawling is one of the most widespread human impacts on the seafloor and has the potential to inflict damage on benthic habitats and ecosystems. Our demersal fishery on Greenland halibut uses otter board rockhopper gear. This gear type exerts less pressure on the seabed, compared to other demersal trawl gears, with an accompanying smaller footprint. The footprint of gear is defined as the relative contribution from individual larger gear components, such as trawl doors, sweeps, and ground gear, to the total area and severity of the gear's impact. For a traditional single otter trawl, there are three main types of seabed impacts during a haul: (i) from the otter boards, (ii) from the sweeps, and (iii) from the trawl ground gear, which together define the footprint of an otter trawl fishing operation. Of these three impacts, the otter board is the most severe but also has the narrowest track/path. The weight of the trawl door/otter boards on the seabed will be approximately 20-25% of its weight in air (due to a combination of an 8 -10% reduction due to the weight of steel and other materials in water, and the tension of the gear behind the trawl door and the uplift from the warp towing the trawl door). The ground gear on a hopper trawl is made up of large rubber discs spaced out using smaller rubber discs between them with it all threaded onto either wire or chain

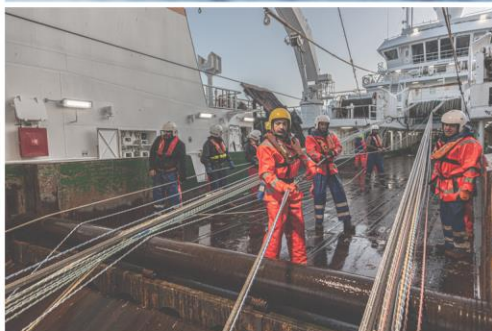


Although this can look very heavy and cumbersome, it is relatively light on the seabed due to the low density of the rubber and canvas in the rubber hopper discs. The gear is designed to 'bounce' easily over the hard, rough ground. The seabed impact of the net and ground gear will be minimized as a result. Recognizing that the otter boards constitute the major impact on the seabed, we are conducting research into the door design and position (moving to a semi-pelagic trawl door). The doors are higher and shorter, reducing drag, and reducing contact area with the seabed. The project is called: 'Pelagic trawl doors for demersal fisheries', and if the research results are positive, the new gear will be implemented on all vessels ([source: Public Certification Report for the assessment of the Doggerbank Seefischerei West Greenland Halibut Fishery, pages 36-49](#)).



### **Tuna fishing:**

The purse seine gear in our tuna fishing is strictly pelagic and therefore the fishing operation itself does not have an impact on benthic habitats. Considering the significant cost of the gear (at over 0.5 million euros for one purse seine), the size of the operation, the make-up and configuration of the gear (with the net attached to two parts of the boat), the loss of the purse seine is considered unlikely. Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) fishing forms an





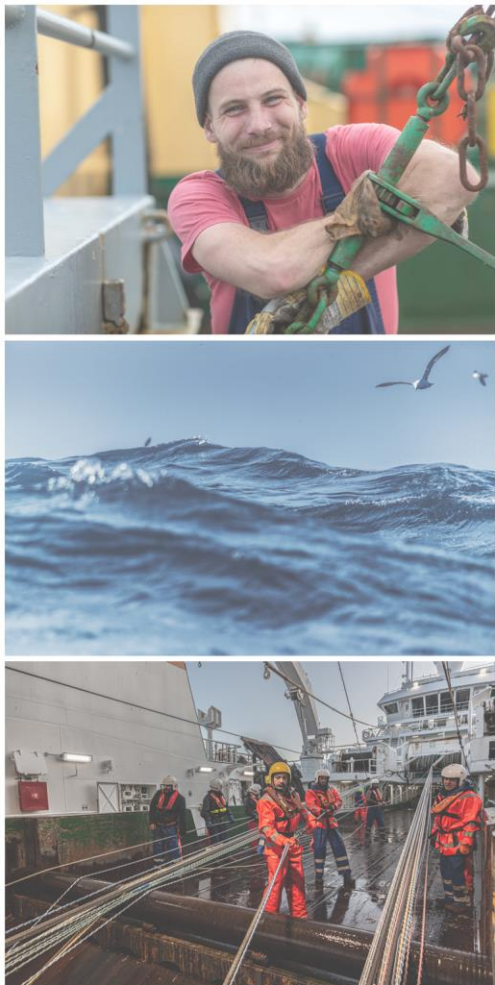
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important component of our tuna fishing operation and impacts may result from the FADs themselves. Abandoned or lost FADs can end up stranded on coasts, with coral reefs the most impacted habitat, as the FAD's sub-surface structure becomes entangled on for example a reef structure. In this context, we have been taking a number of steps to reduce the likelihood and severity of beaching events: (1) participate in pilot projects to use non-entangling FADs and biodegradable FADs, (2) activities limiting FAD deployments and (3) participation in projects for FAD recovery ([source: Public Certification Report for the assessment of the CFTO Indian Ocean Purse Seine Skipjack fishery, pages 80-82](#)).

