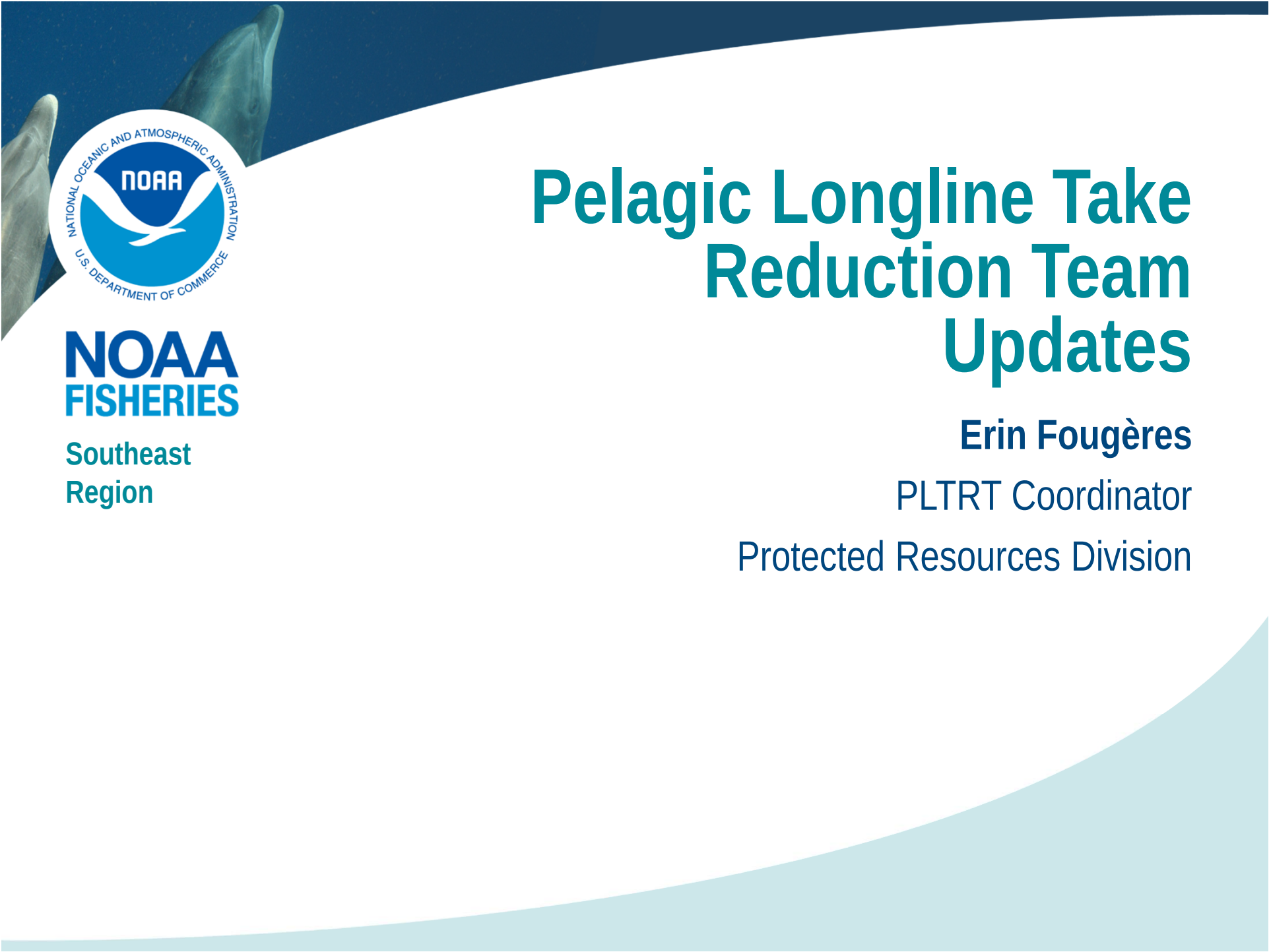




Pelagic Longline Take Reduction Team Updates

Erin Fougères

PLTRT Coordinator

Protected Resources Division



**NOAA
FISHERIES**

**Southeast
Region**

Basics of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA)



- Enacted in 1972
- Prohibits the “take” of marine mammals, with limited exceptions (e.g., commercial fishing)
 - Take = to hunt, harass, capture, or kill, or to attempt to hunt, harass, capture, or kill
- Protection extended to all marine mammals regardless of status (i.e., endangered or not)





Key MMPA Goals

- Maintain marine mammals as functioning elements of their ecosystems
- Obtain Optimum Sustainable Population (OSP) levels for all marine mammals
- Reduce serious injury and mortality (bycatch) of marine mammals incidental to commercial fishing operations to insignificant levels



