Dorothy Lowman  
Chair, Pacific Fishery Management Council  
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 200  
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384

Dear Ms. Lowman:

Please find attached the U.S. Coast Guard’s 2014 Annual Report to the Pacific Fishery Management Council, presented on behalf of Coast Guard District Thirteen and my counterpart in Coast Guard District Eleven, Rear Admiral Servidio.

The report provides an overview of Coast Guard enforcement efforts from 2014 in support of PFMC managed fisheries along the entire U.S. West Coast, which includes the respective programs in Coast Guard District Eleven (California) and Coast Guard District Thirteen (Washington and Oregon).

The Coast Guard appreciates our strong working relationship with the PFMC and our various associated partnerships. We feel that our participation in the Council process by senior Coast Guard leadership is imperative to ensure the success of our fisheries enforcement program, as well as the overall management of the fisheries.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact me or my PFMC designees listed below:

LCDR Gregg Casad: gregg.w.casad@uscg.mil 206-220-7305  
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Sincerely,

[Signature]

R. T. GROMLICH  
Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard  
Commander, Thirteenth Coast Guard District

Copy: Commander, Eleventh Coast Guard District (d)  
Commander, Coast Guard Pacific Area (PAC-3)
U. S. COAST GUARD
District Eleven & District Thirteen
Annual Report

To The
Pacific Fishery Management Council

March 2015

Prepared By:
Eleventh U.S. Coast Guard District (dre)
Thirteenth U.S. Coast Guard District (dre)
CONTENTS

I. Introduction

II. OCEAN GUARDIAN Fisheries Enforcement Strategic Plan

III. Involvement in Fisheries Management Process

IV. Fisheries Enforcement Resources

V. U. S. Coast Guard Missions

VI. Living Marine Resources Training

VII. 2014 Fisheries Enforcement Efforts

VIII. Joint Enforcement Initiatives

IX. Marine Protected Species

X. Foreign Fisheries: Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fisheries / Integrity of the U.S. EEZ

XI. Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety
I. INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) is represented on the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) by the Commander of the Thirteenth Coast Guard District, Rear Admiral Richard T. Gromlich. Rear Admiral Gromlich’s designees on the Council are LCDR Gregg Casad and Mr. Brian Corrigan. The USCG is also represented in the PFMC process by LCDR Joe Giammanco and LT Shannon Anthony from USCG District Eleven, who represent USCG interests in California on the PFMC’s Enforcement Consultants Committee.

This report provides an overview of USCG enforcement efforts from 2014 in support of PFMC managed fisheries along the entire U.S. West Coast, which includes the respective programs in USCG District Eleven (D11 – California) and District Thirteen (D13 – Washington and Oregon).

The USCG places the safety of the nation’s fisheries among its highest priorities. In addition, the USCG recognizes that at-sea enforcement is an essential component for the success of the fisheries management plans the PFMC governs so diligently. The USCG appreciates the PFMC incorporating important safety and enforcement issues into its fisheries management considerations.

This report will provide an overview of the following topics:

- USCG’s involvement in the fishery management process, both with the PFMC and with other management entities.
- Update on USCG resources used to accomplish the living marine resources protection mission and impacts from competing responsibilities.
- Summary of USCG fisheries enforcement activity over the past year and engagement with partnering agencies.
- Review of fishing vessel safety statistics from 2014, including efforts associated with observer safety and an update on pending regulatory changes associated with fishing vessel safety.
II. **OCEAN GUARDIAN FISHERIES ENFORCEMENT STRATEGIC PLAN**

The USCG’s fisheries enforcement and living marine resources protection mission is guided by the Commandant’s *OCEAN GUARDIAN* strategic plan. The strategy of the USCG is to provide effective and professional at-sea enforcement to advance national goals for fisheries management and conservation and management of living marine resources and their environments.

The *OCEAN GUARDIAN* strategic plan completed a comprehensive revalidation during 2014, in order to ensure the strategy has adapted to reflect current domestic and international living marine resource management needs.

Although the regulations the USCG enforces often change and the strategies employed to enforce them must adapt, the objectives of the *OCEAN GUARDIAN* strategic plan remain the same:

- *Prevent encroachment of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and internal waters by foreign fishing vessels,*

- *Ensure compliance with domestic living marine resource laws and regulations,*

- *Ensure compliance with international agreements for the management of living marine resources.*
III. INVolVEMENT IN THE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROCESS

As indicated in the framework for the USCG’s OCEAN GUARDIAN strategic plan, productive partnerships are one of the plan’s key concepts. Some of the USCG’s most productive partnerships are through interactions associated with this Council. USCG D11 and D13 highly value the relationship with the PFMC and involvement in the fisheries management process. The USCG strives to remain involved in all fisheries management issues that have a potential impact on fisheries enforcement and fishing vessel safety considerations.