### **Shrimp fishing:**

In our Surinam and Guyana Atlantic Seabob Shrimp Fisheries demersal trawls are used. The trawls are always used on flat and smooth bottom substrates and therefore there is no requirement for rock-hopper bobbins, meaning that the gear remains comparatively light.

Seabob do not burrow deeply into the seabed and are easily stimulated to flee their burrows by vibrations caused by approaching trawl gear; as a result, there is no need for the gear employed to penetrate the surface layers of the seabed in order to work efficiently. The soft sediments where seabob are targeted, together with the behaviour of the seabob as the target species, mean that the trawl gear employed in the fishery is relatively lightweight. The trawl doors are mainly constructed of wood with steel skids along the lower edge, while tickler chains may be used ahead of a light ground rope made of combination wire. Importantly, evidence from benthic impact and recovery studies globally shows that penetration depth is a key factor in determining benthic recovery times, with less penetration resulting in faster recovery. In the case of muddy sediments with limited penetration, as in the Suriname and Guyana Atlantic Seabob Fisheries, community recovery may be expected within a few days to weeks. The potential for the Atlantic Seabob Shrimp Fishery to have serious or irreversible consequences for seabed habitats is constrained by a range of factors. In particular, fishing for sea bob shrimp in Suriname is limited to waters between 18-33 m, with waters shallower than 18 m being closed to seabob trawling in order to protect the inshore artisanal fishery, as well as vulnerable sub-tidal communities and important nursery and juvenile fish and invertebrate foraging grounds. In Guyana similar measures exist. Also, the fishery is limited to a maximum number of licensed seabob vessels that are subject to a maximum days-at-sea allocation, such that impacts are effectively constrained. As part of the Seabob Fisheries Management Plan seabob vessels have undertaken to report the occurrence of, or interaction with, a range of prescribed vulnerable seabed habitats (i.e., seagrass and hard and soft corals). If and when such an encounter occurs, the FMP requires that a 'move on' rule be applied, whereby the vessel must move







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to a distance of at least 1 nm from the line of the tow, or the point of interaction if that can be determined, for at least three days. Other vessels in the fleet are also required to avoid the location for the minimum three-day period (source: Public Certification Report for the reassessment of the Suriname Atlantic Seabob Fishery, pages 74-77).

As PP Group we are fully committed to maintain, restore and don't cause irrecoverable harm to the marine ecosystem and take many initiatives to protect the marine habitats in relation to our different fisheries. We apply best practices, cooperate with different institutions and stakeholders and strive for continuous improvements.

### **Questions?**

If you have questions about this policy or wish to raise a concern please contact the CSR Department of PP Group via [csr@pp-group.eu](mailto:csr@pp-group.eu) or telephone number +31(0)71 789 00 00 (Monday-Friday during office hours).

*This policy, our procedures and internal audits are designed to ensure that PP Group complies with all applicable laws and regulations and will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to ensure that it remains current and effective.*

**Approved by the board of PP Group  
Valkenburg, 1 November 2022**

