

# U.S. COAST GUARD

## 2022 REPORT



## TO THE PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

**March 2023**

*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's (D11) area of responsibility includes the waters off the coast of California. The Thirteenth District's (D13) is responsible for the waters off the coasts of Washington and Oregon 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. D11 Patrol Boats include eleven 87' Coastal Patrol Boats located at coastal ports throughout California and four 154' Fast Response Cutters in San Pedro. D13 Patrol Boats include seven 87' Coastal Patrol Boats located in Salish Sea ports, as well as one 110' Patrol Boat homeported 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 has a 225' Seagoing Buoy Tender, homeported in Astoria, Oregon for offshore fisheries and a 175' Coastal Buoy Tender, homeported in Everett, WA, for Puget Sound fisheries.

Medium Endurance Cutters: Two 210' Medium Endurance Cutters located in Astoria, Oregon and one in Port Angeles, Washington conduct west coast fisheries patrols several times a year.

### **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. D11's three helicopter air stations are in Humboldt Bay, San Francisco, and San Diego, along with an Air Facility at Naval Base Ventura County. D13's three helicopter air stations are in Port Angeles, Astoria, and North Bend, along with an Air Facility in Newport.

### **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. 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' and 29' Response Boats.

### **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 (DFO), and the states of California, Washington, and Oregon.

## **II. Fisheries Enforcement Efforts**

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

EEZ enforcement efforts specific to the west coast were primarily associated with fisheries under the U.S./Canada Tuna Treaty. This year, the USCG continued to focus on robust air and surface surveillance along the U.S./Canada EEZ boundary as resource availability allowed. USCG efforts ensuring the integrity of the U.S. EEZ, fall under D13's Operation Olympic Shield, a comprehensive 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. No confirmed EEZ incursions were documented by the Coast Guard within District Eleven or District Thirteen this year.

During the US/CA Treaty Albacore fishery, CGC ACTIVE embarked a Canada DFO Conservation Officer, who joined Coast Guard Boarding Officers conducting at-sea boardings along the west coast. While no significant violations were detected, the operation advanced cross-border relationships between our three agencies and facilitated international law enforcement cooperation.

Two Canadian tuna trollers were boarded while fishing in the U.S. EEZ this year with no violations detected. All other Canadian vessels observed or queried were in compliance with applicable treaty provisions. The Coast Guard deployed C-27 maritime patrol aircraft and pushed our cutters out to the edges of our EEZ to ensure no Canadian vessels remained fishing in the U.S. EEZ after the treaty season closure.

To ensure the integrity of the EEZ, the USCG will continue to work 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. The USCG will also remain engaged in discussions

regarding the future of reciprocal access under the Treaty, and enforcement strategies will be developed and employed to ensure compliance. Of note, no illegal activity has been detected or reported since reciprocal access resumed under the Tuna Treaty in 2013.

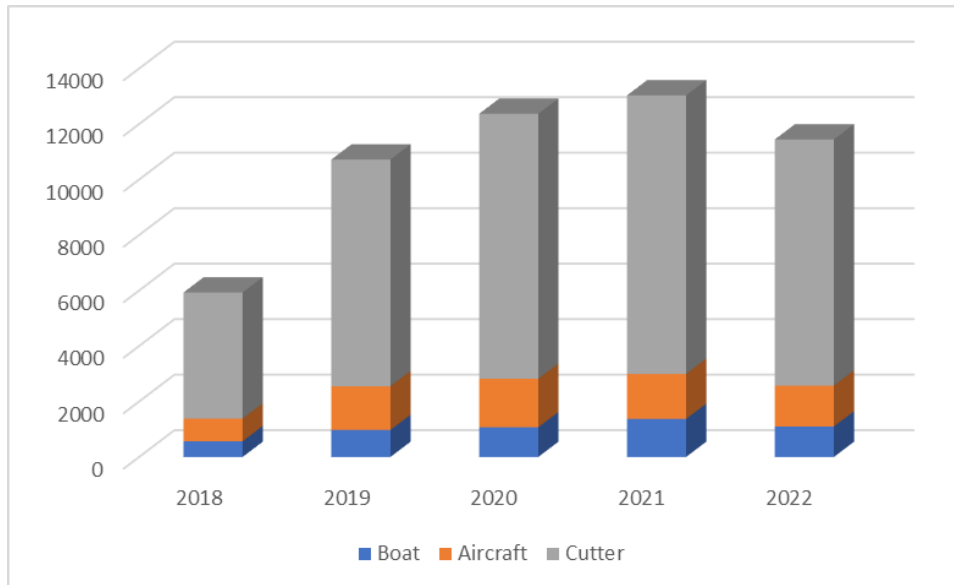
The Coast Guard also received reports of multiple Canadian Whiting vessels operating near the U.S. EEZ off the coast of northwest Washington. Aircraft and cutters were sortied to investigate and patrol the area with no incursions identified. The Coast Guard relayed the reports to NOAA OLE, who in turn notified Canada DFO who confirmed there was no illegal fishing by reviewing Electronic Monitoring data for the suspect vessels.

