

# U.S. COAST GUARD

## 2020 REPORT



## TO THE PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

**April 2021**

*Prepared By:  
Eleventh Coast Guard District  
Thirteenth Coast Guard District*

## **I. U.S. Coast Guard Resources**

The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) has two districts overseeing U.S. waters off the western coastal states. The Eleventh District (D11) area of responsibility includes the waters off the coast of California out to 200 nautical miles. The Thirteenth District (D13) area of responsibility includes the waters off the coasts of Washington and Oregon out to 200 nautical miles, as well as Washington internal waters and the Columbia River. Resources used for fisheries enforcement include cutters, aircraft, and boats from coastal stations.

### **Cutters**

Patrol Boats/Fast Response Cutters: The primary surface fisheries law enforcement patrol resources are the 87' Coastal Patrol Boats, 110' Patrol Boats, and 154' Fast Response Cutters. 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 four Fast Response Cutters in San Pedro. The primary change in Patrol Boat home ports for 2021 is the decommissioning of CGC DORADO in Crescent City, CA. 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. Medium Endurance Cutters: Two 210' Medium Endurance Cutters located in Astoria, Oregon, and one in Port Angeles, Washington are also assigned to dedicated west coast fisheries patrols.

### **Aircraft**

Air Station Sacramento provides medium range fixed-wing HC-27J Spartan aircraft to conduct surveillance flights along the entire west coast. The primary rotary wing fisheries law enforcement resources on the west coast are MH-60 Jayhawk and MH-65 Dolphin helicopters. Due to endurance and safety limitations, offshore patrols are typically conducted within 100 nautical miles of the coast. D11's three helicopter air stations are located in Humboldt Bay (Eureka, CA), San Francisco, and San Diego, along with an Air Facility at Naval Base Ventura County (Oxnard, CA). D13's three helicopter air stations are located in Port Angeles, Washington, and Astoria and North Bend, Oregon, along with an Air Facility in Newport, Oregon.

## **Stations**

Small boats from coastal stations primarily conduct search and rescue. However, boat crews are trained in fisheries law enforcement, and conduct patrols to enforce domestic fisheries and safety regulations, typically within 20 nautical miles of shore. D11 has fourteen stations located along the California coast, while D13 has eleven coastal stations along the Washington and Oregon coasts, as well as three stations in Washington internal waters (Port Angeles, Bellingham, and Seattle) and one on the Willamette River (Portland). Two additional seasonal stations are operated in Bandon and Gold Beach, Oregon, during summer months, corresponding with periods of higher boating activity. Typical boat types at west coast stations include the 47' Motor Lifeboat, the 45' Response Boat-Medium, and the 29' Response Boat-Small. Additionally, for more than 60 years, the Coast Guard's workhorses in the surf off the Pacific Northwest were the 52' Heavy Weather Lifeboats, the Victory, Intrepid, Invincible II and Triumph II. Due to a series of equipment failures, the Thirteenth District Commander severely restricted their use in October 2020. The Coast Guard continues to respond to reports of mariners in distress with the 47' Motor Lifeboat, aviation assets and cutters.

## **Pacific Regional Fisheries Training Center**

All units involved in fisheries enforcement receive training from the Coast Guard's Pacific Regional Fisheries Training Center in Alameda, California. NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) agents and state fisheries enforcement officers routinely participate in the training, as well as ride on cutters and aircraft during fisheries enforcement patrols. The success of USCG fisheries enforcement operations is enhanced by collaboration with our enforcement partners from NOAA OLE, Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and the states of California, Washington, and Oregon.

## **II. Fisheries Enforcement Efforts**

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

Efforts specific to the west coast were primarily associated with fisheries associated with the U.S./Canada Tuna Treaty. During 2020, the USCG continued to focus on robust air and surface surveillance along the U.S./Canada EEZ boundary as resource availability allowed. USCG efforts such as these, which are in support of ensuring the integrity of the U.S. EEZ, fall under D13's Operation Olympic Shield, a comprehensive and multi-agency enforcement plan to deter illegal incursions into the U.S. EEZ. Additionally, the USCG maintained vigorous air/surface surveillance along the U.S./Mexico EEZ boundary under Operation Baja Tempestad (OBT). While OBT is a counter-drug/migrant smuggling operation, units patrolling the maritime boundary line also ensure there are no EEZ incursions from foreign fishing vessels (FFVs) which directly supports Operation Western Flyer, District 11's EEZ enforcement operation. No EEZ incursions were documented by the Coast Guard in 2020.

