

14-06-2024

Faroe Marine Research Institute
Nóatún 1
FO-100 Tórshavn
Faroe Islands

Ms. Brynhildur Benediktsdóttir
Executive Secretary
North Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO)
Summit Place
1601 Lower Water Street
Suite 401
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada B3J 3P6

Dear Ms. Benediktsdóttir,

This is an official notification regarding the continuation of Faroese longline survey in 3M that will be conducted by vessel Klakkur from the 21st of June 2024.

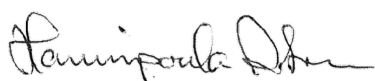
Although the survey has been thoroughly revised and standardized according to recommendations from the Scientific Council and STACREC, changes to the survey procedures are aimed to reduce catches and ensure survey coverage and consistency through standardized procedures. The new proposed protocol was presented for the STACREC meeting in May and further discussed in Scientific Council's June meeting.

Being an industry conducted survey, the survey catches (roughly estimated to approx. 62 tons, hence exceeding the survey catch limit of 15 tons for Atlantic cod) will be subtracted of the fishing quota allocated to this vessel and will be marketed with the vessels commercial catches. The proposed protocol stipulates survey design and sampling to be covered by up to three vessels. This year will be covered by Klakkur only which will have external observer onboard conducting the survey.

The aim of the survey remains to present a fisheries independent index of abundance at age conducted with an alternative gear type to be used as supportive information in the stock assessment of cod in 3M.

Attached is the new and improved Survey Protocol for Faroese longline survey of Flemish Cap (Div. 3M).

Sincerely,



Hannipoula Olsen,
Principal Investigator – Faroese Longline Survey on Flemish Cap (Div.3M)

Proposed protocol of the Faroese longline survey of Flemish Cap (Div. 3M)

by

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Introduction

This protocol was developed by Faroese Marine Research Institute. It serves as a guide to the methodologies adhered to during the planning and execution phases of the Faroese longline survey on Flemish Cap NAFO Regulatory Area (NRA, 3M).

Flemish Cap is an isolated bank on the American continental shelf covering approximated 17 000 squared nautical miles within the 1460 m depth isobath and 10 555 within the 730 m. Flemish Cap is separated from the Newfoundland Grand Bank by the Flemish Pass, an area deeper than 1000 m.

The general circulation in the vicinity of the Flemish Cap consists of the offshore branch of the Labrador Current which flows through the Flemish Pass on the Grand Bank side and a jet that flows eastward north of the Cap and then southward east of the Cap. To the South, the Gulf Stream flows to the northeast to form the North Atlantic Current and influences waters around the southern areas of the Cap. In the absence of strong wind forcing, the circulation over the central Flemish Cap is dominated by a topographically induced anti-cyclonic (clockwise) gyre (Akenhead 1986, Stein 1996).

The survey was initiated in 2021 and it has been subjected to several planned and ad-hoc adjustments which are described below:

- The survey conducted in 2021 from 14/6 to 10/7 by the longline vessel “Klakkur” (KG 9, LOA 51.3 m) covered the 3M area shallower than 600 m isobaths. The number of sets was established at 100 with approximately 6000 hooks on each longline set.
- The 2022 survey was led by the smaller vessel “Eivind” (VA 132, LOA 41.3 m). A total number of 54 (of 100 planned) sets of 4400 hooks each were employed covering mostly the western region of 3M. Fishing operations were carried out in the month of June (1/6 – 13/6)
- In May 2023 (2/5 – 15/5) the vessel “Stapin” (FD 32, LOA 42 m) conducted the survey employing 3600 hooks on each of the total 28 (of 52 planned) sets.

The following protocol is based on the experience from the Faroese longline survey 2021 to present and on experience, guidelines and manuals from already accepted protocols for other NAFO research surveys.

Objective

The main objective of the survey is the study of abundance, biomass and composition structure of the target species, i.e., Atlantic cod in area 3M. In addition, also biological samples of other fish species should be conducted in every longline set as well as oceanographic compilation of data consisting of water temperatures and depth measurements recorded from haphazardly selected sets.

Significance of the longline survey

The aim of the survey is to investigate the Flemish Cap Atlantic cod stock employing an alternative gear to that used in the EU survey, which may potentially be incorporated into and supplement the analytical stock assessment as a fishery independent index. Importantly, the longline survey catches fish larger than 60 cm, i.e. the part of the stock that is not well covered in the EU trawl survey.