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**

Most west coast offshore fisheries enforcement efforts are conducted by Coast Guard Cutters, which patrolled for 8,871 hours in 2022. Coast Guard aircraft patrolled for 1,475 hours while small boats patrolled for 1,098 hours.

### **USCG Fisheries Resource Hours 2018-2022**



*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 nearly 2,000 commercial and recreational fisheries boardings in Washington, Oregon, and California waters, covering federal, state, and tribal managed species. Nearly 20% of the boardings were on commercial fishing vessels, while the remainder were on recreational and charter vessels.

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 important 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, accurate, and 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**

#### **2022 by the Numbers**

*1,958 Fisheries Boardings*

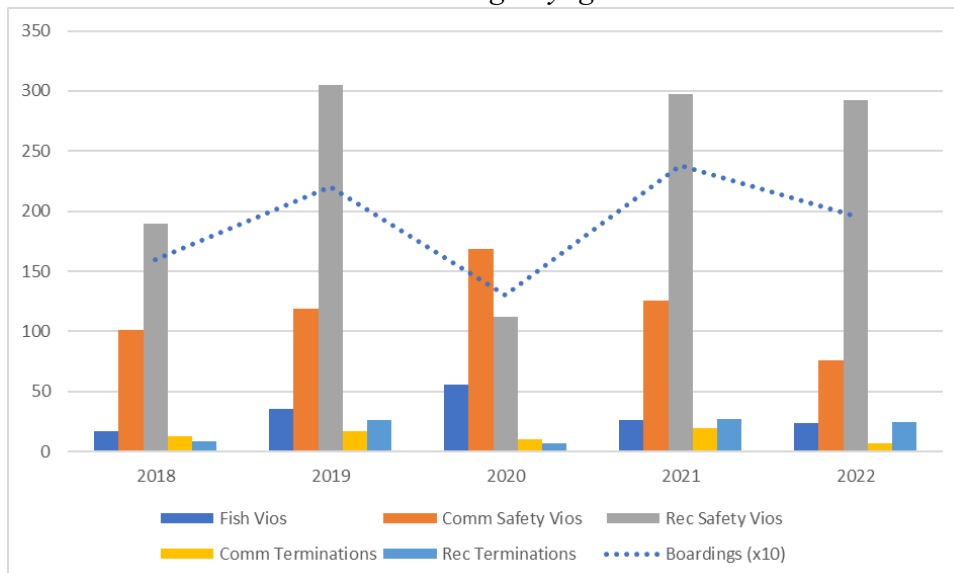
*24 Fisheries Violations*

*76 Commercial Safety Violations*

*7 Commercial Fishing Voyages Terminated*

*292 Recreational Safety Violations*

*25 Recreational Fishing Voyages Terminated*



*Figure 2. 2018-22 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)
- Gear violations (i.e., 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
- Violations of Observer regulations

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

USCG Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated Fisheries (IUUF) 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, 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. Throughout 2022 U.S. Coast Guard Cutters homeported across the West Coast completed numerous IUU fishing focused patrols.

NOAA and the USCG have worked 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), the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO) 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 2022.

USCGC MUNRO, an Alameda, CA. homeported National Security Cutter supported Operation North Pacific Guard, an annual high seas U.S. fisheries law enforcement operation, running for 25+ years, designed to detect and deter all types of IUU fishing activity, including large-scale high seas pelagic drift-net fishing. Operation North Pacific Guard upholds international maritime governance in the North Pacific by supporting several RFMOs, 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. The cutter conducted joint operations and high seas inspections under both the North Pacific Fisheries Commission and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

During the late summer months, USCGC JAMES a National Security Cutter homeported in Alameda, CA completed a patrol in the Eastern Pacific where they conducted the first ever High Seas Boarding Inspections in the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO) Convention Area. The Coast Guard highlighted positive relationships with coastal states in the SPRFMO and collaborated on enforcement efforts to counter IUU fishing in extremely remote regions on the high seas. By combining enforcement efforts with outreach and education, training, and key leader engagements, this operation strengthened regional partnerships, empowered coastal states, and enhanced international cooperation.