Two Canadian tuna trollers were boarded while fishing in the U.S. EEZ during 2020 with no violations detected. All other Canadian vessels observed were determined to be in compliance with applicable Treaty provisions. In order to ensure the integrity of the EEZ, the USCG works closely with various agency partners, including Canada DFO, NOAA OLE and General Counsel, state enforcement, and the U.S. Attorney's Office to ensure collaborative preparation for potential attempts by unauthorized Canadian tuna trollers to fish in the U.S. EEZ. No illegal activity has been detected or reported since reciprocal access resumed under the Tuna Treaty in 2013. The USCG will remain engaged in potential discussions regarding the future of reciprocal access under the Treaty and enforcement strategies will be developed and patrol assets will be deployed to ensure compliance. The Coast Guard also forward-deployed a C-27 fixed-wing aircraft and pushed our cutters out to the edges of our EEZ to ensure no Canadian vessels remained in the U.S. EEZ after the treaty season closure.

The Coast Guard also received reports of multiple Canadian Whiting vessels operating near the U.S. EEZ off the coast of northwest Washington. Aircraft and cutters were sortied to investigate and patrol the area with no incursions identified. The Coast Guard relayed the reports to NOAA OLE, who in turn notified Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans to remind the Canadian fleet to operate in the Canadian EEZ.

The Coast Guard is particularly concerned with continued reporting from the U.S. and Canadian Albacore fleets of net marked fish and potential movement of the Chinese fleet toward the US EEZ. Any fishermen with specific reports of vessel names, dates, and/or locations of Chinese vessels operating in the Northeastern Pacific Ocean are encouraged to make a report to any of the PFMC Enforcement Consultants.

### **Domestic Fisheries Efforts**

The majority of west coast offshore fisheries enforcement efforts are conducted by 154' Fast Response Cutters and 110' and 87' Patrol Boats, which patrolled for 9,549 hours in 2020. The Medium-Endurance Cutters ACTIVE and ALERT contributed 2,851 hours through 2 deployments in D13 and one in D11. Coast Guard aircraft patrolled for 1,749 hours while small boats patrolled for 1,069 hours.

As with every other aspect of Council activities, COVID-19 impacted Coast Guard operations in 2020. We continued active air and surface patrol efforts, but reduced boardings to limit potential exposure. Extensive Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) guidelines were established to ensure the safety of both Coast Guard personnel and fishermen. The Coast Guard also issued several Marine Safety Information Bulletins (MSIB) reiterating existing laws and regulations, including:

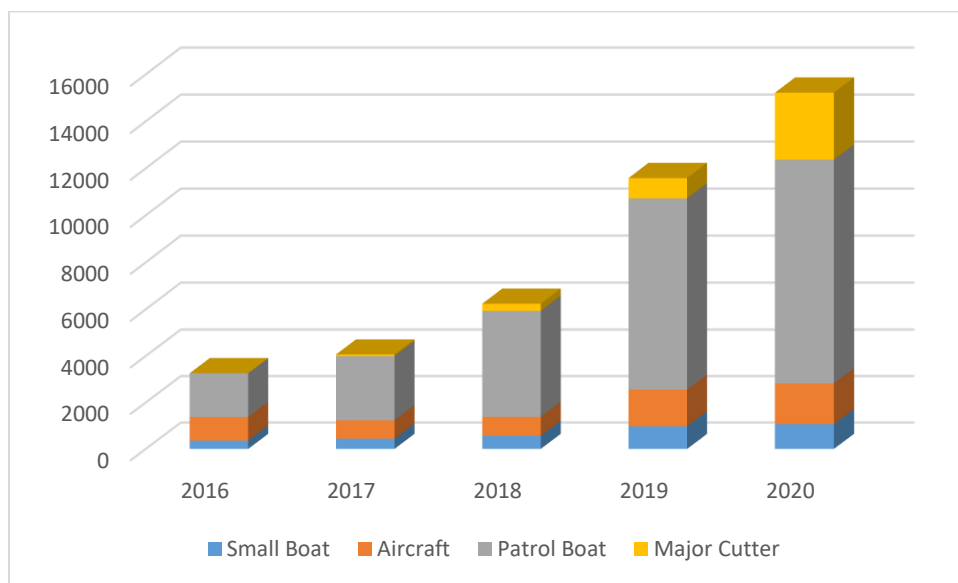
- 33 CFR 160.216 - Illness of a person onboard a vessel that may adversely affect the safety of a vessel or port is a hazardous condition and the owner, agent, master, operator,

