



# Management of Whale Entanglements on US West Coast

Dan Lawson

National Marine Fisheries Service

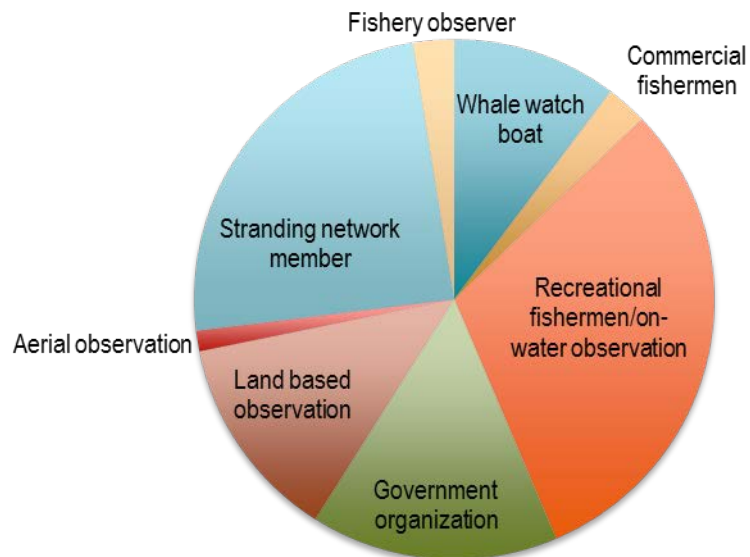
West Coast Regional Office

Protected Resources Division

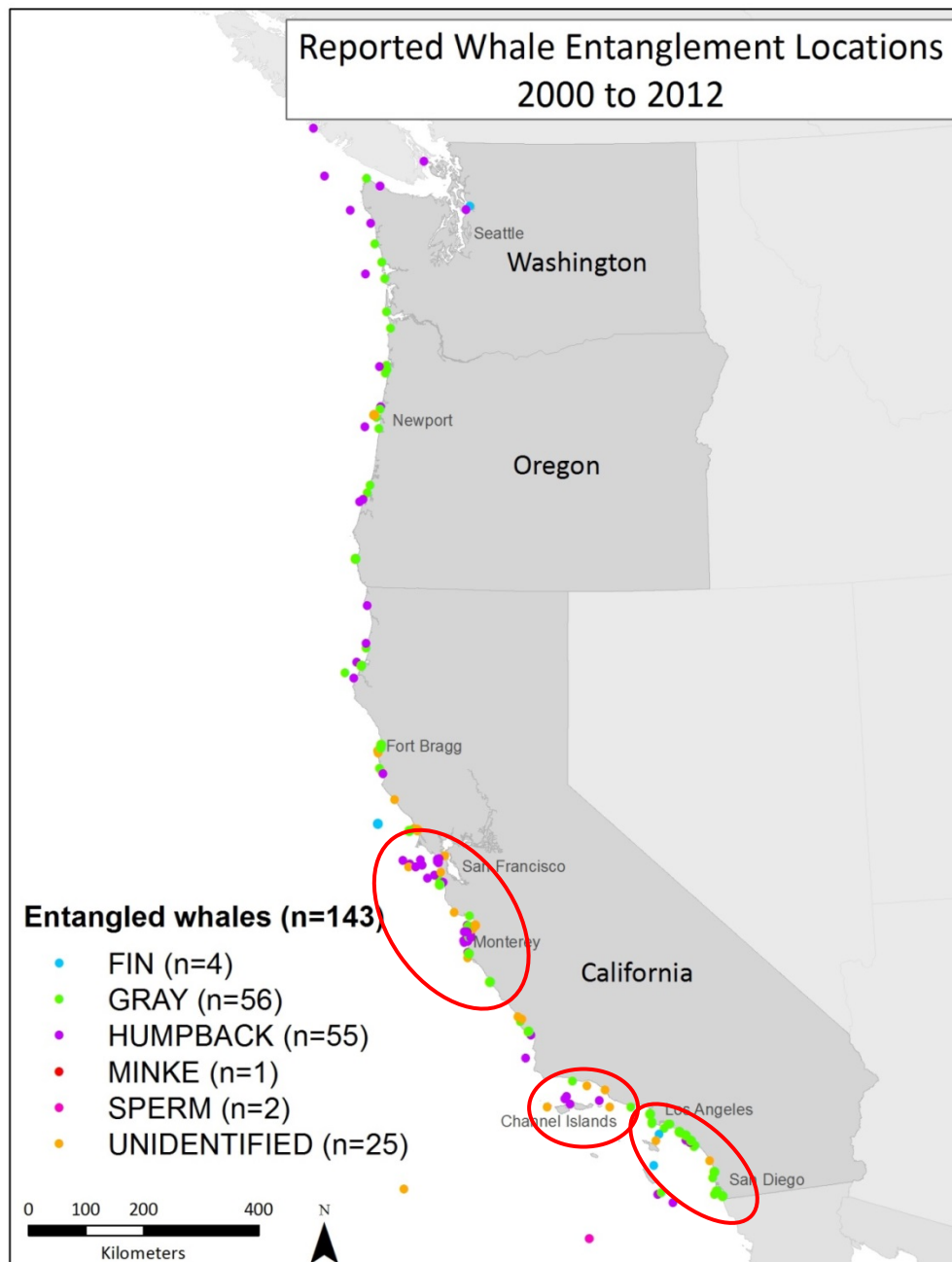
562-980-3209 [Dan.Lawson@noaa.gov](mailto:Dan.Lawson@noaa.gov)

