

## Title 50 —Wildlife and Fisheries

### Chapter VI —Fishery Conservation and Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce

#### Part 600 —Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions

##### Subpart D —National Standards

**Authority:** 5 U.S.C. 561 and 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

**Source:** 61 FR 32540, June 24, 1996, unless otherwise noted.

#### § 600.350 National Standard 9—Bycatch.

- (a) **Standard 9.** Conservation and management measures shall, to the extent practicable:
- (1) Minimize bycatch; and
  - (2) To the extent bycatch cannot be avoided, minimize the mortality of such bycatch.
- (b) **General.** This national standard requires Councils to consider the bycatch effects of existing and planned conservation and management measures. Bycatch can, in two ways, impede efforts to protect marine ecosystems and achieve sustainable fisheries and the full benefits they can provide to the Nation. First, bycatch can increase substantially the uncertainty concerning total fishing-related mortality, which makes it more difficult to assess the status of stocks, to set the appropriate OY and define overfishing levels, and to ensure that OYs are attained and overfishing levels are not exceeded. Second, bycatch may also preclude other more productive uses of fishery resources.
- (c) **Definition—Bycatch.** The term “bycatch” means fish that are harvested in a fishery, but that are not sold or kept for personal use.
- (1) **Inclusions.** Bycatch includes the discard of whole fish at sea or elsewhere, including economic discards and regulatory discards, and fishing mortality due to an encounter with fishing gear that does not result in capture of fish (i.e., unobserved fishing mortality).
  - (2) **Exclusions.** Bycatch excludes the following:
    - (i) Fish that legally are retained in a fishery and kept for personal, tribal, or cultural use, or that enter commerce through sale, barter, or trade.
    - (ii) Fish released alive under a recreational catch-and-release fishery management program. A catch-and-release fishery management program is one in which the retention of a particular species is prohibited. In such a program, those fish released alive would not be considered bycatch.
    - (iii) Fish harvested in a commercial fishery managed by the Secretary under Magnuson-Stevens Act sec. 304(g) or the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act of 1975 (16 U.S.C. 971d) or highly migratory species harvested in a commercial fishery managed by a Council under the Magnuson-Stevens Act or the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention Implementation Act, that are not regulatory discards and that are tagged and released alive under a scientific tagging and release program established by the Secretary.

- (d) **Minimizing bycatch and bycatch mortality.** The priority under this standard is first to avoid catching bycatch species where practicable. Fish that are bycatch and cannot be avoided must, to the extent practicable, be returned to the sea alive. Any proposed conservation and management measure that does not give priority to avoiding the capture of bycatch species must be supported by appropriate analyses. In their evaluation, the Councils must consider the net benefits to the Nation, which include, but are not limited to: Negative impacts on affected stocks; incomes accruing to participants in directed fisheries in both the short and long term; incomes accruing to participants in fisheries that target the bycatch species; environmental consequences; non-market values of bycatch species, which include non-consumptive uses of bycatch species and existence values, as well as recreational values; and impacts on other marine organisms. To evaluate conservation and management measures relative to this and other national standards, as well as to evaluate total fishing mortality, Councils must—
- (1) **Promote development of a database on bycatch and bycatch mortality in the fishery to the extent practicable.** A review and, where necessary, improvement of data collection methods, data sources, and applications of data must be initiated for each fishery to determine the amount, type, disposition, and other characteristics of bycatch and bycatch mortality in each fishery for purposes of this standard and of section 303(a)(11) and (12) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Bycatch should be categorized to focus on management responses necessary to minimize bycatch and bycatch mortality to the extent practicable. When appropriate, management measures, such as at-sea monitoring programs, should be developed to meet these information needs.
  - (2) **For each management measure, assess the effects on the amount and type of bycatch and bycatch mortality in the fishery.** Most conservation and management measures can affect the amounts of bycatch or bycatch mortality in a fishery, as well as the extent to which further reductions in bycatch are practicable. In analyzing measures, including the status quo, Councils should assess the impacts of minimizing bycatch and bycatch mortality, as well as consistency of the selected measure with other national standards and applicable laws. The benefits of minimizing bycatch to the extent practicable should be identified and an assessment of the impact of the selected measure on bycatch and bycatch mortality provided. Due to limitations on the information available, fishery managers may not be able to generate precise estimates of bycatch and bycatch mortality or other effects for each alternative. In the absence of quantitative estimates of the impacts of each alternative, Councils may use qualitative measures. Information on the amount and type of bycatch should be summarized in the SAFE reports.
  - (3) **Select measures that, to the extent practicable, will minimize bycatch and bycatch mortality.**
    - (i) A determination of whether a conservation and management measure minimizes bycatch or bycatch mortality to the extent practicable, consistent with other national standards and maximization of net benefits to the Nation, should consider the following factors:
      - (A) Population effects for the bycatch species.
      - (B) Ecological effects due to changes in the bycatch of that species (effects on other species in the ecosystem).
      - (C) Changes in the bycatch of other species of fish and the resulting population and ecosystem effects.
      - (D) Effects on marine mammals and birds.
      - (E) Changes in fishing, processing, disposal, and marketing costs.

- (F) Changes in fishing practices and behavior of fishermen.
  - (G) Changes in research, administration, and enforcement costs and management effectiveness.
  - (H) Changes in the economic, social, or cultural value of fishing activities and nonconsumptive uses of fishery resources.
  - (I) Changes in the distribution of benefits and costs.
  - (J) Social effects.
- (ii) The Councils should adhere to the precautionary approach found in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (Article 6.5), which is available from the Director, Publications Division, FAO, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy, when faced with uncertainty concerning any of the factors listed in this paragraph (d)(3).
- (4) **Monitor selected management measures.** Effects of implemented measures should be evaluated routinely. Monitoring systems should be established prior to fishing under the selected management measures. Where applicable, plans should be developed and coordinated with industry and other concerned organizations to identify opportunities for cooperative data collection, coordination of data management for cost efficiency, and avoidance of duplicative effort.
- (e) **Other considerations.** Other applicable laws, such as the MMPA, the ESA, and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, require that Councils consider the impact of conservation and management measures on living marine resources other than fish; i.e., marine mammals and birds.

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