A further motivation for the inclusion of a longline survey in the assessment framework is the distinct perception of the stock dynamics among Faroese fishermen. Since 2017 the Faroese fishery in 3M is conducted exclusively by longliners.

Given the nature of longline fishing it's not possible to collect samples of invertebrates, sponges and corals. However, an advantage of longlining over more traditional methods of groundfish trawl surveys is that impact on ecological structures and negative effects on the sea floor are kept to a minimum.

Survey design and area coverage

The stratified random survey design in the Flemish Cap follows the methodological specifications of NAFO which were presented and adopted in 1981 (Doubleday 1981). Flemish Cap is divided into 39 strata of which 32 are surveyed by the EU research vessel *Vizconde de Eza*. Each stratum is divided in rectangles of equal area and thus the number of rectangles is proportional to the stratum area. A total of 478 rectangles are considered in the current survey design. Each rectangle is in turn divided in 10 fishing units of equal area, leading to 4780 possible bottom trawl fishing hauls or longline sets. The number of selected hauls in the EU survey is 181.

The scope of the Faroese survey is limited to 62 longline stations; this adjustment is based on the relatively high catches observed the first three years. In order to accomplish the objective, the 50 random stations are to be selected from the sampling strata in NAFO 3M division. The Faroese survey will cover strata 1-20, 24 and 28 of Flemish Cap.

Temporal coverage

The recommended time-frame to conduct the survey is during the four-week period from mid-May to end of June. In any one given year, the survey should be completed within three weeks.

Longline station selection methodology

The number of sets in each stratum is fixed and distributed proportionately to the number of trawl stations conducted by EU survey with in each stratum. A minimum of two sets are surveyed in each stratum to ensure statistically valid estimates and deviations.

Only one fishing station will be selected randomly in each stratum in a given rectangle. Additionally, two stations are not be selected in adjacent fishing units.

Criteria for rejecting sets:

- Deviations from the standard soaking time and the number of hooks employed in all sets.
- Damages caused in the longline gear.
- Unjustified change in the geographical position of selected units.
- Rejected sets are not to be used in the compilation of survey indices although sampled individuals can be retained for further investigations.

Vessels

Due to operational and financial limitations, it is not possible to employ the same vessel every year to conduct the survey. The survey may either be conducted by one single vessel or up to three vessels. If more than one vessel conducts the survey all vessels must carry an observer (see below) and the stations (see below) are distributed among the vessels prior to survey start. Potential vessels to conduct the survey are listed in Table 1. Felagið Línuskip appoints which vessel/vessels conduct the research trip each year.

Table 1 – Potential vessels to conduct the survey

Vessel name	Call name	Official number	Length (m)	Power System	BRT
Klakkur	OW2046	KG9	51.3	18 000KW	1 737
Eivind	XPQE	VA132	41.3	749KW	656
Stapin	OW2065	FD32	42.0	745KW	703
Jákup B	XPPR	KG7	44.95	698KW	726
Jógvan I	OW2049	FD710	44.85	749KW	1 001
Sandshavið	XPRK	SA499	47.7	735KW	765
Vesturhavið	OW2009	VN700	37.6	687LW	522
Pison	OW2132	KG476	40.6	736KW	593

Personnel

An observer will be present during the duration of the survey. The task of the observer is to carry out the sampling procedure and ensure that crew members follow the scientific standards established in the protocol. Crew members are obliged to help and facilitate the operational requirements of the survey.

Data collection

Data collected will be delivered to the Faroe Marine Research Institute (FAMRI) for quality check and error filtering. Validation of all the input data will be completed by scientists at FAMRI. The observer is responsible to ensure all data and samples collected during the survey is delivered to FAMRI upon port return.

Fishing gears

The fishing gear is longline from various gear providers. In order to standardize equipment in the survey among the vessels and years, obligated specifications of equipment used is listed in Table 2. These specifications are based on experience from the investigations in 2021-2023 and from the protocols for a halibut longline survey in Canada [ref].

Main adjustments to the protocol with regards to gear specification compared to the surveys in 2021-2023 consist of lowered number of hooks per longline set and decreased and standardized soak time. Based on the halibut survey, the number of hooks per longline-set is fixed at 1000. Fishing activity is standardized by limiting the soak time, aiming at a range from 5 to 10 hours. For optimisation of vessels operational time, setting and retrieving can be conducted any time of day.