**NOAA  
FISHERIES  
SERVICE**

## Entanglement report sources for live whales; California 2000 to 2012

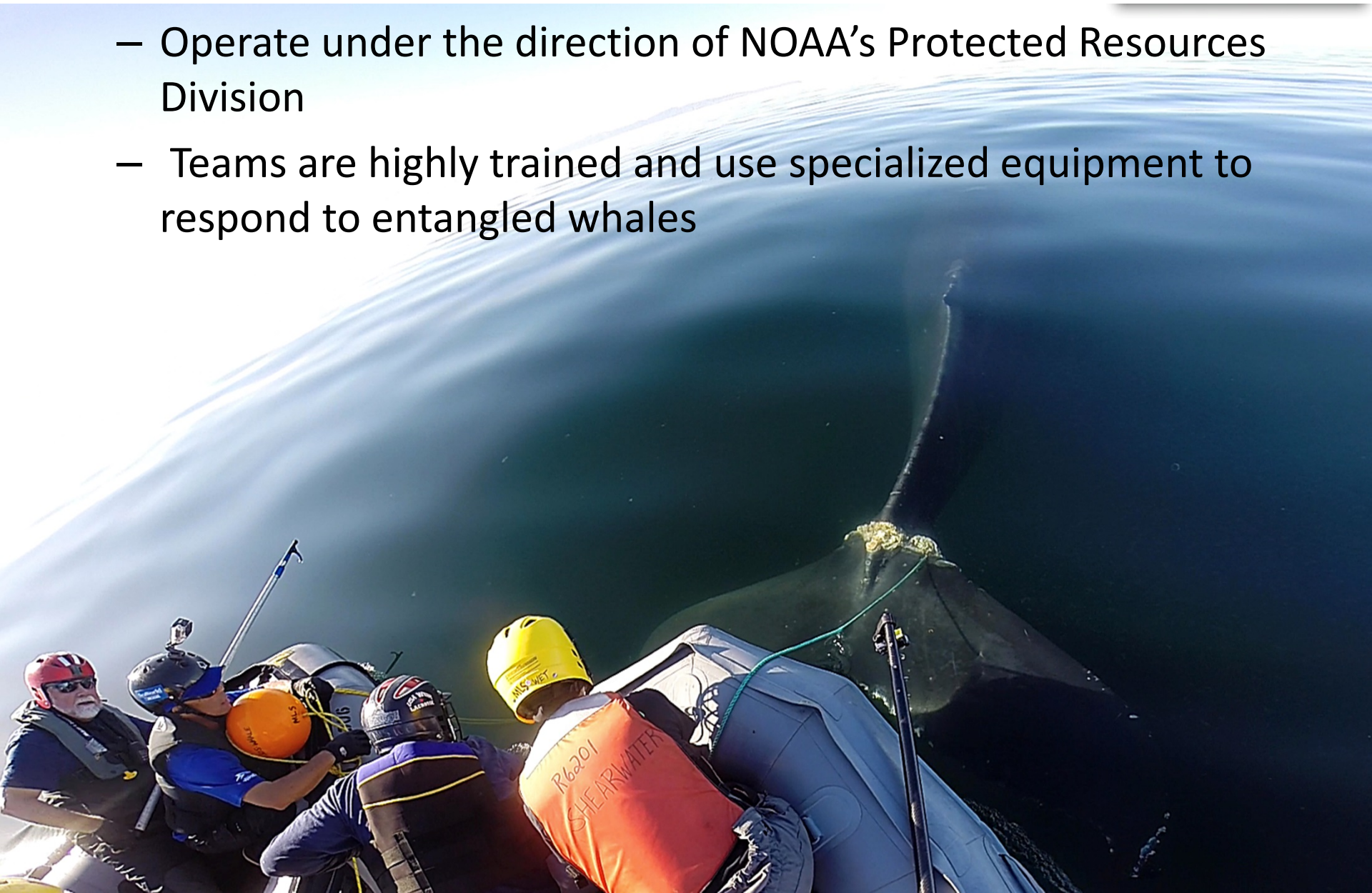


**\*\*Where entanglement was reported is not