

Subject: Take Reduction Goal - FKW Take Reduction Plan

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Dear Team members and alternates,

At the second TRT meeting last month, we discussed the immediate take reduction goal for our False Killer Whale Take Reduction Plan. The immediate goal of the Plan is the goal against which the Plan's progress and success will be measured. Because we are managing a transboundary stock of false killer whales, defining this goal is not simple.

In the 2009 SAR, the PBR level for the Hawaii pelagic stock of false killer whales is calculated only for animals within the US EEZ of the Hawaiian Islands, but the stock occurs outside the EEZ of the Hawaiian Islands as well. The Hawaii longline fisheries operate both inside the EEZ and on the high seas, and have documented incidental mortality and serious injury (M&SI) of false killer whales both within and outside the US EEZ of the Hawaiian Islands.

At the last Team meeting in April, NMFS presented a strategy for proportional reductions of M&SI inside and outside the US EEZ (see Appendix 4 of the meeting's Key Outcomes Memo, available online at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/interactions/fkwtrt_meeting2_outcomes.pdf). After Team members expressed concern with this approach, NMFS agreed to reconsider the take reduction goal.

After much consideration of the requirements, goals, and intent of the MMPA, as well as available data on false killer whales and the fishery, NMFS is moving forward with the following short-term (i.e., within 6 months of the Plan's implementation) take reduction goal:

Reduce the level of mortality and serious injury (M&SI) of the Hawaii Pelagic stock of false killer whales within the US EEZ of the Hawaiian Islands to below the stock's PBR level (2.5 false killer whales per year).

The reduction in M&SI inside the US EEZ of the Hawaiian Islands cannot be achieved by displacing fishing effort to areas outside of the EEZ (e.g., a closure of the EEZ), if that displacement would be expected to result in an increase in M&SI of false killer whales in waters outside the EEZ. Further, commercial fisheries that operate on the high seas are subject to the prohibition against taking marine mammals and must comply with gear requirements and other restrictions that are intended to reduce or eliminate incidental interactions. Accordingly, specific gear modifications or changes in fishing practices that may be part of the Team's Draft Take Reduction Plan should be applied fleet-wide (wherever the fleet operates) to work toward reducing M&SI of false killer whales wherever they occur. While this is important for the species' conservation, it will also give us a "head start" on reducing M&SI outside the US EEZ, which may be required at a later time when a PBR can be calculated for the stock throughout its range.

Please use the above goal, and the guidance for developing recommendations to achieve that goal, as the Team continues its deliberations. We will also be happy to discuss this take reduction goal at the next Team meeting.

Thank you, and we look forward to seeing you again on June 15.

-Lisa

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