

PACIFIC WHITE-SIDED DOLPHIN (*Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*): California/Oregon/Washington, Northern and Southern Stocks

STOCK DEFINITION AND GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

Pacific white-sided dolphins are endemic to temperate waters of the North Pacific Ocean, and common both on the high seas and along the continental margins (Brownell et al. 1999). Off the U.S. west coast, Pacific white-sided dolphins occur primarily in shelf and slope waters (Figure 1). Sighting patterns from aerial and shipboard surveys conducted in California, Oregon and Washington (Green et al. 1992; 1993; Forney and Barlow 1998; Barlow 2016) suggest seasonal north-south movements, with animals found primarily off California during the colder water months and shifting northward into Oregon and Washington as water temperatures increase in late spring and summer.

Stock structure throughout the North Pacific is poorly understood, but based on morphological evidence, two forms are known off the California coast (Walker et al. 1986). Specimens belonging to the northern form were collected from north of about 33°N, (Southern California to Alaska), and southern specimens were obtained from about 36°N southward along the coasts of California and Baja California. Samples of both forms have been collected in the

Southern California Bight, but it is unclear whether this indicates sympatry in this region or whether they may occur there at different times (seasonally or interannually). Genetic analyses have confirmed the distinctness of animals found off Baja California from animals occurring in U.S.

waters north of Point Conception, California and the high seas of the North Pacific (Lux et al. 1997). Based on these genetic data, an area of mixing between the two forms appears to be located off Southern California (Lux et al. 1997). Two types of echolocation have been documented for Pacific white-sided dolphins off Southern California and these have been hypothesized to reflect acoustic differences between the two forms (Soldevilla et al. 2008, 2011; Henderson et al. 2011).

Although there is clear evidence that two forms of Pacific white-sided dolphins occur along the U.S. west coast, there are no known differences in color pattern, and it is not currently possible to distinguish the two stocks reliably during surveys. Geographic stock boundaries appear dynamic and are poorly understood, and therefore cannot be used to differentiate the two forms. Until means of differentiating the two forms for abundance and mortality estimation are developed, these two stocks are managed as a single unit. Pacific white-sided dolphins are not restricted to U.S. territorial waters, but there are no cooperative management agreements with Mexico or Canada for fisheries which may take this species (e.g. gillnet fisheries). For the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) stock assessment reports, Pacific white-sided dolphins within the Pacific U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone are divided into two discrete, non-contiguous areas: 1) waters off California, Oregon and Washington (this report), and 2) Alaskan waters.

POPULATION SIZE

The distribution of Pacific white-sided dolphins throughout this region is highly variable, apparently in response to oceanographic changes on both seasonal and interannual time scales (Forney and Barlow 1998,

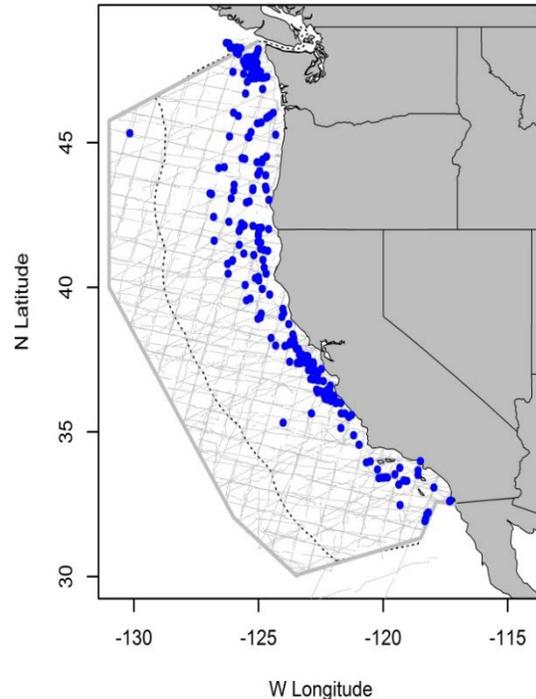


Figure 1. Pacific white-sided dolphin sightings based on shipboard surveys off California, Oregon, and Washington, 1991-2014 (Barlow 2016). Dashed line represents the U.S. EEZ, thin gray lines indicate completed transect effort of all surveys combined.

