

SHORT-FINNED PILOT WHALE (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*): California/Oregon/Washington Stock

STOCK DEFINITION AND GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

Two genetically and morphologically distinct short-finned pilot whale types are described in the Pacific ('Shiho' and 'Naisa') by Van Cise *et al.* (2016), which correspond to the northern and southern types (respectively) described off Japan (Kasuya *et al.* 1988; Wada 1988; Miyazaki and Amano 1994). Shiho type animals are largely confined to the California Current and eastern tropical Pacific, while Naisa type pilot whales occur in the central Pacific and Japan. Differences in body size, head shape, coloration, and number of teeth characterize Shiho and Naisa morphotypes, with the larger eastern Pacific Shiho type characterized by a rounder melon and distinct light saddle patch. Short-finned pilot whales were once common off Southern California, with an apparently resident population around Santa Catalina Island, as well as seasonal migrants (Dohl *et al.* 1980). After a strong El Niño event in 1982-83, short-finned pilot whales virtually disappeared from this region, and despite increased survey effort along the entire U.S. west coast, sightings and fishery takes are rare and have primarily occurred during warm-water years (Julian and Beeson 1998, Carretta *et al.* 2004, Barlow 2016). Figure 1 summarizes the sightings of short-finned pilot whales off the U.S. west coast from 1991-2014. Pilot whales in the California Current and eastern tropical Pacific likely represent a single population, based on a lack of differentiation in mtDNA (Van Cise *et al.* 2016), while animals in Hawaiian waters are characterized by unique haplotypes that are absent from eastern and southern Pacific samples, despite relatively large sample sizes from Hawaiian waters. For the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) stock assessment reports, short-finned pilot whales within the Pacific U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone are divided into two discrete, non-contiguous areas: 1) waters off California, Oregon and Washington (this report), and 2) Hawaiian waters. Shiho-type short-finned pilot whales comprise the California, Oregon and Washington stock, and are covered in this report. Naisa-type short-finned pilot whales comprise the Hawaiian stock.

POPULATION SIZE

The abundance of short-finned pilot whales in this region is variable and may be influenced by prevailing oceanographic conditions (Forney 1997, Forney and Barlow 1998, Barlow 2016). Because animals may spend time outside the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone as oceanographic conditions change, a multi-year average abundance estimate is the most appropriate for management within U.S. waters. The most recent estimate of short-finned pilot whale abundance is the geometric mean of estimates from 2008 and 2014 summer/autumn vessel-based line-transect surveys of California, Oregon, and Washington

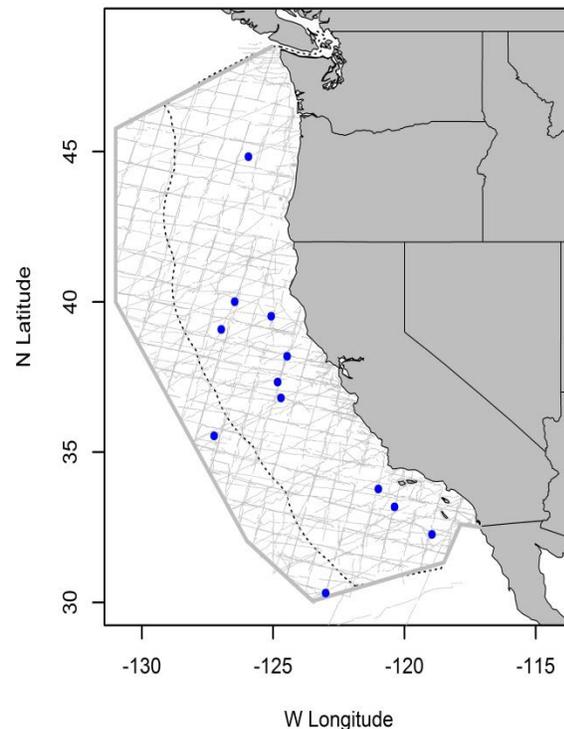


Figure 1. Short-finned pilot whale sightings made during shipboard surveys conducted off California, Oregon, and Washington, 1991-2014 (Barlow 2016). Dashed line represents the U.S. EEZ, thin gray lines indicate completed transect effort of all surveys combined.

waters, or 836 (CV=0.79) animals (Barlow 2016). This estimate includes new correction factors for animals missed during the surveys.

