

NMFS Office of Protected Species
Review of Guadalupe Fur Seal Stranding Events
April 1; April 4; April 13; April 16; and April 17, 2017

NMFS completed its review of the five Uncommon Stranding Events (USE) for five Guadalupe fur seal (*Arctocephalus townsendi*) strandings reported to NOAA Fisheries and the California Stranding Network on the following dates: April 1, April 4, April 13, April 16 and April 17, 2017. Based on the information available at this time, NMFS has determined that the events do not warrant modifications to the Letters of Authorization for the U.S Navy's Hawaii Southern California Training and Testing (HSTT) under 50 CFR 218.78 (c)(1) or notice and comment on procedures under 50 CFR 216.106(e) or 50 CFR 218.78(c)(1)(ii).

The following reported stranding events were typical of strandings during the ongoing Guadalupe fur seal Unusual Mortality Event (UME). Increased strandings of Guadalupe fur seals have occurred along the entire coast of California since January 2015. Guadalupe fur seal are stranding alive and dead and are mostly weaned pups and juveniles (1-2 years old). Findings from the majority of stranded animals include malnutrition with secondary bacterial and parasitic infections.¹

Live stranded animals

On April 1, 2017, Sea World San Diego responded to a stranded Guadalupe fur seal on Pacific Beach, California. The male yearling was emaciated, and was assessed using the information routinely obtained by the rehabilitation facility. The seal died on April 23, 2017 in the care of Sea World San Diego as a result of the effects of starvation/inanition.

On April 4, 2017, the Pacific Marine Mammal Center responded to the report of a stranded Guadalupe fur seal on Newport Beach, California. The male yearling was emaciated and dehydrated, and was transferred to Sea World San Diego on April 6, 2017 for the completion of the rehabilitation process. The animal progressed through a normal course of rehabilitation for an emaciated Guadalupe fur seal yearling. On June 1, 2017, the male yearling was successfully released back to the wild after completing rehabilitation at Sea World San Diego.

On April 16, 2017, the Pacific Marine Mammal Center responded to the report of a live stranded Guadalupe fur seal at Bolsa Chica State Beach Park in Huntington Beach, California. The male pup was emaciated and dehydrated, and was transferred to Sea World San Diego on April 17, 2017 for rehabilitation. The animal progressed through a normal course of rehabilitation for an emaciated Guadalupe fur seal pup. On July 25, 2017, the male pup was successfully released back to the wild after completing the rehabilitation process at Sea World San Diego.

On April 17, 2017, the California Wildlife Center responded to the report of a live stranded

¹ See <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/mmume/guadalupefurseals2015.html>

Guadalupe fur seal in Malibu, California. The male pup was emaciated and dehydrated, and was transferred to Sea World San Diego on April 20, 2017 for rehabilitation. The animal progressed through a normal course of rehabilitation for an emaciated Guadalupe fur seal pup. On June 1, 2017, the male pup was successfully released back to the wild after completing the rehabilitation process at Sea World San Diego.

The available information from these live stranded Guadalupe fur seals does not support a causal connection between the Navy's training or testing and these stranding events. There are no additional samples remaining for analysis or interpretation. Therefore, NMFS concludes that this event does not warrant any actions pursuant to 50 CFR 216.106(e) or 50 CFR 218.78(c).

Dead stranded animal

On April 13, 2017, Southwest Fisheries Science Center responded to the report of a dead stranded Guadalupe fur seal on Carlsbad State Beach, California. The female pup was fairly fresh and only weighed 5.5 kilograms, well below average weight given the age of the pup. Results from the gross necropsy were inconclusive.

Because the available information and results from the gross necropsy are insufficient to support a causal connection between the Navy's HSTT operations and the death of this animal, no actions are necessary pursuant to 50 CFR 216.106(e) or 50 CFR 218.78(c).