In addition to attending all PFMC meetings and pertinent PFMC sub-committee meetings, representatives from USCG D11 and D13 also attend portions of North Pacific Fishery Management Council meetings when they are held locally. USCG representatives also have an affiliation with many other associated organizations, such as the International Pacific Halibut Commission, where D13 also provides an annual report, National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Councils and Enforcement Working Groups, and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. D11 and D13 also partner with NOAA in the Marine Mammal Stranding Network and provide representation to the U.S. Government delegation in the U.S./Canada Albacore Tuna Treaty deliberation process.

Through affiliations with these various management and regulatory organizations, the USCG has been able to develop a rapport with various organizations and individual members of the fishing industry. These relationships are extremely beneficial, allowing more seamless sharing of information and understanding of respective challenges and concerns, in order to foster constructive partnerships.
IV. FISHERIES ENFORCEMENT RESOURCES

For the purposes of this report, USCG District Eleven’s (D11) area of responsibility includes all waters off the coast of California out to 200 nautical miles. USCG District Thirteen’s (D13) area of responsibility includes all waters off the coasts of Washington and Oregon out to 200 nautical miles, as well as Washington internal waters. Resources in both districts used for fisheries enforcement include cutters, aircraft, and boats from coastal stations.

Cutters:

Patrol Boats: The primary surface fisheries law enforcement patrol resources are the 87’ Coastal Patrol Boats and 110’ Patrol Boats. Due to sea keeping and endurance limitations, patrol boats typically patrol within 50 nautical miles of shore. D11 patrol boats include thirteen 87’ Coastal Patrol Boats located at coastal ports throughout the state and one 110’ patrol boat in San Diego. D13 patrol boats include nine 87’ Coastal Patrol Boats located in Puget Sound and Strait of Juan de Fuca ports, as well as one 110’ Patrol Boat home-ported in Port Angeles, Washington, and one in Coos Bay, Oregon.

Buoy Tenders: Buoy tenders conduct periodic law enforcement, including fisheries enforcement, in conjunction with their primary mission of maintaining aids to navigation. D11 buoy tenders include one 225’ Seagoing Buoy Tender home-ported in San Francisco and one 175’ Coastal Buoy Tender in San Pedro. D13 uses one 225’ Seagoing Buoy Tender, home-ported in Astoria, Oregon, for offshore fisheries enforcement.

Medium Endurance Cutters: Two 210’ Medium Endurance Cutters, referred to as major cutters, located in Astoria, Oregon, and one in Port Angeles are also occasionally assigned to dedicated patrols in D11’s and D13’s waters or to monitor fisheries activity during transits to other operating areas. Competing mission demands and patrol requirements in other regions have significantly decreased West Coast fisheries enforcement patrols by major cutters during the past several years, with no dedicated major cutter patrols in D13’s area of responsibility during the past two calendar years.

Larger cutters, similarly referred to as major cutters, located on the West Coast include four 378’ High Endurance Cutters, two in Seattle and two in San Diego. The High Endurance Cutters belong to the Pacific Area command and are assigned to patrol throughout the Pacific Area Theater. In addition, three out of four of the Coast Guard’s newest class of ship, the 418’ National Security Cutter, are home-ported in Alameda. Although their primary operational obligations are elsewhere, these larger cutters have conducted brief fisheries patrols, in conjunction with other patrol tasking, in D13’s and D11’s areas of responsibility during the past several years.
Aircraft:

Rotary-wing: The primary aviation fisheries law enforcement resources on the West Coast are H-60 Jayhawk and H-65 Dolphin helicopters. Due to endurance and safety limitations, offshore patrols are typically conducted as far as 50-75 nautical miles offshore. D11's four helicopter air stations are located in San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Humboldt Bay. D13's three helicopter air stations are located in Port Angeles, Washington, and Astoria and North Bend, Oregon.

Fixed-wing: Air Station Sacramento provides C-130 aircraft to conduct surveillance flights along the entire West Coast and throughout the Eastern Pacific, deploying in support of missions as far north as Alaska and as far south as Central America. Varying C-130 missions compete for time with local fisheries enforcement patrols. Competing mission demands and limited resource hours have significantly decreased C-130 flight hours dedicated to fisheries enforcement in D11's and D13's areas of responsibility in recent years.