or person in charge must immediately notify the nearest Coast Guard Captain of the Port (COTP).

- 16 USC 1857(1)(D) – It is unlawful to refuse to permit any officer authorized to board a fishing vessel for any reason, including COVID-19 concerns.

Additionally, the Coast Guard recently issued MSIB 02-21 with direction to commercial vessels regarding wearing masks. Reports of vessels not complying with the requirement or questions should be emailed to [wearmask@uscg.mil](mailto:wearmask@uscg.mil). Coast Guard MSIB's are available at <https://www.dco.uscg.mil/Featured-Content/Mariners/Marine-Safety-Information-Bulletins-MSIB/>.

### USCG Fisheries Resource Hours 2016-2020



*Figure 1. Coast Guard Living Marine Resource hours on the West Coast.*

In addition to offshore fisheries patrols, USCG units enforced federal safety regulations and monitored tribal and state fisheries activity in Washington internal waters, as well as monitoring Columbia River Buoy 10, and other coastal bay recreational salmon fisheries. Operations were also conducted in internal waters to monitor high volumes of vessel traffic associated with certain fisheries openers. The majority of these targeted efforts included joint patrols, embarking riders, or sharing of information with state and NOAA fisheries enforcement personnel.

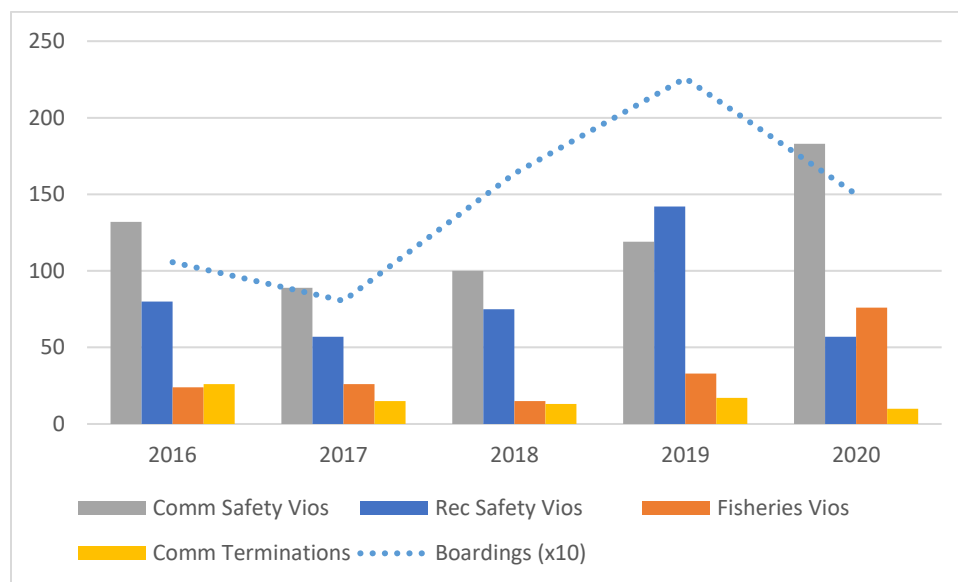
Coast Guard units conducted 1,500 commercial and recreational fisheries boardings in Washington, Oregon, and California waters, covering federal, state, and tribal managed species. Approximately 1/3 of the boardings were on commercial fishing vessels, while the remainder were on recreational and charter vessels.

The Coast Guard’s most effective efforts are the result of working collaboratively with partners from NOAA OLE, Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Treaty Tribes, and California, Oregon, and Washington state fisheries enforcement personnel.

