

U.S. COAST GUARD

2023 REPORT



TO THE PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

April 2024

*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 (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.

The Coast Guard is currently experiencing a significant workforce shortage and cannot maintain the same level of operations with our current shortfall – we cannot do the same with less. Conducting our missions is often inherently dangerous, and doing so without enough crew puts our members and the American public at increased risk. To reduce this risk, we are prioritizing our missions, adapting our operations, and strategically reallocating personnel. Some of the changes include the reallocation of personnel and assets from outlying small boat stations to more centralized locations, the accelerated decommissioning of cutters, and changes to the manning and mission standards at various units. The changes affecting the west coast are detailed below.

Cutters

Patrol Boats/Fast Response Cutters (FRC): 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. In 2024, both of District 13's 110' Patrol Boats, ORCAS and ANACAPA, are being decommissioned. Additionally, the 87' Coastal Patrol Boats SEA FOX and SEA DEVIL are shifting homeports from Bangor, WA to Kings Bay, GA; BLUE SHARK is shifting homeports from Everett, WA to Port Angeles, WA; and WAHOO is going into lay-up status. Assets are being added as well, specifically, the Fast Response Cutters DAVID DUREN and FLORENCE FITCH are being commissioned and stationed in Astoria this year with one additional FRC forecasted to arrive in 2026. These cutters bring a significant capability improvement with longer unsupported patrol lengths and the ability to conduct search and rescue operations and launch boarding teams in higher sea state conditions.

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. In

2024, CGC STEADFAST (Astoria, OR) is being decommissioned, CGC ALERT is shifting homeports from Astoria, OR to Cape Canaveral, FL, and CGC ACTIVE remaining in Port Angeles, WA

Aircraft

Air Station Sacramento provides medium range fixed-wing HC-27J Spartan aircraft to conduct surveillance flights along the entire west coast. Air Station Sacramento was in a degraded status for a majority of 2023 due to a myriad of maintenance issues resulting in a drop in Living Marine Resource Enforcement resource hours allocated to the HC-27J's, which are the primary assets utilized in fisheries detection and monitoring. Air Station Kodiak conducted several HC-130J deployments to Sacramento to maintain west coast fixed wing capability.

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, WA; Astoria, OR; and North Bend, OR, along with an Air Facility in Newport, OR.

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, and 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 our international boundaries with Canada and Mexico. USCG efforts ensuring the integrity of the U.S. EEZ off the Pacific Northwest 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.

On the U.S/Mexico Boundary Line, D11 responded to multiple EEZ incursions from Mexican fishing vessels. A USCG Coastal Patrol Boat and a Station San Diego small boat was able to coordinate with NOAA OLE to respond to a particular EEZ incursion, where once the Law Enforcement Units arrived on scene, the fishing vessel failed to comply with law enforcement presence by swiftly heading south back into Mexican territory seas. The station small boat was able to successful retrieve and seize the gear, which they then turned over to NOAA OLE.



Figure 1. Fishing Gear Seized following EEZ Incursion along U.S./Mexcio Border on 08 Aug.

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.

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 launched 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 U.S. 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 6,786 hours in 2023. Coast Guard aircraft patrolled for 994 hours while small boats patrolled for 913 hours.

USCG Fisheries Resource Hours 2019-2023

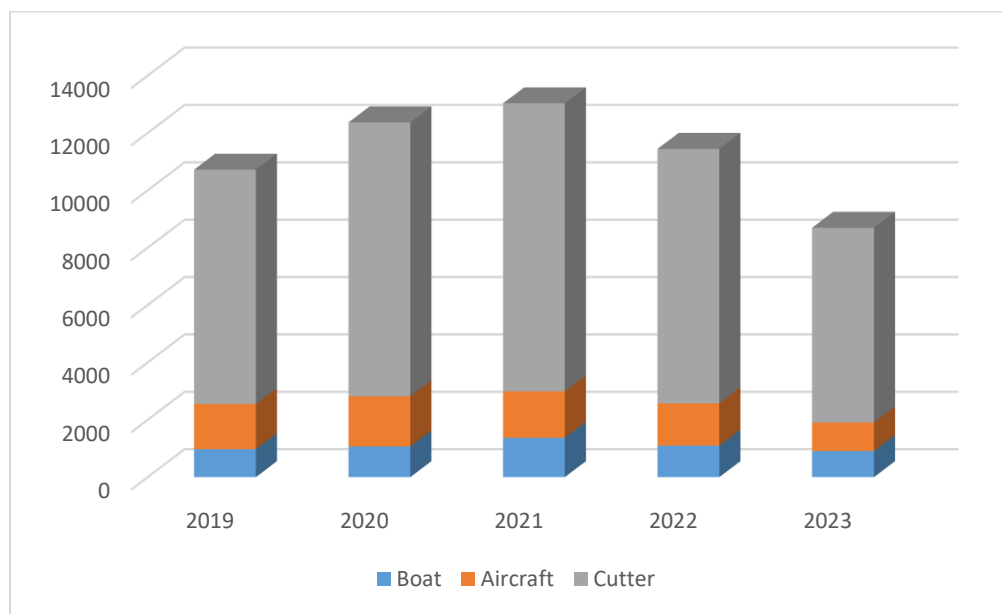


Figure 2. Coast Guard Living Marine Resource hours on the West Coast.

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 over 1,500 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

2023 by the Numbers

1,564 Fisheries Boardings

23 Fisheries Violations

82 Commercial Safety Violations

17 Commercial Fishing Voyages Terminated

167 Recreational Safety Violations

14 Recreational Fishing Voyages Terminated

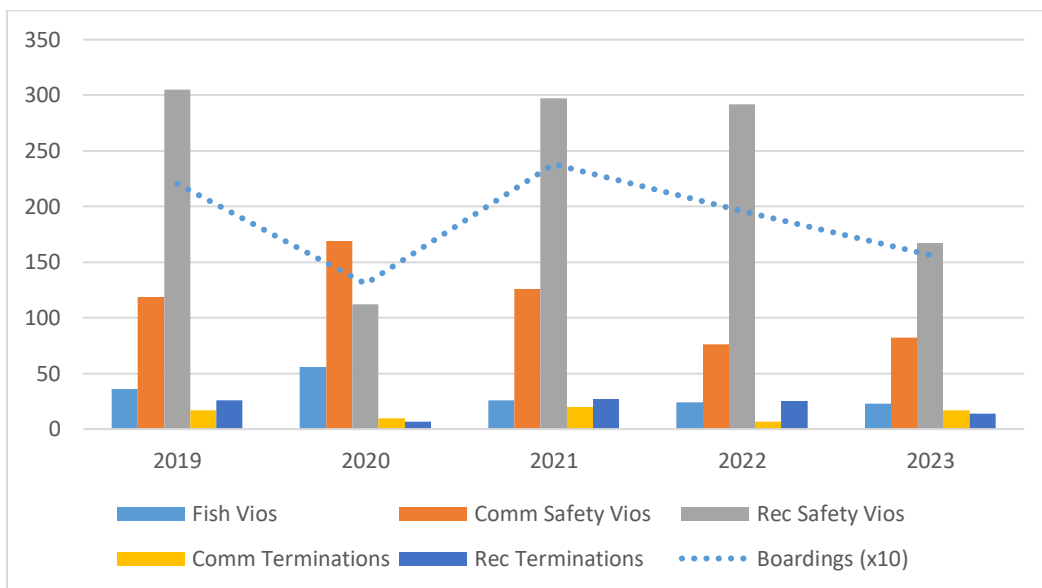


Figure 3. 2019-23 Coast Guard Boardings and Fisheries/Safety Violations

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, Seabird Avoidance Gear)
- Failure to carry Highly Migratory Species (HMS) logbook
- Fishing in closed areas (federal/state marine reserves)
- Fishing during closed periods

High Seas Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated (IUU) Fishing

USCG Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated Fisheries (IUUF) enforcement efforts on the High Seas are conducted out of District 17 (D17-Alaska), District 14 (D14-Hawaii), and District 11 (D11-California). Although direct involvement with specific IUU activities have historically been relatively low on the West Coast, D13 remains 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 2023 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 enforcement arm of the NPCGF is Operation North Pacific Guard (NPG), which for the past 30 years the USCG has tactically led. Operation NPG is an annual high seas fisheries law enforcement operation designed to detect and deter 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.

As competing demands pulled the USCG surface asset from the operation in 2023, Canada was able to contract vessel for the first time to conduct these high seas operations in both the NPFC and WCPFC Convention Areas. The USCG supported Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans by supplementing their boarding teams with a High Seas Boarding and Inspection (HSBI) qualified law enforcement detachment to assist with the HSBI conducted throughout the patrol. The USCG also provided aerial surveillance through C-130 patrols based out of Yokota Air Base in Japan.

In the fall, a surface action group consisting of the buoy tender, USCGC ALDER, homeported in San Francisco, CA, and Fast Response Cutter, USCGC TERRELL HORNE, homeported in Long Beach, 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 under the newly adopted HSBI Conservation and Management Measure. 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 Hawaii-based Fast Response Cutters conducted patrols in Oceania as part of the Blue Pacific Campaign, a multi-part 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 geo-politically charged region.

The USCG highlighted our commitment to the Indo-Pacific by re-homeporting an Indo-Pacific Security Cutter, the USCGC HARRIET LANE in the region. The cutter's operations aim to complement Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) maritime cooperation, Australia's established Pacific Maritime Security Program, and ongoing operations Aiga, Blue Pacific, Island Chief, and Rai Balang. While USCG cutters have a rich history of patrolling the Indo-Pacific, the HARRIET LANE represents the new face of USCG operations in the area by providing regular and lasting USCG operational presence to better-address the area's unique mission set, threats, and challenges.

Additionally in 2023, the USCG established an Indo-Pacific IUUF Center of Expertise (IUUF COE) to further promote regional coordination to combat IUUF and better equip partner nations to do the same. The IUUF COE was established at the NOAA Building on Ford Island in Honolulu, HI, in late summer of 2023. The COE will increase maritime domain awareness, exchange information, increase interoperability, and share best practices related to combating IUUF among regional partners.

During the fall of 2023, the CGC ALDER (225' Buoy Tender) and CGC TERRELL HORNE (Fast Response Cutter) formed a Surface Action Group (SAG) for a combined 62 patrol days in support of Operation Southern Shield and multinational exercise GALAPEX. The deployment resulted in the successful implementation of new South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization Conservation Management Measures to conduct high seas boardings and inspections on the distant water fishing fleets that scour the fisheries of South America. The Coast Guard supported a broad information campaign that highlighted enforcement presence among the fishing fleet, which was further amplified in the news media to alert the international public to the growing malign influence in the South and Central American region. This deployment also galvanized the operational logistics command's new expeditionary logistics support capability to extend the reach of District 11's coastal assets to over 1000 nautical miles south of the Equator.

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 five 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 locating the affected animal and tracking it until NOAA and Marine Mammal Stranding Network assets arrive on scene, which involves both aircraft and surface assets.

Additional Marine Protected Resource focused operations, which involved NOAA OLE, WDFW, OSP, and/or CDFW, were conducted in 2023, including:

- Operation Be Whale Wise: This interagency operation focused on the protection of Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW) vessel approach zones. 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 2024. In 2023 Coast Guard Sector Puget Sound established a fully monitored "Cetacean Desk" for the tracking and monitoring of whales in the Salish Sea and Strait of Juan de Fuca, focusing on deconflicting vessel traffic with known whale sightings.
- Operation Buoy 10: This interagency 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 2024.
- 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 2023. This operation will be conducted again in 2024.

- 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 2024.
- 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 in 2023. D11 also coordinated routine overflights with CDFW for whale entanglement sightings along CA coast. This operation will be conducted again in 2024.
- 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 2024.

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, Coast Guard personnel attend Council and state 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 2014-2023

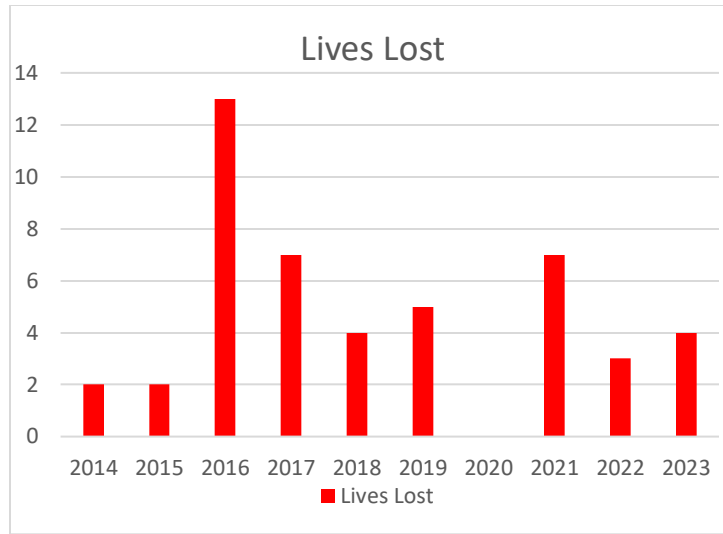


Figure 4. Lives lost from West Coast commercial fishing vessels since 2014.

In 2023 USCG boat crews, aircrews, and cutters conducted 3,321 search and rescue cases in coastal and inland waters of California, Oregon, and Washington. 258 of those cases were assisting commercial fishing vessels, ultimately saving 17 lives.

Four lives were lost in West Coast commercial fisheries during 2023, which is lower than the average from the preceding ten-year period (4.7 lives lost per year). There were also at least 9 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 46' wood crabber with 3 POB capsized on the Willapa Bay, WA bar. The vessel returning to port after setting a string of Dungeness crab pots when it was struck by a series of breaking surf while crossing the bar. The skipper and one deckhand were able to enter the inflatable liferaft and were rescued by a Coast Guard helicopter. One deckhand was never found and is presumed dead.
- Also in February, a 38' fiberglass multi-rig vessel homeported out of San Diego with 1 POB (owner/operator), was found adrift and unmanned 19NM west of Pt. Loma. It had been drifting for approx. 3 days with gear stowed and the engine idling. An extensive search did not locate the owner and was suspended due to approaching severe weather. His body later washed up in Mexico.

- In March, a 36' urchin dive vessel homeported out of Santa Barbara with 3 POB, operating on the east end of Catalina Island, had a crewman become unresponsive during a dive and was deceased when recovered. Cause of death was determined to be a heart attack.
- In June, 2 POB were fishing for rockfish on their 24' fiberglass fishing vessel near Nesika Beach, OR when it capsized after striking a submerged object. The fishermen clung onto the overturned hull. When they did not return home at their planned time, a concerned spouse contacted the Coast Guard. A Coast Guard motor lifeboat found the fishermen after they had been clinging to the wreck for more than 4 hours. Other than experiencing mild hypothermia, they were in good health.
- Also in June, a 32' wood groundfish vessel with 1 POB homeported out of Pillar Point grounded on Surfer's Beach just south of the harbor entrance after the operator fell asleep at the helm. The hull cracked and could not be salvaged.
- In August, the operator of a 34 ft fiberglass tuna troller fell asleep and ran the vessel onto the beach south of the Yaquina Bay, OR entrance. The 3 POB were able to abandon the vessel and wade to shore. Vessel was a total constructive loss.
- In September, just days after another fishing vessel was removed from the same location, the operator of a 51 ft steel tuna troller fell asleep and ran the vessel onto the beach south of the Yaquina Bay, OR entrance. The operator was the only person aboard and was returning after a 3-day fishing trip. During the salvage efforts, the vessel struck the jetty (due to the rudder being stuck to one side) before it was eventually towed into port.
- Also in September, a 62' aluminum squid seiner with 8 POB, grounded on the east end of Catalina Island after the Master fell asleep at the helm. The hull was breached, with a total repair cost over \$1 million, and the vessel was subsequently scrapped.
- In October, the Coast Guard received the report of an overdue 43 ft wood tuna fishing vessel, with 2 POB and a dog, out of Westport, WA. The Coast Guard launched a search involving cutters, motor lifeboats, fixed and rotary wing aircraft from three CG Districts. After 3 days of searching over 14,000 square miles, with negative results the search was suspended. Several days later, a fishing vessel in Canadian waters found a survivor in an inflatable liferaft. He had survived the vessel's capsizing and sinking by getting into the liferaft for 13 days. The skipper and dog were lost with the vessel.

Additional reported casualties included:

- Disabled and Adrift (engine/shaft/rudder/battery issues) –92 cases
- Flooding (pumped out and repaired on-scene) – 2 cases
- Groundings (refloated) – 7 cases
- Personnel Injuries – 4 cases

- Fire (electrical, etc.) – 1 case
- Falling Overboard – 2 cases
- Collision – 1 case

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.

In 2023, approximately 22% of commercial fishing vessels boarded had some type of discrepancy involving safety gear carriage requirements or other federal safety regulations (reversing an upward trend of 17% in 2021 and 24% in 2022). Approximately 5% 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 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.

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.