Boat Stations:

Small boats from coastal stations have the primary mission of search and rescue. However, personnel are also trained in the fisheries law enforcement mission and conduct patrols to enforce fisheries and safety regulations, typically within 20 nautical miles of shore. D11 has fourteen small boat stations located along the California coast, with one boat station manned entirely by the Coast Guard Auxiliary, an all volunteer component of the service, in Crescent City. D13 has eleven coastal small boat stations along the Washington and Oregon coasts, as well as three stations in Washington internal waters and one on the Willamette River (Portland). Two additional seasonal stations are also operated in Central and Southern Oregon during summer months with higher boating activity. Typical boat types at West Coast stations include the 47' motor life boat, the 45' response boat, and the 25' response boat. In addition, several D13 boat stations are equipped with 52' motor lifeboats, which, similar to the 47' motor life boats, are specifically designed and manned for operations in heavy surf conditions, as well as having the capability to respond as far as 150 nautical miles offshore.
V. U. S. COAST GUARD MISSIONS

LMR protection and enforcement is just one of several important missions the USCG is required to accomplish. The USCG is tasked with eleven statutory missions, which encompass protecting the maritime economy and environment, defending maritime borders, and assisting those in distress. A comprehensive list of USCG missions includes:

- **Aids to Navigation:** The USCG sets and maintains aids to mark the waters of the United States and its territories to assist boaters in navigation and alert them to obstructions and hazards.
- **Defense Readiness:** In support of the National Military Strategy and Department of Defense operations, USCG assets are capable and equipped to deploy and conduct joint operations in support of critical needs of combatant commanders.
- **Drug Interdiction:** The USCG is the lead federal agency for maritime drug interdiction and shares lead responsibility for air interdiction with the U.S. Customs Service.
- **Ice Operations:** The USCG conducts icebreaking services to assist vessels and communities in emergency situations and facilitate essential commercial maritime activities in the Great Lakes and Northeast regions.
- **Living Marine Resources:** The USCG enforces fisheries laws at sea, as tasked by the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act. The USCG also shares marine protected species responsibilities and authority based on legislation under the Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the Sanctuaries Act.
- **Marine Environmental Protection:** The USCG develops and enforces regulations to avert the introduction of invasive species into the maritime environment, stop unauthorized ocean dumping, and prevent oil and chemical spills.
- **Marine Safety:** The USCG inspects commercial vessels, responds to pollution, investigates marine casualties and merchant mariners, manages waterways, and licenses merchant mariners.
- **Migrant Interdiction:** The USCG enforces immigration law at sea by conducting patrols and coordinating with other federal agencies and foreign countries to interdict undocumented migrants at sea.
- **Other Law Enforcement:** Preventing illegal foreign fishing vessel encroachment in the U.S. EEZ is a primary USCG role vital to protecting the integrity of the nation’s maritime borders and ensuring the health of U.S. fisheries.
- **Ports, Waterways, and Coastal Security:** The USCG is responsible for protection of the U.S. Maritime Domain and Marine Transportation System.
- **Search and Rescue (SAR):** Minimizing the loss of life, injury, property damage or loss by rendering aid to persons in distress and property in the maritime environment is the USCG’s highest priority mission.

Although certain USCG units primarily focus on specific missions, such as small boat stations conducting SAR and buoy tenders maintaining aids to navigation, almost all USCG units participate in multiple missions, often simultaneously, requiring extensive training and operational expertise to remain proficient.
VI. LIVING MARINE RESOURCES TRAINING

Due to the multi-mission nature of the Coast Guard and the dynamic and complex fisheries regulations, all operational USCG units involved in the LMR enforcement mission receive training at least annually. Training is provided by the Pacific Regional Fisheries Training Center (PRFTC) located on Coast Guard Island in Alameda, CA – which provides training to units in Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii and Guam.

PRFTC is one of five Coast Guard Regional Fisheries Training Centers solely dedicated to living marine resources training, focused on the preservation and protection of living marine resources. In addition to its state-of-the-art training room, in December 2014, PRFTC completed the construction of a commercial fishing vessel training platform specifically designed to facilitate performance based training and evaluations for student boarding officers. PRFTC will also construct a recreational fishing vessel training platform in 2015. PRFTC is scheduled to host six resident courses per year- two sessions for California LMR Boarding Officers and four for Oregon/Washington LMR Boarding Officers. Partner agency involvement has been vital to the success of all resident courses and the USCG looks forward to continued collaboration during future courses to ensure the success of the training program.

During 2014, PRFTC provided resident training to 72 personnel from 39 units, during five resident training courses. PRFTC instructors also offer exportable training at various units to train Boarding Officers who were unable to attend the resident course. During 2014, 12 exportable courses were also held, involving visits to 17 units and providing training to 158 personnel.

In addition to formal LMR training, District staffs also participate in impromptu LMR training at local units, often specifically in preparation for upcoming fishing season or enforcement emphasis operations. These training sessions also frequently rely on partner agency participation to enhance the learning environment.
2014 Living Marine Enforcement Resource Hours U.S. West Coast

Figure 1 depicts the total resource hours dedicated to the Living Marine Resources mission for the entire West Coast during the last three years. Further details are below:

- Due to the lack of major cutter presence available to enforce West Coast fisheries, as discussed in Section IV, efforts have been made to increase patrol boat presence offshore. D13 and D11 patrol boats conducted 16 dedicated fisheries enforcement patrols during 2014. Since most patrol boats spend the majority of the year conducting missions other than offshore fisheries, riders from other units and agencies with fisheries enforcement experience are often arranged to augment patrol boat boarding teams to maximize their effectiveness. CGC FIR (D13) and CGC ASPEN (D11) also conducted 4 offshore fisheries patrols during 2014, often in conjunction with satisfying their aids to navigation responsibilities, successfully demonstrating their multi-mission capabilities.
2014 Fisheries Boardings and Violations

1156 boardings
73 violations

- Of the 1156 fisheries boardings, approximately 68% of the overall total was on vessels engaged in federal fisheries managed by this Council, while the remainder was on vessels participating in fisheries administered by Treaty tribes and the States.

