Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program

Southeast Alaska Drift Gillnet Fishery

Marine Mammal Protection Act

The MMPA was enacted in 1972 to protect and conserve marine mammals

Congress stated that marine mammal populations should be:

"protected and encouraged to the greatest extent feasible and commensurate with sound policies of resource management, and the primary objective of their management should be to maintain the health and stability of the marine ecosystem."

Moratorium on Marine Mammal Takes

The MMPA imposes a moratorium on the taking and importing of marine mammals and marine mammal products except under certain conditions

"Take" means to hunt, harass, capture, kill, or attempt to hunt, harass, capture, or kill a marine mammal

Incidental Take Authorization in Commercial Fisheries

The MMPA provides an authorization to commercial fisheries of the U.S. to allow incidental taking of marine mammals, provided certain requirements are met:

- Maintain annual MMPA registration
- Report all marine mammal injuries and mortalities
- Comply with monitoring requirements
- Work to reduce incidental takes of marine mammals

Monitoring Incidental Takes in Commercial fisheries

The MMPA requires monitoring of serious injury and mortality levels of marine mammals during commercial fishing in order to obtain statistically reliable estimates of incidental serious injury and mortality

*NMFS' **Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program** (AMMOP) monitors incidental marine mammal take levels in Alaska state fisheries*

Observer Data Used For:

- Annual Stock Assessment Reports

  Annual review of the overall status and health of the marine mammal stock

- Annual List of Fisheries

  Annual assessment of commercial fisheries effects on marine mammal populations

Marine Mammal Potential Biological Removal Level:

The maximum number of animals, excluding natural mortalities, that may be taken from a marine mammal stock while allowing that stock to reach or maintain its optimum sustainable population

minimum population estimate

x

one half the maximum net productivity rate

x

recovery factor between 0.1 and 1.0

Annual List of Fisheries

For each marine mammal stock:

Tier I (All Fisheries)

If total serious injury and mortality from all commercial fisheries ≤ 10% of PBR, all fisheries placed in Category III

Tier II (Individual Fisheries)

Category I: Mortality and Serious Injury ≥ 50% PBR
Category II: 50% PBR >Mortality and Serious Injury >1% PBR
Category III: Mortality and Serious Injury ≤ 1% PBR

Common SEAK Marine Mammal Stocks & PBRs

- Humpback whale (central North Pacific stock)

  PBR = 61.2

- Steller sea lion (eastern U.S. stock)

  PBR = 2,378

- Harbor seal (Southeast Alaska stocks)

  PBR = 142 to 1,348

Fisheries Observed by AMMOP

- Prince William Sound salmon drift & set gillnet (1990-1991)
- Alaska Peninsula salmon drift gillnet (1991)
- Cook Inlet salmon drift and set gillnet (1999-2000)
- Kodiak salmon set gillnet (2002, 2005)
- Yakutat salmon set gillnet (2007-2008)

Final reports for each fishery may be found at:

http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/protectedresources/observers/mmop.htm

SEAK Drift Gillnet Fishery

Timeline

- 2012-2013 ADFG Management Areas 6 & 8
- 2014 + ADFG Management Areas 1, 11, 15

ADFG Management Areas 6 & 8

Timeline

2010 - 2013	Industry Outreach
2011	Scope fishery operations & finalize sampling design
2012	Data Collection
2013	Data Collection
2014	Analysis Complete

Sampling Design

- Target coverage will be 7.5% of fishing effort
- Permits will be randomly selected for sampling

Data Collection

- Observers will collect data from independent boats nearby the fishing vessel under observation
- One “permit sample” will be data collected from one fishing vessel during a 24-hour day
- Data collected will include information on fishing effort and operations, gear, environmental conditions, catch, and bycatch

AMMOP Observers

- Saltwater, Inc. of Anchorage, AK is the contracted observer provider

- Saltwater will hire and deploy observers who meet experience and educational requirements and have demonstrated:

  * they can work professionally and respectfully with fishermen
  * they possess good judgment and can work independently
  * they can pass stringent training requirements
  * they are physically up to the job

Data Confidentiality

- Saltwater, Inc. staff and observers must sign a confidentiality statement and comply with State of Alaska and federal confidentiality requirements
- Data collected from a particular permit holder may only be released to that permit holder or a designated agent by written request
- Data are released to the public only in aggregate form such that operations or catch information for an individual permit holder cannot be identified

Common Fishermen's Concerns

- Will the AMMOP data collected be used to shut the fishery down?
- Will my data be confidential?
- Will I have an observer on my boat?
- Will sampling interrupt my fishing operations?
- What are the data used for?
- Is the program mandatory?

Program Outreach

Public meetings

- Provide program information to fishermen
- Receive input on fishermen's concerns

Workshops

- Two-way dialogue on observer deployment logistics

Informational Material

- Information booklet
- Letters to permit holders on updates, meetings
- Webpage

More Information

- AMMOP website:
  http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/protectedresources/observers/mmop.htm

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