Barlow 2016). As oceanographic conditions vary, Pacific white-sided dolphins may spend time outside the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone, and therefore a multi-year average abundance estimate including California, Oregon and Washington is the most appropriate for management within U.S. waters. The most recent estimate of Pacific white-sided dolphin abundance is the geometric mean of estimates from 2008 and 2014 summer/autumn vessel-based line-transect surveys of California, Oregon, and Washington waters, 26,814 (CV=0.28) animals (Barlow 2016). This estimate includes new correction factors for animals missed during the surveys.

Minimum Population Estimate

The log-normal 20th percentile of the 2008-2014 average abundance estimate is 21,195 Pacific white-sided dolphins.

Current Population Trend

The distribution and abundance of Pacific white-sided dolphins off California, Oregon and Washington varies considerably at both seasonal and interannual time scales (Forney and Barlow 1998, Becker et al. 2012, Barlow 2016), but no long-term trends have been identified.

CURRENT AND MAXIMUM NET PRODUCTIVITY RATES

No information on current or maximum net productivity rates is available for Pacific white-sided dolphins off the U.S. west coast.

POTENTIAL BIOLOGICAL REMOVAL

The potential biological removal (PBR) level for this stock is calculated as the minimum population size (21,195) times one half the default maximum net growth rate for cetaceans (½ of 4%) times a recovery factor of 0.45 (for a species of unknown status with a mortality rate CV between 0.6 and 0.8; Wade and Angliss 1997), resulting in a PBR of 191 Pacific white-sided dolphins per year.

HUMAN-CAUSED MORTALITY AND SERIOUS INJURY

Fishery Information

A summary of recent fishery mortality and injury information for this stock of Pacific white-sided dolphin is shown in Table 1. More detailed information on these fisheries is provided in Appendix 1. The estimate of mortality and serious injury for Pacific white-sided dolphin in the California drift gillnet fishery for the five most recent years of monitoring, 2010-2014, is 1.1 animals (CV=0.97) per year (Carretta *et al.* 2017). Although some Pacific-white sided dolphins have been incidentally killed in West Coast groundfish fisheries in the past, no takes of this species were observed during 2009-2013 (Jannot *et al.* 2011, NWFSC unpublished data). Gillnets have been documented to entangle marine mammals off Baja California (Sosa-Nishizaki *et al.* 1993), but no recent bycatch data from Mexico are available.

Table 1. Summary of available information on the incidental mortality and injury of Pacific white-sided dolphins (California/ Oregon/Washington Stock) in commercial fisheries that might take this species (Carretta *et al.* 2017; Jannot *et al.* 2011). All observed entanglements of Pacific white-sided dolphins resulted in the death of the animal. Coefficients of variation for mortality estimates are provided in parentheses; n/a = not available. Mean annual takes are based on 2010-2014 data unless noted otherwise.

Fishery Name	Data Type	Year(s)	Percent Observer Coverage	Observed Mortality	Estimated Annual Mortality	Mean Annual Takes (CV in parentheses)
CA/OR thresher shark/swordfish drift gillnet fishery	observer	2010	12%	0	1.3 (2.5)	1.1 (0.97)
		2011	20%	0	1.4 (2)	
		2012	19%	0	0.8 (2.2)	
		2013	37%	0	0.9 (1.5)	
		2014	24%	0	0.9 (2)	

Fishery Name	Data Type	Year(s)	Percent Observer Coverage	Observed Mortality	Estimated Annual Mortality	Mean Annual Takes (CV in parentheses)
WA/OR/CA groundfish (bottom trawl)	observer	2009-2013	23% (2009) 18% (2010) 100% (2011-2013)	0	0	0
WA/OR/CA groundfish (midwater trawl - at-sea hake sector)	observer	2009-2013	100%	0	0	0
WA/OR/CA groundfish (midwater trawl - shoreside hake sector)	observer	2011-2013	100%	0	0	0
Minimum total annual takes						1.1 (0.97)