- The 73 violations included documentation of 46 federal fisheries violations, which were forwarded to NOAA for adjudication, as well as suspected violations of 23 state and 4 tribal regulations which were forwarded to the appropriate agencies. Many of the violations were documented during joint operations with federal, state and tribal enforcement partners, as summarized in section VIII of this report.

- In addition to offshore LMR patrols, USCG units enforced federal safety regulations and monitored state and tribal fisheries activity during patrols in internal state waters throughout the year. Operations were also conducted in internal waters to monitor high volumes of vessel traffic associated with certain fisheries openers.
VIII. JOINT ENFORCEMENT INITIATIVES

Some of the USCG’s most effective efforts are the result of working collaboratively with partners from NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE), Treaty Tribes, and California, Oregon, and Washington state fisheries enforcement personnel. An open flow of communication throughout the year is vital to evaluating trends observed by respective agencies and planning operations to support PFMC managed fisheries and other important enforcement concerns throughout the West Coast region, ensuring shared success.

Not only does collaboration occur at the management level, but operational units also work closely with their federal, tribal, and state counterparts in the field. CG STA Grays Harbor hosts detachments of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and NOAA enforcement personnel, as well as providing dock space for Washington’s enforcement vessel CORLISS. Plans are in place to co-locate newly assigned NOAA enforcement officers at USCG Station Coos Bay, as well as at the USCG’s Pacific Regional Fisheries Training Center in Alameda. Co-location of partnering agency personnel has greatly enhanced collective efforts and additional future opportunities will continue to be pursued.

Some specific examples of joint operational efforts and interactions during 2014 include:

- Providing information from boardings and surface and aerial observations in support of federal and state marine resources investigations, including:
  
  - Sector Puget Sound units shared sighting information to WDFW of suspicious Puget Sound geoduck harvests;
  
  - Air Station Astoria and Station Tillamook Bay supported a multi-month Oregon State Police (OSP) investigation into alleged illegal crabbing, which ended during May 2014, resulting in the seizure of over 150 crab pots, some of which were believed to be stolen.
  
  - Sector Los Angeles/Long Beach received a request from NOAA for USCG assistance to launch a helicopter to investigate a suspicious vessel located inside the Cow Cod Conservation Area near San Nicolas Island. A USCG H-65 was launched and observed the vessel in the conservation area cleaning fish on deck. NOAA interdicted the vessel and seized 600 lbs of sablefish and 160 lbs of thornyheads. An additional 68 lbs of unmarketable fish was voluntarily abandoned at sea.
  
- Embarking riders in support of investigations and to monitor fisheries activity:
  
  - Air Station Astoria and Air Station North Bend embarked OSP fisheries enforcement riders to monitor two commercial halibut derbies.
- Air Station Astoria embarked NOAA enforcement riders on a flight along the Columbia River and two flights over Puget Sound internal waters to gather evidence related to a criminal ESA and illegal dumping investigations;

- Air Station Port Angeles embarked a WDFW fisheries enforcement rider on a flight to monitor a recreational halibut opener, resulting in documentation of a closed area violation and a catch seizure;

- Air Station Port Angeles embarked a tribal enforcement rider to monitor a tribal fishery opener and ensure the integrity of Tribal Usual and Accustomed Areas.

- CGC ASPEN embarked the D11 Living Marine Resources Officer and a fisheries training center instructor to assist in a week long fisheries patrol off the coast of Northern California resulting in a vessel detention.

- CGC EDISTO embarked a fisheries training center instructor for a week long fisheries patrol targeting highly migratory species (Operation Tropic Tuna), resulting in documentation of two federal fishery violations that were turned over to NOAA for prosecution.

- Air Station San Francisco embarked NOAA OLE riders during a joint USCG, NOAA, and CDFW operation targeting the commercial and recreational salmon fleet.

- CGC SEA OTTER embarked a California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) enforcement rider for a three-day patrol resulting in 12 boardings of vessels targeting spiny lobster.

- Conducting dedicated joint operations to enforce general fisheries regulations, as well as monitoring activity of particular concern:

  - Off the Washington coast: Station Neah Bay personnel conducted a joint recreational fisheries enforcement patrol with WDFW. Citations were issued for closed season retention of rockfish, retention of undersized catch, failure to record catch, and use of illegal gear.

