

**Pelagic Longline Take Reduction Team Webinar**  
October 31, 2016

**Key Outcomes Memorandum**

**Overview:**

The Pelagic Longline Take Reduction Team met via webinar October 31, 2016, to continue its discussions related to possible revisions to its 2015 consensus recommendation regarding mainline length. Below is a summary of key discussion points from the webinar. This summary is not intended to be a detailed overview of the entire webinar. Rather, it is intended to provide issue context, a synthesis of main options discussed, consensus recommendations reached and key next steps.

**Participation:**

The following Team members participated in the call: Bill McLellan, Dewey Hemilwright, Jane Davenport, David Kerstetter, Sharon Young, Tim Werner, Tim Werner, Bill McIntyre, Kristy Long, Brendan Cummings, Glenn Delaney, Andy Read, Terri Beideman, Beth Lowell, Marty Scanlon, Damon Gannon and Laura Engleby.

The webinar was convened by PLTRT Coordinator Erin Fougères; Scott McCreary with CONCUR, Inc., and Bennett Brooks with the Consensus Building Institute facilitated the discussion. NMFS staff from the Southeast Region and Science Center participated in the webinar, as did staff from other offices within NMFS and the U.S. Coast Guard.

**Discussion Summary:**

*Background*

In December 2015, the PLTRT recommended the Agency revise the mainline length rule. The recommendation included, among other elements, a component that would allow separate sets separated by a least one nautical mile, with the maximum mainline length of any single set no longer than 20 nautical miles.

During the course of further analyses conducted as part of proposed rulemaking, Science Center staff determined that the “multi-set” option would generate no conservation benefit for pilot whales, primarily due to the longer soak times associated with multi-sets. (Note: For the purpose of analyses, multi-sets or “consecutive sets” were defined as two distinct sets that have a time separation  $\leq 0.5$  hrs between sets).

Given this analysis, the agency reconvened the Team in September 2016 to revisit its recommendation and consider possible ways to modify the mainline length consensus recommendations to achieve the desired conservation benefit. The Team identified three

possible strategies (see below), but agreed to defer Team consideration of a preferred approach pending additional discussions within the fishery and, as possible, additional analyses.

*Options Identified During September Team Webinar*

- Eliminate the multi-set option completely from the consensus recommendation (i.e., delete the multi-set recommendation and leave only the single-set option)
- Delete the multi-set option and replace it with “same day” sets (two sets that occur on the same day, with separation >0.5 hrs between sets and most commonly 8-16 hrs between sets) allowing no more than one piece of mainline in the water at once (with some exception for line that may become parted after setting)
- Delete the multi-set option and replace it with “same day” sets requiring sets to be separated by some amount of time (e.g., two sets must be separated by 6 or 8 hours)

*October 31 Discussion*

Lance Garrison with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center provided a brief update on recent analyses, noting there was limited data to meaningfully assess the options identified during the September call or predict fishermen behavior. He noted that the high bycatch rate does not appear to be associated with any particular fishery behavior nor gear type. He did note that the major focus of takes has been clustered between 36 and 37.5-degrees latitude in December, and he suggested the increase may be tied to an increase in observer coverage.

Fishing industry representatives on the Team said, based on their outreach, fishermen appear mostly comfortable with the policy choice of eliminating the multi-set option and allowing a single set within 24 hours. (The greatest pushback, they said, came from fishermen in the Cape Hatteras area.) Fishermen, they said, also are okay with the “same-day set” option, where fishermen are not allowed to have more than one piece of line in the water at any one time.

Team discussions centered on the following themes:

- **Enforceability.** Team members discussed the potential to meaningfully enforce rules. While it was broadly acknowledged that at-sea mainline length remains a difficult regulation to enforce (as it has been since the Team first began focusing on mainline length), participants noted that it would be easier to enforce a rule that prohibits having two pieces of gear in the water at the same time as opposed to a requirement based on lapsed time between setting gear. It was noted that Vessel Monitoring System data (VMS) may prove helpful with enforcement.
- **Feasibility.** Some fishermen on the webinar voiced support for an approach that addresses conservation benefit needs while affording fishermen the greatest flexibility when out on the water. They recommended against tying the “same-day set” rule to a 24-hour or calendar-day limitation, suggesting it was not needed if the rule is to include

a prohibition against having two lines in the water at the same time (except for instances where line parts unexpectedly after setting).

- **Conservation Benefit.** Team members sought to understand the conservation benefit associated with the different options under discussion. As noted above, L. Garrison said that while it is not possible to more precisely model the options under discussion, his review of the data suggests that the “same-day set” limitations would yield an approximately 18% reduction in bycatch due to less line in the water and shorter soak duration. Several Team members also noted that other aspects of the proposed rule – most critically, terminal gear requirements – are expected to provide meaningful conservation benefits.
- **Uncertainty about effectiveness, but interest in pushing forward.** Several conservationists and researchers voiced ongoing doubt regarding the likely effectiveness of the proposed approach (several suggested that bycatch is more likely tied to spatial considerations than mainline length), but they endorsed the overall package of management actions (given the potential conservation benefit) and supported pushing forward in a timely way with the proposed rule. At the same time, several Team members emphasized the importance of bringing the Team back together in the near future given elevated bycatch levels and uncertainty regarding the proposed rule’s effectiveness.

#### October 31 Consensus Recommendation

Based on the discussion, the Team reached consensus on the following recommendation:

*Consensus Recommendation*

- An owner and operator of an Atlantic pelagic longline vessel may set no more than 30 nm of active gear (gear with leaders and hooks) with a maximum mainline length of 32 nm, and continuous active gear (gear with leaders and hooks) of no more than 20 nm.
- Any active gear in excess of 20 nm must be separated from other active gear along the mainline by a gap of at least 1 nm along the mainline in which no leaders and hooks are set.
- There may be no more than one piece of mainline in the water at once (with some exception for line that may become accidentally parted after setting).

E. Fougères said the agency hopes to have a proposed rule published by spring 2017 (though the exact timing is still to be confirmed). Participants expressed interest in convening the team in 2017, if possible in-person and during the proposed rule comment period, to continue deliberations related to reducing takes.

**Next Steps**

- CONCUR: Prepare meeting summary highlighting key discussion points and consensus recommendation
- L. Garrison/Larry Beerkircher: Mine Observer Program existing data to better understand straightened hook types associated with marine mammal interactions; foster stepped up reporting of similar data moving forward
- E. Fougères: Streamline and simplify language associated with Team recommendations; current language is too complex as currently drafted
- E. Fougères: Consider timing for 2017 in-person meeting; provide update to Team