necessarily where the whale became entangled.**



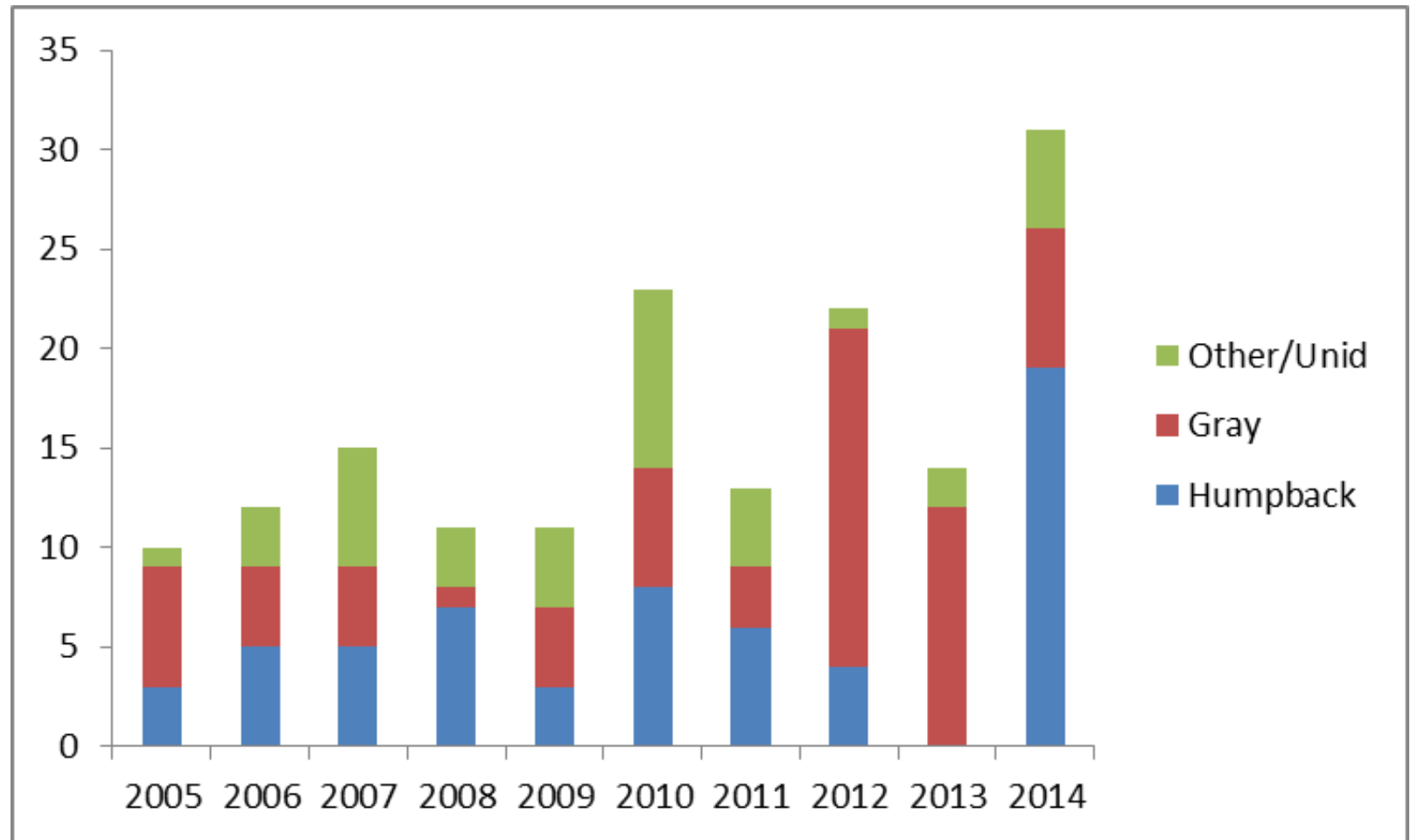
# Entanglement Response Network - professionals and volunteers throughout the state of California