Other removals

Pacific white-sided dolphins have been seriously injured and killed in scientific research trawls for sardines and rockfish. From 2010 through 2014, there were 26 deaths and 2 serious injuries of Pacific white-sided dolphins in scientific research trawls, or an average of 5.6 annually (Carretta *et al.* 2016a). One Pacific white-sided dolphin stranded dead in Washington Inland waters during 2014, and the cause of death was determined to be a vessel strike (Carretta *et al.* 2016a). Human-caused mortality and injury documentation is often based on stranding data, where raw counts are negatively-biased because only a fraction of carcasses are detected. Carretta *et al.* (2016b) estimated the mean recovery rate of California coastal bottlenose dolphin carcasses to be 25% (95% CI 20% - 33%) and stated that given the extremely coastal habits of coastal bottlenose dolphins, carcass recovery rates for this stock represented a maximum, compared with more pelagic dolphin species in the region. Therefore, in this stock assessment report and others involving dolphins along the U.S. West Coast, human-related deaths and injuries counted from beach strandings along the outer U.S. West Coast are multiplied by a factor of 4 to account for the non-detection of most carcasses (Carretta *et al.* 2016b). Applying this correction factor to the one stranded Pacific white-sided dolphin yields a minimum estimate of 4 vessel strike-related deaths during 2010-2014, or 0.8 animals annually. The average annual mortality and serious injury of Pacific white-sided dolphin from other anthropogenic activities during 2010-2014 is 5.6 (research takes), plus 0.8 animals (vessel strikes, corrected for undetected carcasses), or 6.4 animals per year.

STATUS OF STOCK

The status of Pacific white-sided dolphins in California, Oregon and Washington relative to OSP is not known, and there is no indication of a trend in abundance for this stock. No habitat issues are known to be of concern for this species. They are not listed as "threatened" or "endangered" under the Endangered Species Act nor as "depleted" under the MMPA. The average annual human-caused mortality and serious injury from fisheries (1.1 animals), plus other anthropogenic sources (6.4) during 2010-2014 7.5 is estimated to be less than the PBR (191), and therefore this stock of Pacific white-sided dolphins is not classified as a "strategic" stock under the MMPA. The total commercial fishery mortality and serious injury for this stock (1.1/yr) is less than 10% of the calculated PBR and, therefore, is considered to be insignificant and approaching zero.

REFERENCES

- Barlow, J. 2016. Cetacean abundance in the California current estimated from ship-based line-transect surveys in 1991-2014. Southwest Fisheries Science Center, Administrative Report, LJ-2016-01. 63 p.
- Becker, E.A., K.A. Forney, M.C. Ferguson, J. Barlow, J.V. Redfern. 2012. Predictive Modeling of Cetacean Densities in the California Current Ecosystem based on Summer/Fall Ship Surveys in 1991- 2008. U.S. Dep. Commer., NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-SWFSC-499, 45 p.