Similar to the benefits gained from working with enforcement partners, an open flow of communications between the USCG and fishing industry stakeholders is also vitally import to successful mission execution. Industry reports of potential enforcement concerns 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 is not possible, these reports often assist in obtaining more assets to target a particular area of concern.

### **Violation and Enforcement Summary**

**2020 by the Numbers**  
*1,500 Fisheries Boardings*  
*76 Fisheries Violations*  
*183 Commercial Safety Violations*  
*10 Commercial Voyages Terminated*  
*157 Recreational Safety Violations*



*Figure 2. 2016-20 Coast Guard Boardings and Fisheries/Safety Violations*

The violations involved documentation of non-compliance with federal fisheries regulations, which were forward to NOAA for adjudication, as well as suspected violations of state and tribal regulations that were forwarded to the appropriate agency/tribe for disposition. Some examples of these fisheries violations include:

- Broadcasting incorrect Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) declaration codes (particularly at the start of Dungeness Crab season)
- Failure to broadcast Automatic Identification System (AIS) inside 12 NM
- Using barbed hooks while fishing for salmon
- Failure to carry Highly Migratory Species (HMS) logbook
- Fishing in closed areas (federal/state marine reserves)
- Fishing during closed periods
- Fishing in violation of an Experimental Fishing Permit (EFP)
- Violations of Observer regulations

### **High Seas Illegal, Unregulated, Unreported (IUU) Fishing**

USCG Illegal, Unregulated, Unreported (IUU) fisheries enforcement efforts are typically conducted out of District 17 (D17-Alaska) and District 14 (D14-Hawaii). Although direct involvement with specific IUU 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 with the potential to impact fisheries or stakeholder representatives related to the Council.

NOAA and the USCG work closely with enforcement agencies from Canada, China, Japan, South Korea, and the Russian Federation. The international community has come together to further emphasize the importance of maintaining sustainable fisheries by creating the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC), the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC) and the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum (NPCGF). The USCG's annual IUU fisheries enforcement operation, known as Operation North Pacific Guard, was conducted again during the summer of 2020.

Operation North Pacific Guard originally focused on targeting illegal high seas driftnet fishing, a form of wild capture fisheries that poses a significant threat to living marine resources of the world's oceans. The practice involves the use of miles long gillnets that indiscriminately catch and kill everything in the water column, including slow-reproducing species like marine mammals, sharks, and seabirds which may require many years to recover. In response to this threat, in 1991 the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution that placed a moratorium on high seas driftnet fishing. In recent years the operation has been expanded to counter all forms of IUU fishing in the North Pacific Ocean. Participating nations contribute operationally by providing surface and air patrols, and sharing intelligence that facilitate at-sea inspections targeting IUU fishing activity. The United States Coast Guard leads the operation with one major surface asset with embarked MH-65 helicopter, and a C-130 aircraft.

The Operation North Pacific Guard operation area is vast, encompassing more than three million square miles of high seas area. Locating fishing fleets and evaluating whether their operations are illicit or legitimate requires significant effort and coordination. Global Fishing Watch, a non-

governmental organization committed to improving transparency in global fishing, provided valuable information related to suspect transshipment of fish products at sea, and vessel tracking systems that appeared to be “spoofed”, or intentionally manipulated to report false information. Investigation of these reports by the Fishing Agency of Japan and the Canadian Marine Security Operation Center (MSOC) was critical in the identification of numerous vessels of interest. MSOC also provided reconnaissance support, which further helped identify and target potential illicit activity. The Japan Coast Guard and Fisheries and Oceans Canada contributed aircraft resources that detected a potentially stateless vessel.

Supported by the intelligence effort to detect suspicious vessels of interest, the US Coast Guard Cutter DOUGLAS MUNRO patrolled over 12,500 miles in the North Pacific, conducted at-sea inspections aboard 11 fishing vessels, from four different nations, and found 14 potential violations of regional fisheries conservation and management measures. Of note, the cutter conducted three boardings on Chinese flagged squid fishing vessels on which serious potential violations were detected. When DOUGLAS MUNRO began operations there were 31 fishing vessels in the designated patrol area. After these boardings were conducted with serious potential violations being found, however, nearly the entire fleet stopped fishing and fled nearly 850 nautical miles west across the Pacific avoiding further inspection.

