

**Pacific Offshore Cetacean Take Reduction Team
April 15, 2014, Teleconference
Key Outcomes Memorandum**

Note: This is intended to be a brief summary of the April 15, 2014, Team call, as the teleconference was intended to serve primarily as a briefing.

Background:

The National Marine Fisheries Service convened a teleconference of the Pacific Offshore Cetacean Take Reduction Team on April 15, 2014, to achieve the objectives outlined below. The call was intended to serve primarily as a briefing; it was not intended as a platform to identify Team consensus for next steps.

- Update the Team on the draft Stock Assessment Report (SAR) presented to the Scientific Review Group earlier in April
- Consider the changes to both PBR (potential biological removal) and bycatch estimates in the SAR
- Gauge initial feedback on potential implications to the Team's February 2014 consensus recommendations and NMFS's associated rulemaking

Participation and Meeting Materials:

The following Team members participated in the call: Hannah Bernard, Taryn Kiekow, Chuck Cook, John Calambokidis, Doyle Hanan, Michelle Horeczko, Chuck Janisse, Arthur Lorton, Kathy Fosmark, Don Krebs, David Laist, Tina Fahy and Kristy Long. Team members Jim Harvey and Dave Hanson were unable to participate; alternate Dennis Heinemann also participated. Staff from NMFS Southwest Regional Office (Protected Resources and Sustainable Fisheries and the NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center supported the deliberations, as did NOAA Office of General Counsel. Scott McCreary with CONCUR and Bennett Brooks with the Consensus Building Institute facilitated the meeting.

The following materials were provided prior to the meeting and reviewed with Team members: (1) Jeff Moore presentation to the Pacific SRG on abundance and trend estimation for sperm whales in the California Current (1991-2008); (2) Jim Carretta presentation on rare event bycatch estimates; and (3) the draft SAR.

These materials are available on the web at:
<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/interactions/trt/poctrp.htm>.

Presentations:

The meeting focused primarily on presentations by Science Center staff regarding updated calculations of both abundance and trend estimation and bycatch estimates for sperm whales, as well as highlighting the impact to M&SI (morality and serious injury) relative to PBR. T. Fahy noted that the changes in methodology were driven, in part, by Team

recommendations at its February 2014 meeting that expressed interest in (1) considering the use of trend-based abundance estimates and (2) having NMFS and the Science Review Group (SRG) examine the efficacy of averaging bycatch estimates over a period longer than 5 years to account for the rare-event nature of sperm whale bycatch. Key points presented by J. Moore and J. Carretta centered on the following:

- N_{\min} rose to 1343 animals from 751
- PBR rose to 2.7 animals from 1.5
- Mean annual bycatch estimate attributed to the CA drift gillnet fishery dropped to 1.3 animals (2001-2012) from 3.2 animals (2006-2010)

Given these revised calculations, the current mean annual bycatch estimate of 1.3 animals is below the new PBR of 2.7 animals. Both presenters noted that the new methodology has either already been peer reviewed or is in the process of being peer reviewed.

Team Discussion:

T. Fahy noted that, in light of the new data, Team members may want to consider potential implications to the Team's consensus recommendations and NMFS's associated rulemaking. Team discussion centered on several key points:

- Clarifying questions on the new computations, working assumptions, and underlying supporting data. Team members' primary questions centered on clarifying and better understanding how the computations were completed and the status of peer review. They also voiced appreciation for the Science Center's efforts to implement the new methodology.
- Initial reactions related to the Team's recommendations. Several Team members expressed the view that since PBR is still very low, even with the revised calculations, a wise precautionary approach for the near term is to proceed with the Team's February 2014 recommendations. Some members, however, restated their interest in exploring ways to seek flexibility on both observer coverage and VMS requirements. The discussion was preliminary in nature and was not intended to elicit Team recommendations.

Next Steps:

As noted the earlier, the meeting was intended primarily as a briefing, so there was no explicit discussion targeted at identifying Team consensus or specific follow-up actions. However, NMFS staff noted several next steps.

- NMFS noted its intention to keep the Team informed as it considers the implications of the latest SAR on its proposed rulemaking, particularly as it affects any short-term recommendations and actions.

- NMFS expressed its intention to reconvene the Team in-person in early 2015 to create an opportunity for Team members to take stock of progress and consider the need for new recommendations.

Questions or comments regarding this meeting summary should be directed to S. McCreary, B. Brooks or T. Fahy. S. McCreary and B. Brooks can be reached at 510-649-8008 and 212-678-0078, respectively; T. Fahy at 562-980-4023.