  - In Washington internal waters: CGC WAHOO worked in conjunction with WDFW to conduct seven joint recreational fishing vessel boardings during a recreational salmon derby in Puget Sound.

  - In the Columbia River: During joint operations with Station Cape Disappointment, WDFW documented violations of state fishing guide regulations. A joint agency boarding resulted in a vessel being impounded and a subsequent criminal investigation.
- Off the Oregon Coast: Beyond general fisheries enforcement, USCG Station Tillamook Bay assisted OSP fisheries enforcement personnel with locating a commercial tuna troller suspected of federal Clean Water Act violations. During a joint boarding of the vessel, one crewmember was arrested for two outstanding warrants and the vessel master was arrested for possession of illegal narcotics and paraphernalia. The vessels voyage was also terminated due to fishing vessel safety violations.

- Off California:
  - Operation Nearshore: Sector Los Angeles/Long Beach, Station Morro Bay, and CDFW conducted a joint enforcement operation in conjunction with the opening of rockfish and salmon seasons. The operation resulted in documentation of eight violations for prohibited species and two undersized lingcod.

  - Operation Salmon Run: Sector/Air Station Humboldt Bay and San Francisco conducted a joint operation with NOAA, CDFW and Homeland Security Investigations enforcement agents in conjunction with the opening of salmon season. The operation resulted in 187 boardings and documentation of 55 fishery and safety violations.

  - Operation Salmon Sentinel: Sector/Air Station Humboldt Bay and San Francisco conducted a joint operation with NOAA, CDFW and HSI enforcement agents prior to the closure of Salmon season. The operation resulted in 14 boardings and 5 LMR/safety violations.

  - Sector Humboldt Bay conducted a joint operation with CDFW prior to and after the recreational crab opener. The operation resulted in the discovery of pre-soak violations, as well as commercial vessels fishing recreationally.

- In addition to the work in the field with enforcement partners, in April 2014, RADM Gromlich visited NOAA’s Sandpoint facility and West Coast Region (WCR) Headquarters to meet with NOAA WCR Regional Administrator Will Stelle.

Finally, similar to the benefits gained from working with enforcement partners, an open flow of communications between the USCG and fisheries stakeholders is also vitally important to successful mission execution. Industry reports of potential enforcement concerns, whether they are in coastal waters or several hundred miles offshore, as summarized in section X of this report, are extremely valuable to enhancing the USCG’s maritime domain awareness. Reports from stakeholders are most effective when they are as timely, as accurate and as detailed as possible. Even if an immediate response isn’t possible, these reports often assist in making the case that more assets need to be devoted to a particular area.
IX. MARINE PROTECTED SPECIES

In addition to fisheries enforcement, the Coast Guard has an active Marine Protected Species protection program, with a strategic plan titled *OCEAN STEWARD*. Patrolling surface units and aircraft are directed to provide information on marine mammal sightings and interactions, as well as working closely with agency partners and other stakeholders through the marine mammal stranding network and the National Marine Sanctuaries.

Highlights from 2014 include:

- **USCG D11 and D13 participated in 10 marine protected species response operations during 2014.** Nine of the responses involved stranded/entangled whales and other marine mammals. The other involved the USCG responding to a request from NOAA to facilitate the transfer of a juvenile stellar sea lion from a PAWS facility in Washington to The Marine Mammal Center in Sausalito, California, for rehabilitation. The transfer occurred on November 13th, 2014 on board a C-130 aircraft from USCG Air Station Sacramento, which transported the sea lion and veterinarian staff from Boeing Field in Seattle to Sacramento, where it was further transferred in a vehicle to the Bay Area. The USCG continues to work with NOAA to coordinate a similar transfer of the sea lion from California, back to the Pacific Northwest, once its rehabilitation is complete.

- Another notable case occurred on October 27, when NOAA contacted D11 and reported an entangled humpback whale located off Moss Landing. The whale was entangled in a weather buoy and had a 1 mile swim radius. NOAA requested USCG assistance to launch a helicopter and attempt to locate the whale and observe its condition. Air Station San Francisco conducted three sorties in search of the whale. On October 29, Air Station San Francisco located the whale and vectored the NOAA vessel FULMAR, with an embarked disentanglement team, to the whale’s position. NOAA was able to disentangle the whale and preserve the buoy mooring. The whale was observed swimming away after it was freed and NOAA reported the whale would likely fully recover.

- USCG personnel participated in patrols with NOAA in the San Juan Islands during the summer to monitor whale watching activity and to enforce regulations associated with Puget Sound Southern Resident Killer Whale ESA vessel regulations. Sector Puget Sound also conducted Operation Southern Resident in August and September to focus on public education and outreach, as well as compliance monitoring, associated with the regulations. The operation involved engagement with federal and state fisheries enforcement partners. 80 patrol boat hours and seven aircraft hours were expended in support of the operation, resulting in 16 boardings and 32 additional vessel contacts, along with the distribution of educational materials. The USCG is working with NOAA to coordinate similar joint operations in the summer of 2015.
X. FOREIGN FISHERIES: ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED, AND UNREGULATED FISHERIES / INTEGRITY OF THE U.S. EEZ

Foreign fisheries enforcement, involving illegal, unreported, and unregulated fisheries, as well as ensuring the integrity of the U.S. EEZ, fall under the USCG’s Other Law Enforcement mission, per Section V of this report. 2014 efforts associated with specific components of the mission are summarized below.