MMPA Strategy for Reducing Bycatch of Marine Mammals

- Prepare Stock-Assessment Reports (SARs)
 - Describe geographic range, population estimates, trends
 - Identify human-caused sources of mortality and serious injuries
 - Describe commercial fisheries interacting with each stock and take levels
 - Determine status of stock and Potential Biological Removal level
- Categorize fisheries according to levels of bycatch (List of Fisheries)
- Register participants in Category I and II fisheries (Marine Mammal Authorization Program)
- Monitor Category I and II fisheries (observer program)
- Require fishermen to report all injuries and mortalities
- Develop Take Reduction Plans

Take Reduction Planning

- Based on Stock Assessment Reports:
- Take Reduction Plans are designed to assist in the recovery or prevent depletion of “strategic” stocks that interact with Category I or II fisheries
- NMFS may also develop Plans for any stock that interacts with Category I fisheries

PLTRT Timeline

June 2005 - NMFS established PLTRT

June 2005 to May 2006 - 4 meetings and 2 full-team conference calls held

June 2006 - PLTRT submitted consensus draft plan to NMFS

June 24, 2008 - NMFS published the proposed rule in the Federal Register (73 FR 35623)

September 8-9, 2008 - PLTRT meeting held (73 FR 51446, September 3, 2008)

September 22, 2008 - end of 90-day public comment period

May 19, 2009 - Final rule published in Federal Register (74 FR 23349)

June 18, 2009 - Final rule effective

September 16, 2010 - Webinar meeting of PLTRT

August 21-23, 2012 - In-Person Team Meeting, St. Petersburg, FL

June 18, 2014 - Webinar meeting of PLTRT

February 18, 2015 - PLL Fishermen's Workshop

March 2015 - Webinar meeting of PLTRT

December 1-3, 2015 - In-Person Team Meeting, Virginia Beach, VA

September and October 2016 – Webinar meetings of PLTRT

Summary of Current PLTRP Regulatory Requirements by Geographic Region

Requirement	US Atlantic EEZ	EEZ Portion of MAB	CHSRA
Mainline length restriction: maximum 20 nmi			
CHSRA Special observer & research participation requirements (call-in)			
Posting of marine mammal handling and release placard			

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Consensus Recommendations from 2015 and 2016 PLTRT meetings to amend PLTRP:

Based on deliberations, the Team agreed to a full suite of consensus recommendations, including non-regulatory and regulatory measures, for consideration by NMFS. These included:

NON-REGULATORY

- Convening a Work Group to recommend changes and updates to the current handling and safe release protocols for marine mammal interactions in the PLL fishery
- Updating observer protocols and data recording forms to enable recording and analysis of additional data on pilot whale/marine mammal bycatch events and on target catch depredation events

Consensus Recommendations Cont'd:

REGULATORY

- repeal the CHSRA and any associated call-in requirement under the PLTRP
- Terminal Gear Requirements in the FEC, SAB, MAB and NEC – includes leader/branch line requirements and “weaker hooks” (wire diameter not to exceed 4.05mm if 16/0 or 4.4mm if 18/0)
- Modify mainline length restrictions in MAB - may set no more than 30 nm of active gear (gear with leaders and hooks) with no more than one piece of mainline in the water at once (with some additional restrictions)

More information: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/interactions/trt/pl-trt.html>



PLTRT Next steps:

- NMFS is in the process of drafting a proposed rule and associated EA to implement the Team's recommendations
- Finalize and publish proposed rule
- PLTRT meeting during the public comment period for the proposed rule