Operation North Pacific Guard upholds international maritime governance in the North Pacific by supporting several Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMO), multilateral bodies that adopt legally binding conservation and management measures to protect migratory fish stocks on the high seas. The convention areas of the NPFC, WCPFC, and NPAFC – RFMOs established to conserve and govern important commercial fisheries including squid, tuna, and salmon – are patrolled during the operation. These RFMOs have adopted monitoring, control, and surveillance measures, including high seas boarding and inspection in various forms. The United States views high seas boarding and inspection authorities in RFMOs to be critically important to monitoring and compelling compliance with regulatory measures. At-sea inspections level the playing field for legitimate operators and challenge IUU fishing bad actors by shining a light on their illicit activities.

In September 2020, the Coast Guard published the IUU Fishing Strategic Outlook, which announced a commitment to leading a global effort to combat illegal exploitation of the ocean’s fish stocks and protect our national interests. This Outlook establishes three lined of effort critical to achieving success: (1) Promote targeted, effective, intelligence-driven enforcement operations, (2) Counter predatory and irresponsible State behavior, and (3) Expand multilateral fisheries enforcement cooperation. The IUU Strategic Outlook is included alongside this report as USCG Supplemental Report 2 in the April 2021 Council Briefing Book.



### **III. Marine Protected Resources**

In addition to fisheries enforcement, the USCG has an active Marine Protected Resources protection program. Patrolling surface units and routinely provide information on ESA species, migratory birds, and marine mammal sightings and interactions, as well as working closely with agency partners and other stakeholders through stranding networks, National Marine Sanctuaries, and state Marine Reserves and Marine Protected Areas.

The Coast Guard responded to 16 requests for assistance with stranded or entangled whales off the west coast last year. The primary role of the Coast Guard in these cases is relocating the affected animal and tracking it until NOAA and Marine Mammal Stranding Network assets arrive on scene, which typically involved both aircraft and surface assets.

Additional Marine Protected Resource focused operations, all of which involved NOAA OLE, WDFW, OSP, and/or CDFW, were conducted in 2020, including:

- Operation Be Whale Wise: D13's operation focused on the protection of Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW), in particular, vessel approach zones. In 2021, we will also focus on the new WDFW regulations requiring commercial whale watching licenses and AIS. Additionally, we will also add a second surge operation targeting recreational Chinook salmon fishing in Puget Sound, geared toward ensuring conservation regulations on the SRKW key forage species are followed. Lastly, in the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2020, Congress included a requirement for the Coast Guard to submit a report on "Puget Sound Washington Southern Resident Orca Vessel Buffer Zones Enforcement." This report will be provided to the Council at the September meeting.
- Operation Buoy 10: D13's operation focused on enforcing regulations protecting ESA-listed Coho salmon on the Columbia River. Several minor violations were detected and referred to OSP. This operation will be conducted again in 2021.
- Operation Coleridge: D13's operation focused on the requirement for groundfish longliners to use tori lines when setting gear to avoid interactions with endangered Short-Tailed Albatross. No violations were detected in 2020. This operation will be conducted again in 2021.
- Operation Fluke: D13's operation focused on reducing crab gear interaction offshore with endangered and threatened whales by assisting WDFW and OSP in locating derelict crab gear after the commercial season closes. In 2021, we will expand the operation to include assisting state enforcement in ensuring crabbers move their gear when the crab depth limit shifts to 40 fathoms.

- Operation Ocean Protector: D11’s recurring marine protected resources/marine protected species operation. Air Station Sacramento provided two dedicated National Marine Sanctuaries flights per month.
- Operation Silver Surf: D13’s operation focused on enforcing regulations protecting ESA-listed Coho salmon on the central and southern Oregon Coast. No significant violations were detected. This operation will be conducted again in 2021.

