

**Excerpts from the Fishery Management Plan for U.S. West Coast Fisheries for  
Highly Migratory Species as Amended through Amendment 5**

**6.3 Bycatch Monitoring and Minimization**

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) requires that bycatch in fisheries be assessed, and that the bycatch and bycatch mortality be reduced to the extent practicable. Specifically, National Standard 9 states that a fishery management plan (FMP) shall establish a standardized reporting methodology to assess the amount and type of bycatch occurring in the fishery, and include conservation and management measures to the extent practicable and in the following priority: 1) minimize bycatch; and 2) minimize the mortality of bycatch which cannot be avoided.

Bycatch has been identified as a concern in highly migratory species (HMS) drift gillnet and longline fisheries and large-vessel purse seine fisheries (see [Appendix C](#)). Anecdotal accounts indicate bycatch in the small-vessel HMS purse seine and albacore troll fishery is relatively low, but these fisheries have not had formal observer programs. The harpoon fishery is thought to have little, if any, bycatch due to the selective nature of the gear.

*6.3.1 Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology*

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) examined existing bycatch reporting methodologies, and found that current logbook requirements for the various fisheries (states, National Marine Fisheries Service [NMFS] and Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission [IATTC]), together with periodic recreational fishing surveys and port sampling, have provided an important source of information on catch and bycatch for all HMS fisheries ([Appendix C](#), section 5). Nonetheless, certain additional measures were considered to provide improved standardization of logbook reporting and better ground-truthing of the logbook data through pilot observer programs for some of the presently unobserved fisheries. Observer programs are authorized consistent with observer sampling plans prepared by NMFS (Section 6.2.3). All commercial and recreational party or charter/commercial passenger fishing vessels (CPFV) must maintain and submit to NMFS logbook records containing catch and effort statistics, including bycatch. These measures, together with existing reporting requirements, should provide for a comprehensive standardized bycatch reporting system.

*6.3.2 Minimizing Bycatch and Bycatch Mortality*

Additional actions that will have the effect of reducing bycatch and bycatch mortality are discussed in Appendix C and under the various fishery-specific actions in Sections 6.6.1 (drift gillnet fishery), and 6.6.2 (pelagic longline fishery).

The FMP provides for a fishery-by-fishery review of measures to reduce bycatch and bycatch mortality (see [Appendix C](#)); establishes a framework for implementing bycatch reduction, adopts measures to minimize bycatch in pelagic longline and drift gillnet fisheries (Section 6.6), and adopts a formal voluntary “catch-and-release” program for HMS recreational fisheries. This meets the goals of the MSA and of this FMP and the requirements for estimating bycatch and for establishing measures to reduce bycatch and bycatch mortality in HMS fisheries.

The framework procedure may be used to implement additional bycatch reporting and reduction measures. Potential measures/methods include but are not limited to:

- logbooks
- observers
- time/area closures
- gear restrictions or modifications, or use of alternative gear
- educational programs
- performance standards
- real-time data collection programs (e.g., VMS, electronic logbooks)

The voluntary “catch-and-release” program promotes reduction of bycatch mortality and waste by encouraging the live release of unwanted fish. Its rationale and origination for recreational fisheries is explained in Appendix C, Section C.7. The establishment of the catch-and-release program removes live releases in the recreational fisheries from the “bycatch” category as defined in the MSA in Section 3(2) and also promotes the handling and release of fish in a manner that minimizes the risk of incidental mortality, encourages the live release of small fish, and discourages waste.

Shared EC Species, identified in Section 3.3, could continue to be taken incidentally without violating Federal regulations, unless regulated or restricted for other purposes, such as with bycatch minimization regulations. The targeting of Shared EC Species is prohibited.