Minimum Population Estimate

The log-normal 20th percentile of the 2008-2014 geometric mean abundance estimate is 466 short-finned pilot whales.

Current Population Trend

Following the virtual disappearance of short-finned pilot whales from California after the 1982-83 El Niño, they have been encountered infrequently and primarily during warm-water years, such as 1991, 1993, 1997, 2014, and 2015 (e.g., Carretta et al. 1995, Julian and Beeson 1998, Carretta et al. 2004, Barlow 2016). These patterns likely reflect large-scale, long-term movements of this species in response to changing oceanographic conditions. It is not known whether the animals sighted more recently are part of the same population that was documented off Southern California before the mid-1980s or a different wide-ranging pelagic population. Therefore, no inferences can be drawn regarding trends in abundance of short-finned pilot whales off California, Oregon and Washington.

CURRENT AND MAXIMUM NET PRODUCTIVITY RATES

No information on current or maximum net productivity rates is available for short-finned pilot whales off California, Oregon and Washington.

POTENTIAL BIOLOGICAL REMOVAL

The potential biological removal (PBR) level for this stock is calculated as the minimum population size (466) times one half the default maximum net growth rate for cetaceans (1/2 of 4%) times a recovery factor of 0.48 (for a species of unknown status with bycatch mortality rate CV between 0.3 and 0.6; Wade and Angliss 1997), resulting in a PBR of 4.5 short-finned pilot whales per year.

HUMAN-CAUSED MORTALITY AND SERIOUS INJURY

Fishery Information

A summary of known fishery mortality and injury for this stock of short-finned pilot whale is shown in Table 1. More detailed information on these fisheries is provided in Appendix 1. The estimate of mortality and serious injury for short-finned pilot whale in the California drift gillnet fishery for the five most recent years of monitoring, 2010-2014, is 6 (CV= 0.39) individuals, or an average of 1.2 per year (Carretta *et al.* 2017). Bycatch of short-finned pilot whales in the drift gillnet fishery is rarely-observed (14 animals in 8,711 observed sets), but high multivariate El Niño index values associated with warm-water years (Wolter and Timlin 2011) were identified as a significant predictor of bycatch in a recent analysis (Carretta *et al.* 2017).

Historically, short-finned pilot whales were also killed in squid purse seine operations off Southern California (Miller *et al.* 1983; Heyning *et al.* 1994), but these deaths occurred when pilot whales were still common in the region. An observer program in the squid purse seine fishery was initiated in 2004 and a total of 377 sets (<10% of effort) were observed through 2008 without a pilot whale interaction. Gillnets have been documented to entangle marine mammals off Baja California (Sosa-Nishizaki *et al.* 1993), but no recent bycatch data from Mexico are available.

Table 1. Summary of available information on the incidental mortality and serious injury of short-finned pilot whales (California/Oregon/Washington Stock) in commercial fisheries that might take this species (Carretta *et al.* 2017). Coefficients of variation for mortality estimates are provided in parentheses; n/a = not available.

Fishery Name	Data Type	Year(s)	Percent Observer Coverage	Observed Mortality	Estimated Mortality	Mean Annual Takes (CV in parentheses)

Fishery Name	Data Type	Year(s)	Percent Observer Coverage	Observed Mortality	Estimated Mortality	Mean Annual Takes (CV in parentheses)
CA/OR thresher shark/swordfish drift gillnet fishery	observer	2010	12%	0	0	1.2 (0.39)
		2011	20%	0	0	
		2012	19%	0	0	
		2013	37%	0	0	
		2014	24%	2	6 (0.39)	
Market squid purse seine	observer	2004-2008	<10%	0	0	0
Minimum total annual takes						1.2 (0.39)

STATUS OF STOCK

The status of short-finned pilot whales off California, Oregon and Washington in relation to OSP is unknown. They have declined in abundance in the Southern California Bight, since the 1982-83 El Niño, but the nature of these changes and potential habitat issues are not adequately understood. Short-finned pilot whales are not listed as "threatened" or "endangered" under the Endangered Species Act nor as "depleted" under the MMPA. The average annual human-caused mortality, 1.2 animals, is less than the PBR of 4.5, and therefore they are not classified as a "strategic" stock under the MMPA. Total annual human-caused mortality and serious injury for this stock is greater than 10 % of PBR; therefore, mortality and serious injury cannot be considered to be approaching a zero mortality and serious injury rate.

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