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fisheries:

USCG high seas drift net (HSDN) fisheries enforcement efforts are typically conducted out of USCG District 17 (D17-Alaska) and District 14 (D14-Hawaii). Although direct involvement with specific HSDN activities have historically been relatively low on the West Coast, as summarized below, D11 and D13 remain alert to potential issues involving portions of respective areas of responsibility or activity that may impact fisheries or stakeholder representatives affected by the PFMCo.

USCG IUU enforcement efforts during 2014 resulted in the interception of one vessel conducting unauthorized large-scale HSDN fishing operations in the North Pacific Ocean. Similar to the previous year, the USCG implemented Operation North Pacific Guard, the USCG’s annual fisheries enforcement operation to detect, deter, and eliminate IUU fishing activity on the high seas of the North Pacific Ocean. The primary focus of Operation North Pacific Guard includes identifying large-scale HSDN fishing activity and any high seas capture of anadromous species. Operation North Pacific Guard was planned and executed by the Commander of USCG D17 in coordination with the multilateral enforcement focus of the North Pacific Anadromous Fisheries Commission’s (NPAFC’s) Enforcement Coordination Committee.

Operation North Pacific Guard 2014 began in April with the first ever deployment of USCG aircraft temporarily based out of Japan. Two deployments by a USCG HC-130 maritime surveillance aircraft from Air Station Kodiak to U.S. Air Base Yokota in Japan took place, the first between April 27 and May 10, 2014 and the second between June 28 and July 12, 2014. The USCG conducted a total of 17 maritime air sorties in the North Pacific Ocean amounting to a total of 202 patrol hours. Staging USCG aircraft out of U.S. bases in Japan greatly enhanced the ability to maximize the amount of time spent patrolling the high seas areas most conducive to identifying large-scale high seas fishing operations. In addition, USCG Cutter MORGENTHAU patrolled the NPAFC Convention Area from April through July 2014, for a total of 64 days. Operation North Pacific Guard 2014 was once again supported by deployments of Canadian CP-140 patrol aircraft from Hakodate, Japan, from May 11 to June 1, 2014, under the tactical control of USCG D17 in Juneau, Alaska. Two Canadian Department of National Defense officers and one Department of Fisheries and Oceans officer were assigned to D17 to help coordinate the CP-140 aircraft missions. The CP-140 conducted 11 patrol missions for a total of 95 hours and provided air reconnaissance with real time sighting reports of commercial merchant vessel and high seas fishing fleet activity.
On May 18, 2014, MORGENTHAU intercepted two suspected IUU fish transshipment vessels 35 nautical miles outside the Russian EEZ -- SUNGARI, flying a Sierra Leone flag, and SOVEREIGN, flying a Russian flag. U.S. Coast Guard C-130 aircraft first identified these two vessels and vectored in MORGENTHAU for further investigation. The Government of Sierra Leone denied that SUNGARI was registered in Sierra Leone. While the investigation was underway, SUNGARI changed its name to STELLAR and raised the Cambodian flag. In addition to direct reporting from the USCG to North Pacific partner countries, the U.S. issued its first ever INTERPOL Purple Notice on the SUNGARI to help alert international enforcement authorities to the suspected IUU transshipment activity in which this vessel was believed to be engaged.

MORGENTHAU broke off its investigation of the two vessels on May 20, 2014, to pursue a suspected HSDN fishing vessel, YIN YUAN, located by a Canadian CP-140 patrol aircraft about 250 nautical miles south of MORGENTHAU’s position. The YIN YUAN was flying a Japanese flag; however, Japanese fisheries observers on board the CP-140 stated that the vessel was not a Japanese-registered vessel. When the YIN YUAN became aware of the aircraft, a crew member struck the Japanese flag. A large net, net tube, and net spreader were clearly visible on deck, and a large number of buoys were located throughout the vessel—all typical of a driftnet vessel.

MORGENTHAU pursued YIN YUAN for several days in sea and wind conditions that were not conducive for at-sea boarding and inspection. On May 25, when the ship’s master finally responded to USCG radio hails, he made a verbal claim of Chinese registry. The China Coast Guard (CCG) Fisheries Enforcement officials aboard MORGENTHAU directed YIN YUAN to heave-to for inspection. During an initial interview, the master said the vessel was not fishing, only transporting gear to another fishing vessel. When shown previous days pictures of YIN YUAN’s nets, net tube, and net spreader on board, he admitted to having dumped them overboard the night of May 23. In all, he admitted to dumping 3.3 kilometers (km) of driftnet over the side. During an inspection of the vessel, the USCG boarding team found approximately a half a ton of net marked salmon in an onboard freezer.

