

# NOAA Fisheries National Bycatch Strategy

Northwest and Southwest  
Regional Bycatch Plans



# Definition of Bycatch (NMFS 1998)

**The discarded catch of any living marine resource**

*PLUS*

**retained incidental catch**

*AND*

**unobserved mortality due to a direct encounter with  
fishing gear**

This definition includes marine mammals (MMPA), endangered species (ESA), seabirds (MBTA), and fisheries resources (MSA).

## National Bycatch Goal:

“The fundamental national goal of NMFS bycatch-related activities is to implement conservation and management measures for living marine resources that will minimize, to the extent practicable, bycatch and the mortality of bycatch that cannot be avoided.”

\*\* From “Managing the Nation’s Bycatch,” NMFS 1998, derived from Magnuson-Stevens Act, National Standard 9.

# “To the Extent Practicable” according to Congress

- Term recognizes that bycatch can occur in any fishery, and that complete avoidance of mortality is impossible.
- Councils should make reasonable efforts in their FMPs to prevent bycatch and minimize its mortality.
- National Standard 9 not intended to allocate catch between gear groups, nor to impose costs on fishermen and processors that cannot be reasonably met.

\*\* From 9/17/96 *Congressional Record* on the Sustainable Fisheries Act.



# National Bycatch Strategy Includes:

- Regional Bycatch Plans
- “Evaluating Bycatch: A National Approach to Standardized Bycatch Monitoring Programs”
- “NOAA Fisheries Objectives, Protocol, and Recommended Precision Goals for Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodologies”

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/bycatch.htm> for above documents and further information

# Implementing the National Bycatch Strategy

- Assess progress toward meeting the National Bycatch Goal and regional bycatch recommendations from “*Managing the Nation’s Bycatch*”
- Develop a national approach to a standardized bycatch reporting methodology
- Draft regional bycatch goal implementation plans
- Education and outreach to develop cooperative bycatch reduction efforts
- Reduce bycatch of internationally-managed species through existing multi-national partnerships
- Identify funding requirements to support the national bycatch strategy

# Regional Bycatch Plans

## Northwest

- Groundfish – Federally managed
- Salmon – Federally managed marine fisheries

## Southwest

- Coastal Pelagic Species – Federally managed
- CA/OR drift gillnet fishery (ESA/MMPA)
- Tuna purse seine, eastern tropical Pacific (MMPA)

# Northwest Regional Plan Addresses:

- **Bycatch Reporting Methodologies:** at-sea surveys, observer programs, pilot shoreside and electronic monitoring alternatives.
- **Bycatch Research Needs:** expanded monitoring programs, gear selectivity tests, seabird abundance, hooking mortality rates, expanded coded wire tag program



# Northwest Regional Plan Addresses, II:

- **Bycatch Management Measures:**
  - Groundfish - finalize groundfish bycatch EIS, refine conservation areas, reduce capacity, update Biological Opinion on groundfish fisheries
  - Salmon - time/area closures, gear restrictions, review mooching and size limits
- **Education and Outreach Efforts:** websites, email lists, bycatch data reports, EFPs for gear research, SRPs/LOAs for bycatch mortality

# Northwest Near-Term Bycatch Priorities:

- **Monitoring:** Integrate 2002-2003 WCGOP data into bycatch model; Convert at-sea whiting observer program from voluntary to mandatory
- **Research:** Technical workshop on coded wire tagging and mark selective fisheries; Expand groundfish observer coverage to open access fleet
- **Management:** Complete bycatch EIS; Incorporate non-trawl bycatch data into 2004 inseason management; Assess need for Biological Opinion update; Biological Assessment for short-tailed albatross
- **Education/Outreach:** Develop seabird interaction website; Work with PFMC on its communications plan

# Southwest Regional Plan Addresses:

- **Vulnerability of Discarded Species**
  - Quantitative assessment of mortality rates
  - Status of the incidentally caught species
  - High incidence of bycatch in a fishery
  
- **Species of Concern**
  - Marine Mammals
  - Sea Turtles
  - Listed Salmon
  - Sunfish, Blue and Mako Sharks

# Southwest Regional Plan Addresses:

- Identification of Bycatch Problems
  - Coastal Pelagic Species
    - Available data suggests low levels of bycatch
  - Drift Gillnet Fishery
    - Implementation of TRP and the requirements NMFS' biological opinions have substantially reduced the bycatch of sea turtles and marine mammals.



# Southwest Near-Term Bycatch Priorities:

## ■ Monitoring:

- CPS FMP should establish a standardized reporting methodology, capable of reporting the precision and accuracy of estimates of bycatch occurring in all sectors of the fishery.
- Pilot observer program in California to confirm dock-side evaluations of bycatch levels.

# Southwest Near-Term Bycatch Priorities:

## ■ Management:

- With the implementation of the HMS FMP, the SWR must work with the Southwest Fisheries Science Center and states to develop sampling designs within 6 months for observer programs and other activities to ensure that bycatch estimates will be available with adequate precision and accuracy.
- NMFS should continue to promote bycatch assessment and reduction through the IATTC and other international programs.

# Southwest Near-Term Bycatch Priorities:

## ■ Research:

- Effects of US fishing in the Pacific on reproductive capacity of leatherback and loggerhead turtles.
- Post-hooking and post-entanglement mortality rates of leatherback and loggerhead turtles.
- Effects of US fishing in the Pacific on reproductive capacity of molas, blue, and shortfin mako sharks.
- Evaluate use of grates to cover openings of holds in CPS fisheries

# Next Steps

## Science

- Increased NMFS investment in monitoring, gear research, bycatch mortality studies, etc.
- Completion of NMFS nation-wide review of statistical accuracy of sampling programs

## Management

- Council feedback on and/or recommendations for NWR and SWR plans
- Council-NMFS dialogue on bringing plan recommendation into FMP implementation