- Brownell, R. L., Jr., W. A. Walker and K. A. Forney. 1999. Pacific white-sided dolphin, *Lagenorhynchus obliquidens* Gill, 1865. Pages 57-84 In: Ridgway, S. H. and R. Harrison (eds.), Handbook of Marine Mammals, Vol. 6. Academic Press, San Diego.
- Carretta, J.V., J.E. Moore, and K.A. Forney. 2017. Regression tree and ratio estimates of marine mammal, sea turtle, and seabird bycatch in the California drift gillnet fishery: 1990-2015. NOAA Technical Memorandum, NOAA-TM-NMFS-SWFSC-568. 83 p.
- Carretta, J.V., M.M. Muto, S. Wilkin, J. Greenman, K. Wilkinson, M. DeAngelis, J. Viezbicke, and J. Jannot. 2016a. Sources of human-related injury and mortality for U.S. Pacific west coast marine mammal stock assessments, 2010-2014. U.S. Department of Commerce, NOAA Technical Memorandum, NOAA-TM-NMFS-SWFSC-554. 102 p. Forney, K. A. and J. Barlow. 1998. Seasonal patterns in the abundance and distribution of California cetaceans, 1991-92. Mar. Mamm. Sci. 14:460-489.
- Carretta, J.V., Danil, K., Chivers, S.J., Weller, D.W., Janiger, D.S., Berman-Kowalewski, M., Hernandez, K.M., Harvey, J.T., Dunkin, R.C., Casper, D.R., Stoudt, S., Flannery, M., Wilkinson, K., Huggins, J., and Lambourn, D.M. 2016b. Recovery rates of bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) carcasses estimated from stranding and survival rate data. Marine Mammal Science, 32(1), pp.349-362.
- Green, G., J. J. Brueggeman, R. A. Grotefendt, C. E. Bowlby, M. L. Bonnell, and K. C. Balcomb, III. 1992. Cetacean distribution and abundance off Oregon and Washington. Ch. 1. In: Oregon and Washington Marine Mammal and Seabird Surveys. OCS Study 91-0093. Final Report prepared for Pacific OCS Region, Minerals Management Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Los Angeles, California.
- Green, G., R. A. Grotefendt, M. A. Smultea, C. E. Bowlby, and R. A. Rowlett. 1993. Delphinid aerial surveys in Oregon and Washington waters. Final Report prepared for NMFS, National Marine Mammal Laboratory, 7600 Sand Point Way, NE, Seattle, Washington, 98115, Contract #50ABNF200058.
- Henderson E.E., J.A. Hildebrand, M.H. Smith. 2011. Classification of behavior using vocalizations of Pacific white-sided dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*). J. Acoust. Soc. Am. 130:557-567.
- Jannot, J., Heery, E., Bellman, M.A., and J. Majewski. 2011. Estimated bycatch of marine mammals, seabirds, and sea turtles in the US west coast commercial groundfish fishery, 2002-2009. West Coast Groundfish Observer Program. National Marine Fisheries Service, NWFS, 2725 Montlake Blvd E., Seattle, WA 98112.
- Lux, C. A., A. S. Costa, and A. E. Dizon. 1997. Mitochondrial DNA population structure of the Pacific white-sided dolphin. Rep. Int. Whaling. Commn. 47:645-652. NWFS (Northwest Fisheries Science Center), Fisheries Resource Analysis and Monitoring Division, Fisheries Observation Science Program, 2725 Montlake Boulevard East, Seattle, WA 98112 (<http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/research/divisions/fram/observation>).
- Sosa-Nishizaki, O., R. De la Rosa Pacheco, R. Castro Longoria, M. Grijalva Chon, and J. De la Rosa Velez. 1993. Estudio biologico pesquero del pez (*Xiphias gladius*) y otras especies de picudos (marlins y pez vela). Rep. Int. CICESE, CTECT9306. Wade, P. R. and R. P. Angliss. 1997. Guidelines for Assessing Marine Mammal Stocks: Report of the GAMMS Workshop April 3-5, 1996, Seattle, Washington. U. S. Dep. Commer., NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-OPR-12. 93 pp.
- Soldevilla, M.S., Henderson, E.E., Campbell, G.S., Wiggins, S.M., Hildebrand, J.A., and Roch, M.A. 2008. "Classification of Risso's and Pacific white-sided dolphins using spectral properties of echolocation clicks," J. Acoust. Soc. Am. 124, 609-624.
- Soldevilla, M.S., Wiggins, S.M., and Hildebrand, J.A. 2010. "Spatiotemporal comparison of Pacific white-sided dolphin echolocation click types," Aquat. Biol. 9, 49-62.
- Walker, W.A., S. Leatherwood, K.R. Goodrich, W.F. Perrin and R.K. Stroud. 1986. Geographical variation and biology of the Pacific white-sided dolphin, *Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*, in the north-eastern Pacific. In: Bryden, M. M. and R. Harrison (eds.), Research on Dolphins, p. 441-465. Clarendon Press, Oxford.