Table 2 - Fishing gear specifications of the longline Faroe survey in NAFO 3M.

Gear Type		Longline
Total Length		Ca 0.85 Nm
Hooks:	Number	1000
	Average spacing (m)	1.5
	Hook type	EZ
	Hook size	12
Buoys	Marked yes/no	YES
Anchors	Number	2
		50/50
Main line material		pol/ter
Bait line material		ter
Bait type		Squid
Soak time		5-10 hours

Station data

The station data form (see Annex 1) is to be filled in each longline set. The information gathered at beginning and completion of the set-procedure includes: geographical position, date, time, temperature, depth, and TD-recorder ID. At set retrieving, date and time and catch information by species is to be recorded on same station data form. The observer is responsible for logging the catches in the data form. Non-targeted species are also to be recorded.

Fish species

Since the survey design utilizes a passive gear aimed at free-swimming fish, benthic fauna is not caught to any significant degree, and such species are not included in the non-target species list.

Target species:

Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*)

By-catch/non-target species e.g.:

Redfish (*Sebastes marinus*, *S. mentella* and *S. fasciatus*)
Tusk (*Brosme brosme*)
Greenland halibut (*Reinhardtius hippoglossoides*)
Atlantic halibut (*Hippoglossus hippoglossus*)
Wolf fish (*Anarhichas lupus*)
Spotted wolffish (*Anarichas minor*)
Grenadier (*Coryphaenoides rupestris*)

(This list is not exhaustive, merely a list of previously encountered species – all caught species in the subsample are to be sampled)

Hook occupancy

Sampling power for a set or line of hooks is diminished if hooks are broken, bait is lost or the hook is already occupied by another fish. Standardising catch by the condition of the hooks yields a better index of local density of cod.

To describe the hook occupancy, registration of 50 hook condition will be recorded for each set at retrieval (Annex 4). Bycatch species are to be noted under “viðmerking”. Due to the increased possibility of entanglement at the beginning of the line, registration of hook condition is to begin after first 100 hooks are retrieved. Possible hook conditions are:

- Bait only
- Cod
- Bycatch/other species
- Hook empty
- Hook missing
- Damaged/broken hook

Biological sampling

For each station full biological sampling of cod is done. The biological sampling includes:

- length in cm
- round weight in kg
- sex
- maturity
- otolith collection

Biological data for cod are to be recorded in the target species registration form (Annex 2). The total number of otoliths sampled per set is 10 and for sex identification and maturation 20.

For non-target species only length and weight are to be measured and recorded in bycatch registration form (Annex 3). Specimens whose classification is dubious should be labelled and frozen for further scrutiny at FAMRI.

Length and weight sampling

Length measurements of fish are made on the total length (cm). Weight measurements are recorded in kg (see Annex 2). As a rule, 100 individuals of the target species are to be sampled in each station. Of these, 20 are to be measured in both length and weight. The objective is to sample 20 individuals of non-target species conditioned on fish availability.

Sample and subsample weight of the catch must be also recorded. Individual lengths and weights along with sample weights shall be recorded in the appropriate data forms.

Data analyses

The calculation of the survey indices will follow the standard stratified average method:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{h=1}^L N_h \bar{x}_h$$
$$s_x^2 = \sum_{h=1}^L \left(\frac{N_h}{N} \right)^2 \left(\frac{N_h - n_h}{N_h - 1} \right) \frac{s_h^2}{n_h}$$

where

L = number of strata

N = sum of all stratum sizes

N_h = size of stratum h

x_h = sample mean of stratum h

n_h = number of observations in stratum h

S_h = sample standard deviation of stratum h

Future recommendations

The longline survey is over time intended to develop a fishery independent Catch-at-aged index based upon a age length key to support the 3M cod stockassessment framework. In order for the incorporations of such index, a comparative age reading workshop (e.g. via SmartsDots platform) including Faroese, EU and Canadian otholith samples would be highly beneficial to ensure transparency between age-readings of the Atlantic cod stock on Flemish Cap. This has been requested for at the Scientific Council's June meeting.