On June 3, 2014, MORGENTHAU escorted YIN YUAN to a location in the East China Sea and transferred custody of the vessel to the CCG for further investigation and prosecution. The CCG reported back to the USCG that a detailed investigation identified that the vessel had been leased by a third-party Chinese company. In accordance with China’s domestic laws, the master was fined 100,000 RMB (approximately U.S. $16,300) for violations of making false statements, the highest fine permitted under Chinese law under the circumstances. The half ton of net marked salmon was ultimately discarded because it was deemed unfit for human consumption. CCG officials also relayed the results of their investigation to the China Ministry of Agriculture, Bureau of Fisheries, and reported to the USCG that the Ministry is currently pursuing further fishery enforcement investigations against the Chinese participants involved.
The successes described above related to HSDN and IUU fisheries enforcement efforts require significant resource expenditures through coordinated operations such as Operation North Pacific Guard. However, resource availability precludes the ability to address all threats associated with HSDN and IUU fisheries. Therefore, the USCG appreciates reports from stakeholders on suspected illegal activity. As has been expressed to industry representatives and other stakeholders, these reports are most effective when they are as timely, as accurate, and as detailed as possible. This allows the USCG to determine the most effective response.

As an example of industry reports leading to local USCG enforcement responses on the West Coast, during August 2014, a representative from the American Albacore Fisheries Association (AAFA) contacted D13 to report an increased amount of albacore tuna catch with apparent scars from gillnets. Subsequent joint USCG and NOAA interviews with U.S. albacore harvesters resulted in information which added to the concerns of potential illegal high seas drift net activity in the Eastern Pacific. D13 coordinated with D11 and Air Station Sacramento to sortie a C-130 surveillance flight on August 15. The flight focused on an area of concern determined from information provided by U.S. albacore harvesters. The nine hour flight, with an embarked NOAA OLE agent, covered approximately 4,000 square nautical miles, in addition to a roundtrip to and from the search area of approximately 2,000 miles. Although no suspicious activity was observed, the coordination between industry and the USCG proved to be effective and the experience will enhance potential similar efforts in the future.

**Integrity of the U.S. EEZ:**

Efforts specific to the West Coast, associated with foreign fishing activity under the USCG’s Other Law Enforcement mission, were associated with fisheries pursuant to the U.S./Canada Tuna Treaty. Following the suspension of reciprocal access under the Tuna Treaty during 2012, USCG air and surface surveillance along the U.S./Canada EEZ boundary was increased significantly during summer and fall months of 2013 and 2014, due to concerns associated with resuming reciprocal access at a level more restrictive than the historical average. USCG efforts such as these, which are in support of ensuring the integrity of the U.S. EEZ, fall under Operation Olympic Shield, a comprehensive enforcement plan to deter illegal incursions into the U.S. EEZ. In addition to scheduled cutter and aircraft patrols, including **four** C-130 patrols in support of the operation, other larger cutters transiting through the area, en route other operating areas, were also assigned to monitor activity adjacent to the EEZ boundary as their other obligations allowed.

Eleven Canadian tuna trollers were boarded while fishing in the U.S. EEZ during 2014. Several others were observed by USCG patrol aircraft, including two C-130 patrols conducted to specifically monitor the closure of the reciprocal access season. All Canadian vessels observed were determined to be authorized to fish in the U.S. EEZ legally under the Treaty. With the exception of one Canadian vessel in violation of not being marked as required by the Treaty, the other vessels were in compliance with all applicable Treaty provisions.
Also in support of ensuring the integrity of the U.S. EEZ, the USCG works closely with various agency partners, including NOAA OLE and General Counsel, state enforcement, and the U.S. Attorney’s Office to ensure collective preparation for potential attempts by un-authorized (i.e. non-permitted) Canadian tuna trollers to fish in the U.S. EEZ. For the past two seasons, the USCG has also provided the U.S. albacore fleet with 24x7 contact information and a list of information to report if they observe suspected illegal foreign fishing in the EEZ. No illegal activity has been detected or reported since reciprocal access was resumed under the Tuna Treaty in 2013 and 2014. These efforts will be continued through the duration of the current reciprocal access regime and efforts will be adapted as necessary to respond appropriately to concerns when a change to the current regime is made.
XI. COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL SAFETY

One of the USCG’s primary objectives during the PFMC process is to attempt to identify ways to improve the safety of all fishing activity, whether it is related to commercial or recreational trips; whether the fisheries are administered by the federal government, the states, or the tribes; and whether it takes place in the ocean or within navigable internal waters. In addition to USCG representation at the Councilmember table at the main meeting, multiple USCG personnel attend Council meetings in order to engage stakeholders to answer questions, especially with regard to safety. USCG representatives are also available at similar venues throughout the year to collect information, provide advice, and pursue opportunities to enhance safety among the maritime community.