Throughout the year several Alameda-based cutters including USCGC STRATTON and USCGC MUNRO conducted patrols in Oceania as part of the Blue Pacific Campaign, a multipart strategic plan that strives to provide operational support across Oceania with a focus on economic and national security, regional maritime governance, and partner nation support to combat IUU fishing and other transnational crime. These cutters provided presence and maritime domain awareness throughout numerous high seas pockets and Exclusive Economic Zones of Pacific Island Nations. Through the Blue Pacific Campaign, the U.S. Coast Guard reinforces the United States as a Pacific Nation and upholds a free and open Indo-Pacific to advance U.S. security interests across this geopolitically charged region.

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

In addition to fisheries enforcement, the USCG has an active Marine Protected Resources protection program. Patrolling surface units routinely provide information on ESA-listed 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 six requests for assistance with stranded or entangled marine mammals 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 involved both aircraft and surface assets.

Additional Marine Protected Resource focused operations, which involved NOAA OLE, WDFW, OSP, and/or CDFW, were conducted in 2022, including:

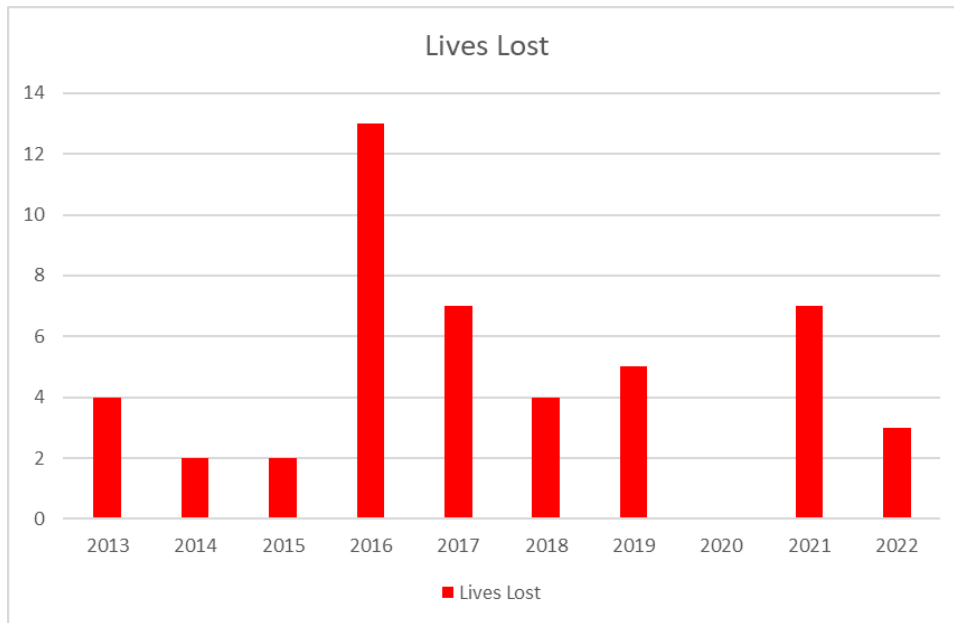
- Operation Be Whale Wise: D13's operation focused on the protection of Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW) vessel approach zones. In 2022, USCG also focused on the new WDFW regulations requiring commercial whale watching licenses and AIS. Additionally, Sector Puget Sound conducted a surge operation targeting recreational Chinook and Coho salmon fishing, geared toward ensuring conservation regulations on the SRKW key forage species are followed. This operation will be conducted again in 2023.
- 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 WDFW/OSP. This operation will be conducted again in 2023.
- 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 2022. This operation will be conducted again in 2023.
- 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. This operation will be conducted again in 2023.
- 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. This operation will be conducted again in 2023. D11 also coordinated routine overflights with CDFW for whale entanglement sightings along CA coast.
- 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 2023.

#### **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 to engage with stakeholders to answer questions, especially regarding 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 2013-2022



*Figure 3. Lives lost from West Coast commercial fishing vessels since 2013.*

In 2022 USCG boat crews, aircrews, and cutters conducted 3,548 search and rescue cases in coastal and inland waters of California, Oregon, and Washington. 159 of those cases were assisting commercial fishing vessels, ultimately saving 28 and assisting an additional 427 fisherman, participating in West Coast commercial fisheries, and preserving \$45.3 million in lost property.

Three lives were lost in West Coast commercial fisheries during 2022. The number of lives lost is lower than the average from the preceding ten-year period (4.7 lives lost per year). There were also at least 8 vessels that were a total loss due to grounding or sinking. 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.

Examples of major Search and Rescue cases involving west coast fishing vessels include:

- In February, a 42' wood crabber with 1 POB was found unmanned and adrift 2NM west of Bodega Bay. Approx. 4 hours later, the operator was found deceased 1 NM from the vessel not wearing a Personal Flotation Device (PFD). The vessel subsequently drifted aground and broke up in the surf.
- In March, a 35' wood crabber with 3 POB was returning to Bodega Bay due to deteriorating weather. The vessel took 2 large waves over the stern with 30 crab pots on deck and began taking on water. Installed pumps failed to keep up and the vessel sank. All 3 POB entered the water and were rescued by nearby CFV.