Table 3 – Stratification of the 3M Flemish Cap survey and Faroe longline survey

NAFO 3M survey					Faroe 3M survey
Stratum	Depth interval (fathoms)	Area (sq miles)	Possible hauls	Selected hauls	Selected sets
1	70-80	342	100	4	3
2	81-100	838	250	10	4
3	101-140	628	180	7	3
4	"	348	100	4	3
5	"	703	200	8	3
6	"	496	150	6	3
7	141-200	822	240	9	4
8	"	646	190	7	3
9	"	314	90	3	2
10	"	951	280	11	4
11	"	806	240	9	4
12	201-300	670	200	8	3
13	"	249	70	3	2
14	"	602	170	7	2
15	"	666	200	8	3
16	301-400	634	190	7	3
17	"	216	60	2	2
18	"	210	60	2	2
19	"	414	120	5	2
20	401-500	525	160	6	2
24	"	253	80	3	2
28	"	530	160	6	3
33	"	98	30	2	-
21	501-600	517	160	6	-
25	"	226	70	3	-
29	"	488	150	6	-
32	"	238	70	2	-
34	"	486	150	5	-
22	601-700	533	160	6	-
30	"	1134	350	11	-
23	701-800	284	90	3	-
31	"	203	60	2	-
Total (strata1-34)		16070	4780	181	62