Commercial Fishing Vessel Lives Lost U.S. West Coast

![Bar chart showing the number of lives lost in West Coast fishing vessels from 2005 to 2014.]

**Figure 2** depicts a comparison the lives lost on West Coast commercial fishing vessels over the past decade. Further details are below:

Two lives were lost in West Coast commercial fisheries during 2014. Although 2014 resulted in the lowest number of lives lost in commercial fisheries in the past decade, the USCG remains diligent in efforts to determine contributing factors to past losses and steps are being taken to mitigate and reduce potential future losses.
The two fatalities during 2014 included a diver lost from a geoduck vessel in the Strait of Juan de Fuca in April and a crewmember lost from an 18-foot Lummi Tribal commercial crabbing vessel, which overturned in the North Puget Sound during November. In addition, seven vessels were also lost while involved in West Coast commercial fisheries during 2014. One vessel was lost to a fire in a Columbia River port, during April. Four vessels participating in the Dungeness crab fishery were lost, one which hit a jetty off Southern Oregon in January, one which ran aground off Central California in March, one which sank eight miles off the Central Oregon coast in December, and one which sank after hitting the Columbia River Jetty in December. One vessel participating in the ocean salmon fishery off Central California was lost after grounding in August. Finally, a vessel was lost after running aground while participating in the shrimp fishery off Southern California in March. These incidents from 2014, as well as past incidents involving vessel losses and losses of life in commercial fisheries, make clear that the hazards in the fishing industry are not isolated to a particular fishery or gear type or a specific geographic area or time of year. The USCG is constantly working to identify trends and take preventive actions in fisheries where incidents occur more frequently; as well as taking steps to attempt to improve the overall safety of the industry.

2014 boarding statistics indicate approximately 30% of commercial fishing vessels boarded had some type of discrepancy involving safety gear carriage requirements or other federal safety regulations. The rate of terminations of commercial fishing vessel voyages for extremely hazardous conditions was approximately 9%.

Voyage terminations are for extremely hazardous conditions, which are defined in section 46 of the Code of Federal Regulations and can include conditions such as the lack of adequate immersion suits, expired or inoperable life rafts or EPIRBs, inoperable bilge pumping systems, lack of adequate firefighting equipment, and other conditions that have the possibility of presenting an immediate threat to a vessel and its crew. The USCG very carefully considers all circumstances related to the potential termination of a vessel’s voyage and the final decision will only be made by the District Commander or a senior officer to whom the authority has been delegated. Following the termination of a vessel’s voyage, the operator must correct the discrepancies and receive permission from the USCG Captain of the Port prior to getting underway again.

The USCG is sensitive to the fact that maintaining a safe vessel with all required gear is expensive and time consuming. Extensive steps are taken to work with industry to ease those burdens and maximize overall compliance. For example, owners of vessels cited for violations of most safety gear carriage requirements are given the opportunity to correct the discrepancies within a specified period of time to avoid a monetary penalty. In anticipation of forthcoming requirements from the USCG and Maritime Transportation Act, efforts are being focused on ensuring commercial fishing vessels operating outside 3 nm have received a successful USCG dockside safety examination, which will assist with bringing them into compliance with requirements under the Act, which will be implemented on October 15, 2015 and will require successful receipt of a certificate of compliance, indicating they have met all safety requirements and are certified to operate under the conditions of the certificate. Currently 896 West Coast commercial fishing vessels have a sticker indicating successful completion of a USCG commercial fishing vessel safety examination.
By qualifying for a fishing vessel safety decal, and eventually a certificate of compliance, not only is the overall safety of vessels and their crews enhanced, but the presence of the decal and/or certificate may result in a more abbreviated at-sea boarding, since less gear needs to be inspected underway, and in most situations, quicker spot checks can verify that gear remains in compliance.

*Updates on the Certificate of Compliance rulemaking, as well as other useful Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety, are available at:*

www.fishsafewest.info

In addition to verifying the status of safety gear during at-sea boardings, USCG units also place a significant emphasis on ensuring compliance with Rule 5 of the International Rules of the Road, which requires all vessels to maintain an appropriate bridge watch or lookout.

USCG fishing vessel safety personnel also work closely with the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program to identify safety concerns on vessels carrying observers. USCG personnel are involved in drill conductor classes and other outreach opportunities to promote at-sea safety, as has been the case for over a decade. USCG fisheries enforcement and commercial fishing vessel safety staff have also worked with NOAA to develop a standard protocol for observers to report to enforcement personnel regarding vessel safety concerns. The USCG also has a close working relationship with NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, which shares information regarding observer debriefings after fishing vessel rides, which result in observations of suspected safety or MARPOL violations that require potential follow up by the USCG.