#### IV. Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety

One of the USCG’s primary objectives during the Council process is 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 the activity takes place in the ocean or within navigable internal waters. In addition to USCG representation on the Council, multiple USCG personnel attend Council meetings in order to engage with 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

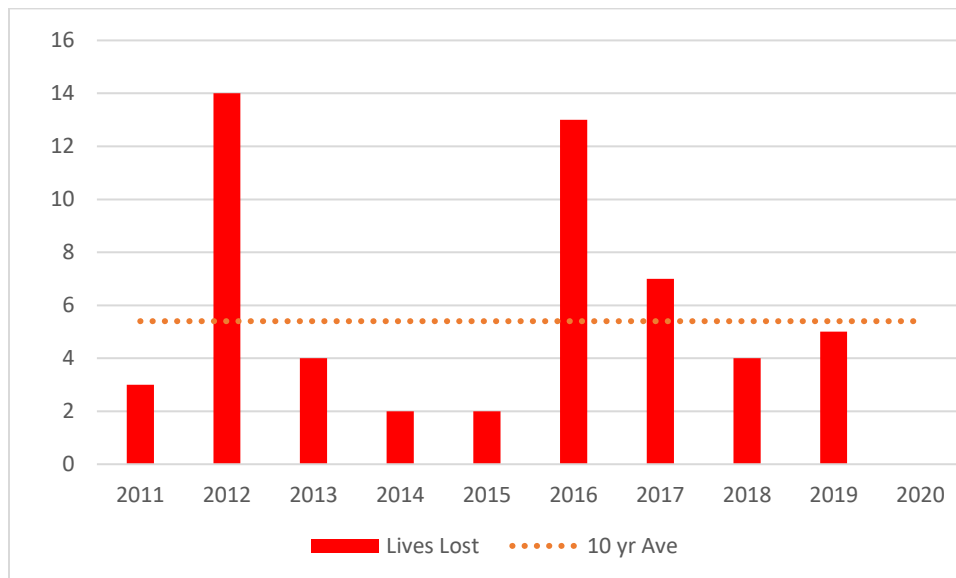


Figure 3. Lives lost from West Coast commercial fishing vessels since 2010.

No lives were lost in West Coast commercial fisheries during 2020. The number of lives lost is significantly lower than the average from the preceding ten-year period (5.4 lives lost per year). 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.

There were, however, multiple vessel losses and serious injuries, including:

- In January, a groundfish vessel with 3 people onboard mistook the entrance to Humboldt Bay, CA during low visibility and ran into the south jetty. The vessel grounded on a nearby sandy beach and then sank. One person sustained a severe head injury and was taken to a local hospital. The other two were uninjured. The vessel broke up in the surf and was a total loss.
- Also in January, while on a training flight, a Coast Guard helicopter discovered a capsized 38 foot crabber at the entrance to Coos Bay, OR, followed shortly by an EPIRB alert. The Hauser Fire Department was able to approach the vessel which had drifted against the north jetty and were able to confirm that all three persons were trapped inside the hull and alive. Within an hour, the Hauser FD was able to cut a hole in the hull and free all three crewmembers. The FD also confirmed that there were no additional crewmembers missing. There were no major injuries. The vessel was a total loss.
- In March, a crabber with 2 people onboard ran aground off Pt. Arena, CA due to fatigue, after being awake for over 36 hours fishing for crab. There were no injuries. Salvage off the sandy beach was unsuccessful and the vessel broke up in the surf and was a total loss.
- In April, a 57 foot tuna troller with 3 people onboard ran aground and began taking on water near Kingston, WA. The master reported he fell asleep and hit a rock near shore. There were no significant injuries and the vessel was salvaged.
- In May, a salmon troller with 1 person onboard ran aground in Pirates Cove, CA. The individual ended up in the water and was hoisted by Air Station San Francisco with no injuries. The vessel broke up in the surf and was a total loss.
- Also in May, a shrimper with 2 people onboard ran aground on Ventura Beach after the operator fell asleep due to fatigue. There were no injuries. The vessel broke up in the surf and was a total loss.
- Also in May, the Coast Guard received notification from a whiting factory processor of a crewmember onboard that tested positive for COVID-19 while moored in Bellingham, WA. The crewmember, and 9 other crewmembers who were in close contact, were removed from the vessel and quarantined. The entire crew was then tested for COVID-19 with 85 of 126 total crew onboard testing positive. The vessel shifted berths to Seattle and remained moored until cleared to depart for Alaska.
- In July, a squid boat with 4 people onboard in Monterey Bay, CA had a crewmember smash his hand between the seine net and horn, causing the loss of the index and middle finger.