Proposed ESA Endangered Listing, Gulf of Mexico Bryde's Whale

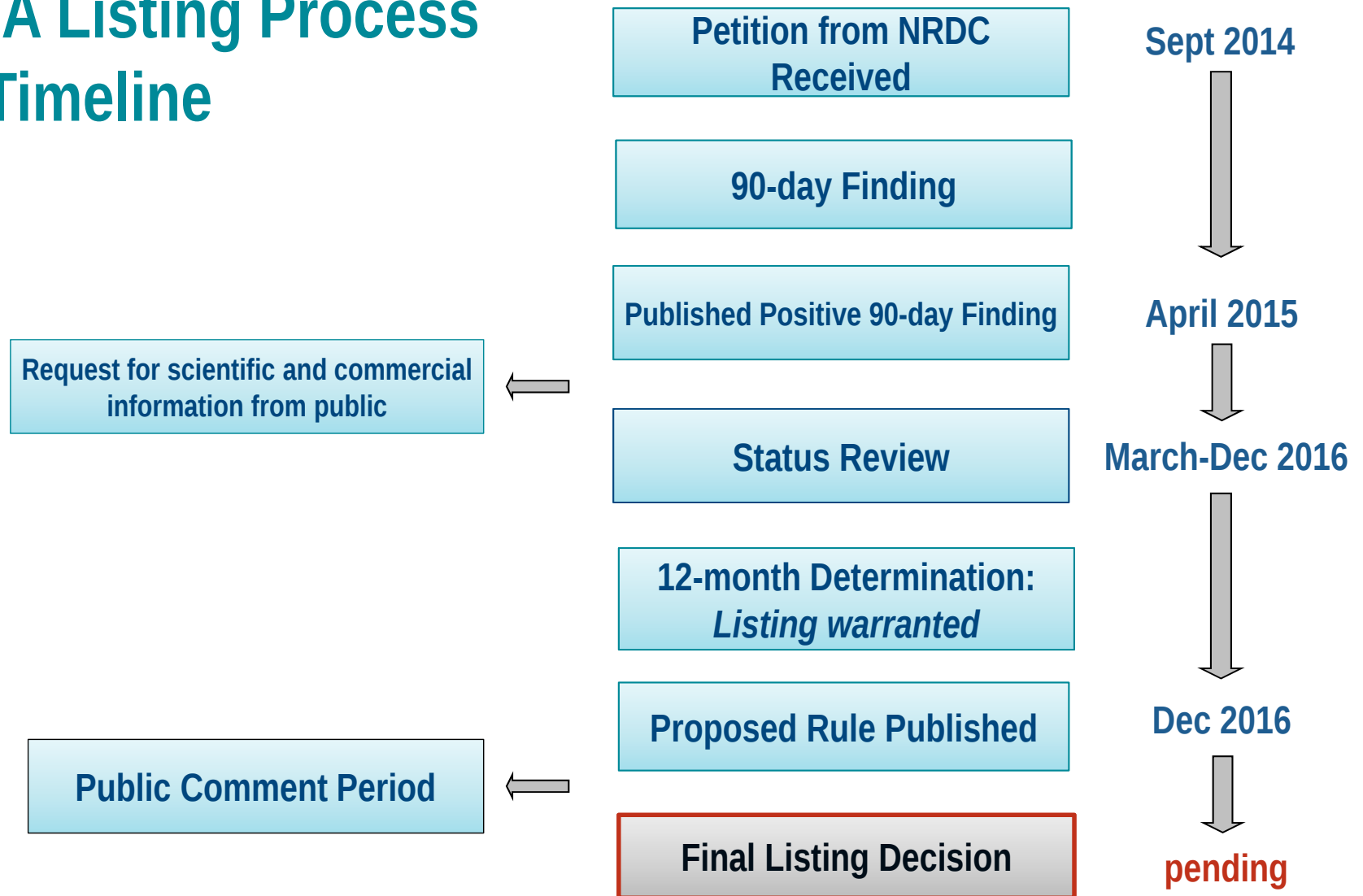


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Petition to List Triggered ESA Action

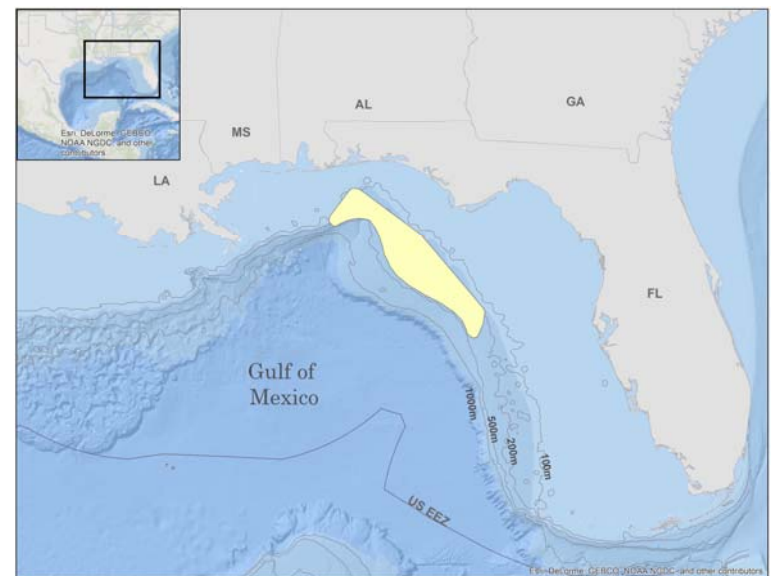
- NOAA received a petition to list the Gulf of Mexico population of Bryde's whale (*Balaenoptera edeni*) as an endangered species under the ESA
 - National Resources Defense Council - September 2014
- Status review determined that the GoM Bryde's whale is a species, as defined by the ESA, which is currently in danger of extinction throughout all of its range

ESA Listing Process & Timeline



Key Biological Information

- Only year-round resident baleen whale in Gulf of Mexico
- **Restricted Range**
 - Consistently located in the northeastern GoM in the De Soto Canyon area, along shelf break between 100-300 m
 - Historical distribution in the GoM much broader
- **Small Population Size**
 - Less than 100 individuals
- **Genetics**
 - Genetically distinct from all other Bryde's whales worldwide
 - Represent at least an unnamed subspecies of *B. edeni*



Bryde's whale
current range

AM2

Threats to Bryde's whales:

NMFS identified the most serious threats to the subspecies as small population size, restricted range, energy exploration and development, oil spills and oil spill response, vessel collision, and anthropogenic noise. We also identified bottom longline and pelagic longline as entanglement risks to GoM Bryde's whales where they overlap within their habitat.

More information:

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/protected_resources/brydes_whale/documents/brydes_whale_faqs.pdf

Questions?



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