

CA/OR Thresher Shark/Swordfish Drift Gillnet (\geq 14in. mesh) Fishery

Fishing gear type: Gillnet

Current category: Category I*

Basis for current classification on the LOF: Based on the level of serious injury and mortality of short-finned pilot whales (CA/OR/WA stock) in this fishery.

Current list of marine mammal species/stocks injured/killed (a ⁽¹⁾ indicates those stocks driving the fishery's classification): California sea lion, U.S.; Long-beaked common dolphin, CA; Pacific white sided dolphin, CA/OR/WA; Northern elephant seal, CA breeding; Northern right whale dolphin, CA/OR/WA; Risso's dolphin, CA/OR/WA; Short-beaked common dolphin, CA/OR/WA; Short-finned pilot whale, CA/OR/WA⁽¹⁾.

Estimated number of current participants: 85

Take Reduction Teams/Plans that affect this fishery: Pacific Offshore Cetacean Take Reduction Plan (POCTRP), 50 CFR 229.31.

Year added to the LOF: 1996

Category when originally listed: Category I

Basis for original classification on the LOF: Observer data from 1991-1993 indicated that the total annual mortality and serious injury of Pacific sperm whale was more than 50% of the PBR (PBR=1).

Estimated number of participants when originally listed: 150

Past names, if any: CA/OR thresher shark/swordfish drift gillnet fishery (until 2003).

Gear description/method for fishing: Gear consists of a 1,000 fathom (1,829 m) gillnet with stretched mesh size from 18-22 in (45.7-56 cm), with a 14 in (35.6 cm) minimum. The net is set at dusk and allowed to drift during the night, with the fishing vessel typically attached at one end of the net. The soak duration is typically 12-14 hours depending on length of the night. Net extender lengths of a minimum 36 ft (11 m) became mandatory for the 1997-1998 fishing season, and the use of acoustic warning devices (i.e., pingers) became mandatory October 28, 1997, significantly decreasing cetacean entanglement.

Target species: Thresher shark, swordfish, and mako shark are ~90% of the catch; swordfish, common thresher, pelagic thresher, bigeye thresher, shortfin mako, blue shark, albacore, tunas, dorado, groundfish, coastal pelagics, crab. Other species commonly caught include opah, big-eye thresher, louvar, barracuda, Pacific bonito, mahi mahi, white seabass, and tunas.

Spatial/temporal distribution of effort: Ranges from the U.S./Mexico border north to waters off of Oregon. The fishery is subject to season-area closures: From February 1-April 30 effort must be more than 200 nmi from shore; May 1-August 14 must be more than 75 nmi from shore; August 15-January 31 must be more than 12 nmi from shore. Majority of the effort occurs in October-December. A season-area closure to protect leatherback sea turtles was implemented in August 200, prohibiting drift gillnet fishing from August 15-November 15 in a set area from Point Sur, CA, to the OR coast. Another season-area closure exists south of Point Conception and east of W120° from June-August during El Nino years to protect loggerhead turtles.

* The fishery is classified based on mortalities and serious injuries of a marine mammal stock greater than 50% (Category I) of the stock's Potential Biological Removal (PBR) level.

Levels of observer coverage each year[†]: The estimated observer coverage from 1990- 2007 was: 4%, 10%, 14%, 13%, 18%, 16%, 12%, 23%, 18%, 20%, 23%, 20%, 22%, 20%, 21%, 21%, 19%, and 16%, respectively.

Management and regulations: This fishery is a limited entry with seasonal closures and gear restrictions, managed under the Highly Migratory Species Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) and by regulations under the Pacific Offshore Cetacean Take Reduction Plan (POCTRP). The FMP includes a series of seasonal and area closures originally promulgated by CA Department of Fish and Game. The POCTRP including a requirement for pingers on drift gillnets, requirement that extenders (buoy lines) be at least 36 feet long, and vessel captains attend skipper education workshops through NMFS Southwest Regional Office. OR restricts landing to swordfish only. Gear prohibited off of the WA coast.

History of Changes on the LOF

2009 LOF: Deleted the following species from list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery because none of been observed taken in the fishery from January 1, 2002, through December 31, 2006 (most recent available data): Dall's porpoise (CA/OR/WA stock), fin whale (CA/OR/WA stock), gray whale (Eastern North Pacific stock), humpback whale (Eastern North Pacific stock), and sperm whale (CA/OR/WA stock).

2007 LOF:

- Deleted the following species from list of species/stocks killed/injured because none of been observed taken since the POCTRP regulations were published in 1997: Baird's beaked whale (CA/OR/WA stock), bottlenose dolphin (CA/OR/WA offshore stock), Cuvier's beaked whale (CA/OR/WA stock), killer whale (Eastern North Pacific offshore stock); Mesoplodont beaked whale (CA/OR/WA stock), northern fur seal (San Miguel Island stock), pygmy sperm whale (CA/OR/WA stock), Steller sea lion (Eastern U.S. stock), and striped dolphin (CA/OR/WA stock).
- Changed the stock name of humpback whales to "Eastern North Pacific." This change was made in the 2001 SAR to be consistent with other stock names in the Pacific; however, the change was inadvertently left out of the LOF.

2006 LOF:

- Corrections were made to list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery to correct errors in previous LOFs: Killer whale, CA/OR/WA Pacific coast stock, changed to Eastern North Pacific Offshore stock; long-beaked common dolphin, CA/OR/WA stock, changed to CA stock. Northern and Southern stocks of Pacific white-sided dolphins combined to better reflect stock characterization in current SARs.
- Added a superscript "1" in Table 1 after short-finned pilot whale (CA/OR/WA) indicating that takes of this stock are driving the classification of the fishery.

2005 LOF:

- Elevated to Category I because new information in the 2003 SARs changed the PBR for short-finned pilot whales (CA/OR/WA from 5.1 to 1.19 animals/year. While the serious injury and mortality of short-finned pilot whales in this fishery continued to decrease, the take was still greater than 50% of the updated PBR for this stock.
- Deleted minke whale (CA/OR/WA stock) from the list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery because there were no observed mortalities from 1997-2001.
- Estimated number of participants decreased from 113 to 85.

2003 LOF:

- Reclassified from Category I to Category II because of the implementation the POCTRP in 1997 resulted in a reduction of interactions to below 50% of PBR for the marine mammal stocks with takes driving the classification of the fishery (CA sea lions, Northern right whale dolphins, short-finned pilot whales, sperm whales, fin whales).

[†] Observer coverage levels include the latest information reported in the most current final Stock Assessment Reports (SAR).

- Renamed "CA/OR thresher shark/swordfish drift gillnet (≥ 14 in. Mesh)" fishery to clarify that it includes drift gillnets of ≥ 14 in. stretched mesh only.
- Added Fin whales (CA/OR/WA) and gray whales (Eastern North Pacific) to the list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery. Previous SARs had documented interactions, so the absence of these species from previous LOFs was in error.
- Split the Pacific white-sided dolphins (CA/OR/WA) to include Northern Pacific white-sided dolphins (CA/OR/WA) and Southern Pacific white-sided dolphins (CA/OR/WA).
- Estimated number of participants was decreased from 130 to 113.

1999 LOF:

- Added striped dolphin (CA/OR/WA), Northern fur seal (San Miguel Island), and killer whale (CA/OR/WA Pacific coast) to the list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery.
- Estimated number of participants was decreased from 150 to 130.

1998 LOF:

- Added minke whale (CA/OR/WA) to the list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery because of two mortalities, one each in 1994 and 1996.
- Deleted harbor seal (CA) and harbor porpoise (OR/WA coastal) from the list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery.