

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON DRIFT GILLNET BYCATCH PERFORMANCE

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) reviewed the most recent bycatch estimates for marine mammal and sea turtles in the large-mesh drift gillnet (DGN) fishery (Carretta 2024), in order to create the performance metrics table for calendar years 2022 and 2023. Based on Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) guidance, the HMSMT again did not create performance metrics for finfish species, but reviewed the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) observer summaries for the 2023-2024 season.

Table 1 shows the updated performance metrics for marine mammal and sea turtle bycatch following the same methodology as in the June of 2019 HMSMT report ([Agenda Item J.4.a, Supplemental HMSMT Report 1](#)). None of the metrics in table 1 were met or exceeded during the 2022 and 2023 calendar years.

The summary of observer data for requested species¹ for the 2023-2024 season shows that there was take of two striped marlin², which were kept, and two megamouth sharks, both of which were released alive. The HMSMT calculated the overall finfish retention rate at 58.6 percent for the 2023-2024 season. This is substantially lower than the Council's 70 percent retention metric; however, as was the case with the previous two seasons (and reported in the [HMSMT's June 2023 report](#)) this season had low swordfish catch and high *Mola mola* catch (241 individuals), with all but two *Mola mola* released alive. As mentioned in previous HMSMT bycatch reports, post-release mortality is believed to be extremely low for this species. Excluding *Mola mola* catch from the retention metric calculation results in a retention rate of 89.3 percent for 2023-2024.

References:

Carretta, James V. 2024. Estimates of marine mammal, sea turtle, and seabird bycatch in the California large-mesh drift gillnet fishery: 1990-2023. U.S. Department of Commerce, Draft NOAA Technical Memorandum.

¹ Finfish species for which the Council requested performance metrics include billfish other than swordfish, megamouth, basking, white, and scalloped hammerhead sharks, and manta ray.

² NMFS West Coast Observer program staff have confirmed that retained marlin were consumed onboard the fishing vessel and not landed or sold.

Table 1: Regression tree performance metric values and annual bycatch estimates for calendar years 2022 and 2023.

	Regression Tree Performance Metric*	Calendar Year 2022 Regression Tree Total Annual Bycatch Estimate	Calendar Year 2023 Regression Tree Total Annual Bycatch Estimate
Minke whale	2.09	0	0
Short-beaked common dolphin	67.1	25.5	9.69
Long-beaked common dolphin	7.99	0.461	4.24
Risso's dolphin	2.7	0.127	0.822
Northern right whale dolphin	11.1	1.08	0.195
Gray whale	1.27	0	0
Pacific white-sided dolphin	9.32	0	0.182
Sperm whale	2.04	0	0
Humpback whale	1.43	0	0
Fin whale	0.261	0	0
Short-finned pilot whale	0.945	0	0
Bottlenose dolphin	1.01	0	0
Leatherback sea turtle	1.98	0.131	0
Loggerhead sea turtle	2.68	0	1.25
Olive ridley sea turtle	0.297	0	0
Green sea turtle	0.148	0	0

*Based on highest 2004 - 2013 calendar year estimate in Carretta May 2024 (1990-2023)

PFMC
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