- Also in July, a 37 foot tuna troller near Astoria, OR with 1 person onboard reported taking on water quickly and that he was unable to control the flooding. The operator activated his EPIRB, launched a flare, and jumped overboard as the vessel sank on the Columbia River Bar. He was immediately recovered by a Coast Guard lifeboat. The vessel was a total loss.
- In August, a 44 foot tuna troller with 1 person onboard called the Coast Guard reporting that he had run aground near the Yaquina Bay, OR south jetty. A Coast Guard lifeboat could not approach the vessel due to shoaling. A Coast Guard ground party entered the water and assisted the fisherman to shore. There were no major injuries. The vessel broke up in the surf and was a total loss.
- Also in August, a 63-foot tuna troller 150 miles west of Yaquina Bay, OR, reported a crew member who suffered a serious eye injury and vision loss after a line slipped while he was reeling in a tuna, and a swivel tackle hit him in the eye. An H-60 Jayhawk helicopter crew from Coast Guard Sector Columbia River, and a C-27J Spartan medium-range surveillance, search and rescue aircrew from Coast Guard Air Station Sacramento in McClellan, California, deployed to assist the injured fisherman. Once on scene, the Jayhawk aircrew hoisted the man, while the Spartan aircrew provided air cover and communication and logistic support. The Jayhawk aircrew flew the crewmember to Oregon Health & Science University Hospital in Portland.

Additional reported casualties included:

- Disabled and Adrift (engine/shaft/rudder/battery issues)
- Minor collisions at sea (net entanglements, low visibility)
- Sinkings at the dock (deferred maintenance)
- Flooding (pumped out and repaired on-scene)
- Minor injuries (first aid)
- Soft groundings (refloated-no damage)
- Fire (in pilothouse while moored and contained)

These incidents make clear that hazards in the fishing industry are not isolated to a particular fishery, gear type, 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.

2020 boarding statistics indicate approximately 36% of commercial fishing vessels boarded had some type of discrepancy involving safety gear carriage requirements or other federal safety regulations (reversing a downward trend from 26% in 2018 and 21% in 2019). Approximately 2% of all commercial fishing vessels boarded had their voyages terminated at sea or were issued a Captain of the Port Order during a post-SAR boarding in port for existence of especially hazardous conditions (roughly the same as in 2019). Especially hazardous conditions, which are defined in

Section 46 of the Code of Federal Regulations can include conditions such as the lack of adequate immersion suits, lack of adequate firefighting equipment, and other conditions having 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 issuance of a Captain of the Port Order. The final decision will only be made by the cognizant District Commander or a senior officer to whom the authority has been delegated. Following the termination of a vessel's voyage and issuance of a Captain of the Port Order, the vessel's operator must correct the discrepancies noted and receive permission from the USCG Captain of the Port prior to getting underway again.

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. Not maintaining a bridge watch has been identified as a contributing factor to several vessel accidents at sea in the past few years.

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 or other concerns at sea. The USCG has a close working relationship with NOAA OLE, which shares information regarding observer debriefings after vessel deployments resulting in observations of suspected safety or MARPOL violations requiring potential follow up by the USCG.

Further details, as well as updates on the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act rulemaking and other important commercial fishing vessel safety information are available at: [www.fishsafewest.info](http://www.fishsafewest.info).

## **V. Recreational Fishing Safety**

Recreational boaters fishing in ocean waters off the West Coast face similar dangers as their commercial vessel counterparts, which are inherent when operating within the coastal environment. Similar to efforts being made to improve the safety of commercial fisheries, every Coast Guard District has a Recreational Boating Safety program focused on enhancing the safety of recreational boaters, including those engaged in fishing.

Coast Guard units work closely with fisheries enforcement and first responders to place a particular emphasis on being present to monitor activity associated with fisheries openers and other timeframes anticipated to result in significant offshore vessel participation. Unlike commercial fisheries, the Coast Guard isn't the lead agency charged with investigating casualties on

recreational boats. Because the root cause of incidents is often unknown or unreported to the Coast Guard, it is much more difficult to determine trends or patterns in recreational vessel incidents when compared to commercial fishing vessel casualties.