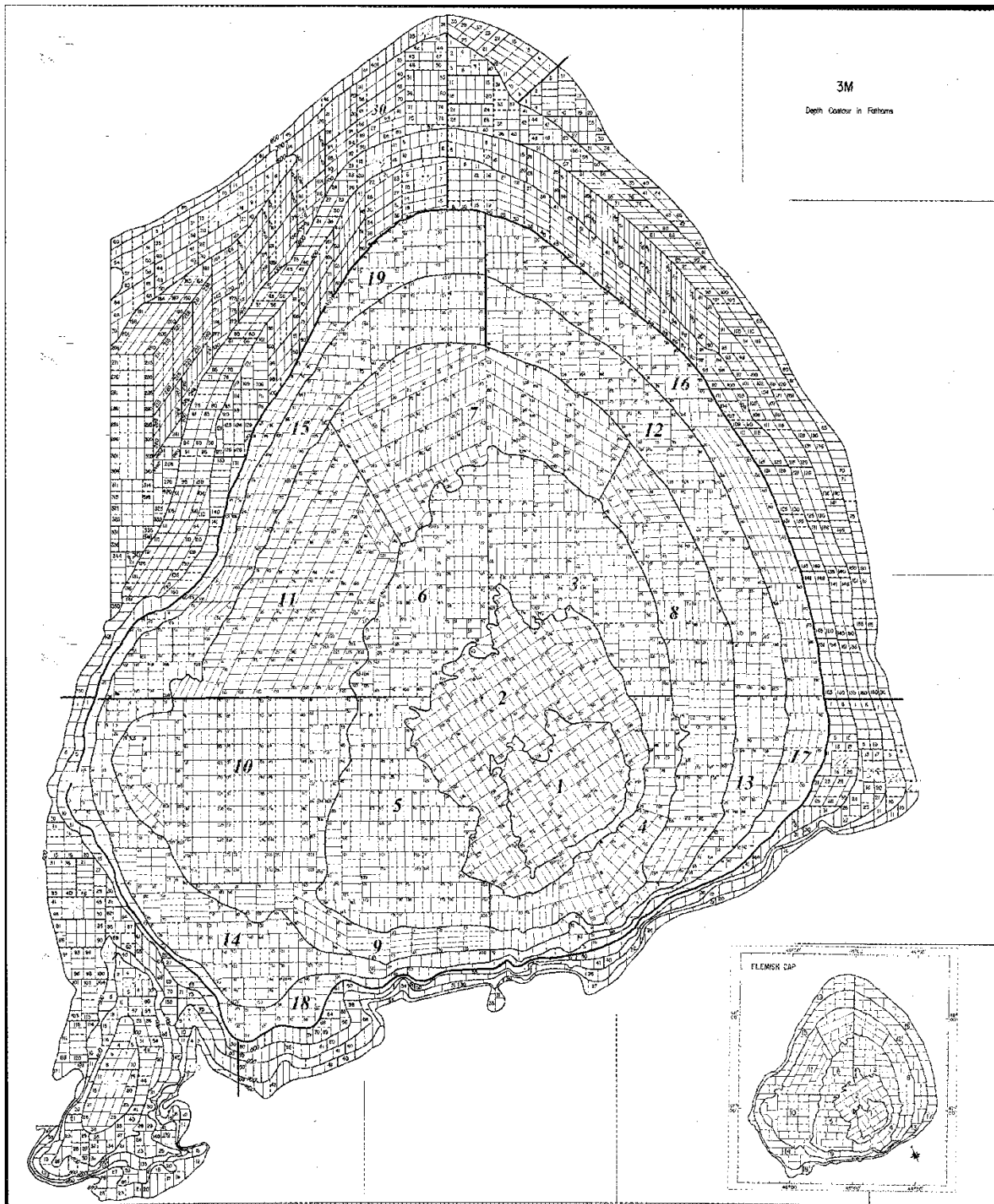


Figure 1. Stratification of the 3M Flemish Cap survey and Faroe longline survey.

Annex 2 – Target specie registration form

FISKASLAG:

DATO:

STUBBI NR:

PRÖVATAKARI:

TOSKUR

	<i>Longd (cm)</i>	<i>Rund vekt (kg)</i>	<i>Kyn (rogn/sil)</i>	<i>Búningarstig</i>	<i>Nytrur (x)</i>
1					
2					
3					
4					
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Vend (31-100) →

Annex 2 - continued

<i>Longd (cm)</i>	<i>Rund vekt (kg)</i>
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32	
33	
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<i>Longd (cm)</i>	<i>Rund vekt (kg)</i>
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Annex 3 – Bycatch registration form

FISKASLAG:

DATO:

STUBBI NR:

PRÓVATAKARI:

<i>Longd (cm)</i>	<i>Rund vekt (kg)</i>	<i>Longd (cm)</i>	<i>Rund vekt (kg)</i>
1		31	
2		32	
3		33	
4		34	
5		35	
6		36	
7		37	
8		38	
9		39	
10		40	
11		41	
12		42	
13		43	
14		44	
15		45	
16		46	
17		47	
18		48	
19		49	
20		50	
21		51	
22		52	
23		53	
24		54	
25		55	
26		56	
27		57	
28		58	
29		59	
30		60	

Annex 4 – Hook occupancy registration form

Skráseting av húkum - (hook occupancy)

Prøvatahari: Setu nummar: Dagfesting:	Kl.: Reiðskapur: Stokkur nr: Tal húkar tils.:
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Númer	Húkur nr	Bert agn	Toskur	Hjáveiða/annað fiskaslag	Onki agn	Ongin húkur	Útgerð oyðilögð/ófiskifør	Viðmerking
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
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Viðmerking:

References

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Luis Ridao Cruz and Petur Steingrund. Survey results of the longline survey on NAFO Division 3M SCR Doc. 23/004REV

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stratum	punt	NAFO_DI	Longitude	Latitude	Depth	Depth	lat g	N	lat mr	lon g	V	lon mr
501	23	3M	-44.59167	47.04167	70	80	47	N	3	44	V	36
501	45	3M	-44.76667	46.81667	70	80	46	N	49	44	V	46
501	73	3M	-44.54167	46.96667	70	80	46	N	58	44	V	33
502	100	3M	-45.00833	47.10833	81	100	47	N	6	45	V	0
502	166	3M	-44.55	47.25833	81	100	47	N	15	44	V	33
502	174	3M	-44.49167	47.09167	81	100	47	N	6	44	V	30
502	45	3M	-44.80833	47.33333	81	100	47	N	20	44	V	48
503	13	3M	-44.9	47.725	101	140	47	N	44	44	V	54
503	25	3M	-44.79167	47.66667	101	140	47	N	40	44	V	48
503	49	3M	-44.71667	47.59167	101	140	47	N	36	44	V	43
504	29	3M	-44.60833	46.65833	101	140	46	N	39	44	V	36
504	75	3M	-44.36667	46.86667	101	140	46	N	52	44	V	22
504	82	3M	-44.325	47.05833	101	140	47	N	3	44	V	20
505	101	3M	-45.575	46.80833	101	140	46	N	48	45	V	35
505	162	3M	-45.29167	46.64167	101	140	46	N	39	45	V	18
505	85	3M	-45.08333	46.81667	101	140	46	N	49	45	V	5
506	141	3M	-45.36667	47.28333	101	140	47	N	17	45	V	22
506	25	3M	-45.025	47.60833	101	140	47	N	36	45	V	1
506	47	3M	-45.125	47.39167	101	140	47	N	24	45	V	8
507	149	3M	-45.14167	47.725	141	200	47	N	44	45	V	9
507	176	3M	-44.64167	47.9	141	200	47	N	54	44	V	39
507	222	3M	-44.81667	47.85833	141	200	47	N	51	44	V	49
507	62	3M	-45.25	47.95833	141	200	47	N	57	45	V	15
508	112	3M	-44.24167	47.175	141	200	47	N	10	44	V	15
508	25	3M	-44.34167	47.64167	141	200	47	N	39	44	V	21
508	97	3M	-44.25	47.23333	141	200	47	N	14	44	V	15
509	34	3M	-45.26667	46.49167	141	200	46	N	30	45	V	16
509	36	3M	-45.35833	46.53333	141	200	46	N	32	45	V	21
510	124	3M	-46.1	46.975	141	200	46	N	59	46	V	6
510	147	3M	-45.83333	46.93333	141	200	46	N	56	45	V	50
510	235	3M	-45.9	46.80833	141	200	46	N	48	45	V	54
510	35	3M	-45.74167	47.14167	141	200	47	N	9	45	V	45
511	127	3M	-45.8	47.23333	141	200	47	N	14	45	V	48
511	147	3M	-45.64167	47.45	141	200	47	N	27	45	V	39
511	17	3M	-46	47.325	141	200	47	N	20	46	V	0
511	81	3M	-45.75	47.575	141	200	47	N	35	45	V	45

