

# Smart Gear

## competition makes everyone a winner

Most people in the Western world recognise the WWF panda logo and know what the organisation stands for. Perhaps not so many are familiar with the way in which WWF-New Zealand has been working with the seafood industry, promoting and rewarding the work of industry members who have been 'smart' about reducing by-catch incidents.

WWF-New Zealand has just announced the opening of the third annual Smart Gear Competition. The competition seeks new designs for fishing gear that will reduce marine by-catch.

The WWF Smart Gear Competition is a global search for practical inventions that will help the fishing industry reduce the amount of marine species and seabirds that end up as by-catch.

"We want to encourage people from New Zealand to enter this competition to make fishing practices smarter," says Chris Howe, WWF-New Zealand's executive director. "WWF is working around the world to reduce the death and waste of seabirds, turtles, dolphins, juvenile fish and other animals through entanglement with fishing gear. Often the best innovations come from fishermen themselves - like New Zealand fisherman Chris Carey, who won runner-up in the 2006 competition for his invention that reduces the risk of large seabirds hitting trawl vessels' warp lines."

One of the judges for the international competition is New Zealander Malcolm McNeill of Sealord, who also serves on the Southern Seabird Solutions management committee.

"The competition is a great opportunity for people to turn their good ideas into action. In 2006 we reviewed 84 entries from 26 countries. Four of those entries were from New Zealand. We're seen as a world leader in reducing by-catch, particularly in regards to our work to reduce seabird by-catch, so it would be fantastic to see the number of entrants from New Zealand climb this year," he says.

Since the 2006 competition, Chris Carey's invention, 'Carefree's Cunning Contraption' has been put into commercial use and many New Zealand fishing vessels now use Carey's invention as part of an arsenal of devices to reduce by-catch. In recent trials, his contraption almost halved the number of large seabird warp strikes.

Chris, who is also a Southern Seabird Solutions management committee member, is over the moon that his invention is being used to reduce seabird by-catch, saying, "The trial results were awesome as a first off. I expect that number to be even higher in future as our techniques are refined and better ones invented."

This year, the winning designer will receive a US\$30,000 grand prize and there will also be two US\$10,000 runner-up prizes. Entries will be judged on whether they are innovative, practical, cost-effective, reduce by-catch of any species and make an important contribution to conservation. The judges include fishermen, researchers, engineers and fisheries managers from all over the world.

For those thinking of entering this year's competition, Chris has this advice: "Go for it. I entered for the hell of it not entertaining the

idea my device would be considered seriously or receive the prize it did. It was a great honour and receiving the award in Brussels at The Seafood Expo was an experience in itself. Sustainable seafood marketing is growing and soon only countries and companies showing they are trying to do something about it will get their products to market. Sit back and do nothing and you'll be left behind."

The competition is open to eligible entrants from any background - including fishermen, professional gear manufacturers, teachers, students, engineers, scientists and backyard inventors.

Instructions for entering the competition are available at [www.smartgear.org](http://www.smartgear.org). Completed entries must be submitted by 31 July 2007. □



Chris Carey holding his CCC.

## Rewarding smart actions

This year Southern Seabird Solutions will award the Seabird Smart Award to an outstanding role-model for seabird by-catch mitigation in the fishing industry. Charles Hufflett, founder and managing director of Solander Fisheries, accepted the first award on behalf of his company in 2005. The award is given every other year.

Under Charles' leadership Solander became one of the first companies in New Zealand to begin collecting and reporting seabird by-catch. Solander also made towing tori lines standard practice within their fleet long before tori lines became mandatory.

Eric Barratt, managing director of Sanford Ltd and a Southern Seabird Solutions Trustee, says, "I'm aware of a number of fishermen in New Zealand who are working hard to reduce seabird by-catch. For these committed individuals knowing that they're making a difference is often reward enough, but the Seabird Smart Award offers all of us within the industry the chance to recognise and promote good practice."

Later this year Southern Seabird Solutions will be asking for nominations through *Seafood New Zealand* from fishermen and others in the fishing industry. So start thinking about worthy candidates who are making a difference in one of the places it counts most - at sea. □