- Also in March, a 32' wood salmon troller with 2 POB hailed the Coast Guard at midnight reporting they were taking on water on Heceta Bank, approximately 30 miles west of Florence, Oregon. A Coast Guard helicopter and motor lifeboat were launched and commencing search for the vessel. Approximately 2 hours later, D13 received an EPIRB alert, and directed the lifeboat to investigate. The lifeboat discovered an empty life raft and debris field and subsequently recovered one body approximately ¼ mile from the life raft. Two fatalities and total loss of the vessel.
- In May, a 59' wood shrimper with 3 POB began taking on water 10 NM west of Ventura. A MAYDAY call was made and the vessel's EPIRB was activated. All POB went into a life raft and were picked up by Tow Boat US and returned to Ventura. The vessel sank.
- In June, a 53' fiberglass squidder with 5 POB had a crewman fall overboard in Santa Barbara Channel. He was able to tread water for over 5 hours before being sighted and picked up by a passing merchant vessel responding to Coast Guard radio calls and was treated for hypothermia.
- In August a 49' tribal fishing vessel with 5 POB sank west of San Juan Island. A good Samaritan responded to the Coast Guard urgent marine information broadcast and recovered all 5 POB. The fishing vessel sank in approximately 250' of water with approximately 2,500 gallons of diesel on board. US Coast Guard, WA State Department of Ecology and the vessel owner formed a unified command and conducted 41 days of oil and vessel recovery operations.
- In September, a 25' fiberglass multi-rig vessel with 1 POB was swamped by wave 1 NM off Pt. Sur and capsized. The operator was trapped underneath the boat but was able to resurface. He sat on hull for several hours in this remote coastal area before being spotted by passing motorist who called 911. Vessel grounded ashore and the operator was able to crawl ashore without injury.
- In October. A 70' wood groundfish vessel with 3 POB was departing Fish Harbor in San Pedro and began taking on water from a rotted plank at the starboard side waterline due to deferred maintenance. Pollution ensued from oily bilge. Vessel was a total loss.
- In December, a 31' fiberglass lobster boat with 1 POB was 10 NM SW of Santa Barbara was working the back deck (on autopilot) when he collided with an offshore supply vessel. The collision caused head trauma and knocked the operator unconscious. The vessel grounded on beach south of Santa Barbara and began taking on water. The operator was found onboard nearly drowned in fish hold.

- That same day, a 34' fiberglass squid light boat with 1 POB fell asleep due to fatigue and ran aground on Santa Cruz Island. The operator sustained a head injury. The vessel was damaged, but salvageable.
- Later in December, a 59' aluminum squid vessel with 6 POB grounded on Santa Cruz Island after the operator fell asleep at the helm due to fatigue. The crew abandoned ship to nearby squid light boat. The vessel was a total loss.

Additional reported casualties included:

- Disabled and Adrift (engine/shaft/rudder/battery issues) – 120 cases
- Minor collisions at sea (net entanglements, low visibility, improper lookout) – 02 cases
- Sinkings at the dock (deferred maintenance) – 09 cases
- Flooding (pumped out and repaired on-scene) – 14 cases
- Injuries requiring MEDEVAC – 06 cases
- Injuries requiring first aid – numerous cases
- Groundings (refloated-no damage) – 03 cases
- Fire (electrical, etc.) – 06 cases

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.

2022 boarding statistics indicate approximately 24% of commercial fishing vessels boarded had some type of discrepancy involving safety gear carriage requirements or other federal safety regulations (reversing a downward trend of 36% in 2020 and 17% in 2021). 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. 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. Like 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.

## **VI. Pacific Coast Port Access Route Study**

D11 and D13 have reviewed and evaluated all the comments received and have made some slight adjustments to our original recommendations based on input from the Council, other entities, and the public at-large. We have forwarded our updated recommendations to the Pacific Area Commander for review before they are sent to USCG Headquarters for final approval. There will be at least one more public comment period before the fairways are codified. Details on the Pacific Coast and other Port Access Route Studies is available at:

<https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/port-access-route-study-reports>.

## **VII. Revised Procedures for Reporting Sexual Misconduct on US Vessels**

The U.S. law that mandates reporting of harassment, sexual harassment, or sexual assault aboard federally documented vessels in engaged in commercial service was recently amended to require notification to the Coast Guard of any complaints or incidents and the penalty for failing to report increased from \$5,000 to \$50,000. Coast Guard Headquarters published Marine Safety Information Bulletin 01-23 with additional details, available at:

<https://www.dco.uscg.mil/Featured-Content/Mariners/Marine-Safety-Information-Bulletins-MSIB/>.