512	61	3M	-44.675	48	201	300	48	N	0	44	V	40
512	82	3M	-44.46667	47.90833	201	300	47	N	54	44	V	28
512	99	3M	-44.24167	47.84167	201	300	47	N	51	44	V	15
513	18	3M	-43.84167	47.09167	201	300	47	N	6	43	V	51
513	57	3M	-44.24167	46.65833	201	300	46	N	39	44	V	15
514	124	3M	-45.9	46.46667	201	300	46	N	28	45	V	54
514	40	3M	-46.30833	46.775	201	300	46	N	46	46	V	18
515	109	3M	-45.78333	47.80833	201	300	47	N	48	45	V	47
515	151	3M	-46.19167	47.4	201	300	47	N	24	46	V	12
515	40	3M	-45.18333	48.125	201	300	48	N	8	45	V	11
516	103	3M	-44.18333	47.93333	301	400	47	N	56	44	V	11
516	161	3M	-43.875	47.44167	301	400	47	N	27	43	V	52
516	54	3M	-44.575	48.2	301	400	48	N	12	44	V	35
517	20	3M	-43.69167	47	301	400	47	N	0	43	V	42
517	40	3M	-43.98333	46.74167	301	400	46	N	45	43	V	59
518	36	3M	-45.89167	46.29167	301	400	46	N	18	45	V	54
518	50	3M	-45.725	46.28333	301	400	46	N	17	45	V	44
519	30	3M	-45.19167	48.38333	301	400	48	N	23	45	V	12
519	71	3M	-45.66667	48.15	301	400	48	N	9	45	V	40
520	13	3M	-45.04167	48.53333	401	500	48	N	32	45	V	3
520	38	3M	-44.78333	48.45833	401	500	48	N	27	44	V	47
524	20	3M	-43.575	46.96667	401	500	46	N	58	43	V	35
524	4	3M	-43.64167	47.08333	401	500	47	N	5	43	V	39
528	105	3M	-45.90833	48.025	401	500	48	N	1	45	V	54
528	29	3M	-45.43333	48.49167	401	500	48	N	30	45	V	26
528	69	3M	-45.71667	48.25833	401	500	48	N	15	45	V	43

Randomized replacement stations for stations within VME

Faroe Longline survey 2024

New station strata	DIV ffu	Re-placing station stata	ffu	Longitude	Latitude	Depth min	Depth max	lat gg	N	lat mm	lon gg	V	lon mm
517	3 3M	517	40	-43.75	47.1417	301	400	47 N	9	43 V	45		
518	46 3M	518	36	-45.7167	46.3917	301	400	46 N	24	45 V	43		
518	58 3M	518	50	-45.475	46.3917	301	400	46 N	24	45 V	29		
519	40 3M	519	30	-45.2	48.3	301	400	48 N	18	45 V	12		
524	6 3M	524	20	-43.6083	47.15	401	500	47 N	9	43 V	36		