- Operate under the direction of NOAA's Protected Resources Division
- Teams are highly trained and use specialized equipment to respond to entangled whales





## Recent Entanglement Report History on U.S. West Coast





## Marine Mammal Protection Act

**Amended in 1994 to include new program for managing marine mammal bycatch:**

- 1. Stock Assessment Reports**
- 2. Categorization of Fisheries**
- 3. Registration/Monitoring Program**
- 4. Reporting (Observer) Program**
- 5. Take Reduction Plans**





## Stock Assessment Reports

Developed for all U.S. marine mammal stocks

- Provide estimates of stock abundance and human caused mortalities and serious injuries (including fishery takes)
- Provides estimates of the “potential biological removal” level or “PBR” (i.e. how many animals per year can be removed from stock by human activities without effecting recovery)



CA/OR/WA humpback whale PBR – 11.0

Eastern North Pacific gray whale PBR - 558



## Marine Mammal Protection Act List of Fisheries

- **Required to assess status of ALL U.S. commercial fisheries - updated on annual basis**
- **Each fishery placed into 1 of 3 categories based on level of marine mammal take (SI/M)**
- **Categorization determines requirements**

Category I – “frequent” takes ( $> 50\%$  PBR)

Category II – “occasional” takes ( $> 1\%$  and  $< 50\%$ )

Category III – “rare or no known takes ( $< 1\%$ )



## U.S. West Coast Fisheries

### Category I Fisheries

CA thresher shark/swordfish drift gillnet fishery

Covered under Take Reduction Plan

**\*sperm whales**



### Category II Fisheries

CA yellowtail/barracuda and white sea bass *drift* gillnet

**\*by analogy**

CA halibut/white sea bass *set* gillnet

**\*humpback whales**







## U.S West Coast Fixed Gear Fisheries 2009 LOF

### Category II Fisheries

CA spot prawn pot

\*humpback whales

Eastern North Pacific gray whales

CA, OR, WA Dungeness coastal crab pot

\*humpback whales

Eastern North Pacific gray whales

CA/OR/WA sablefish pot

\*humpback whales

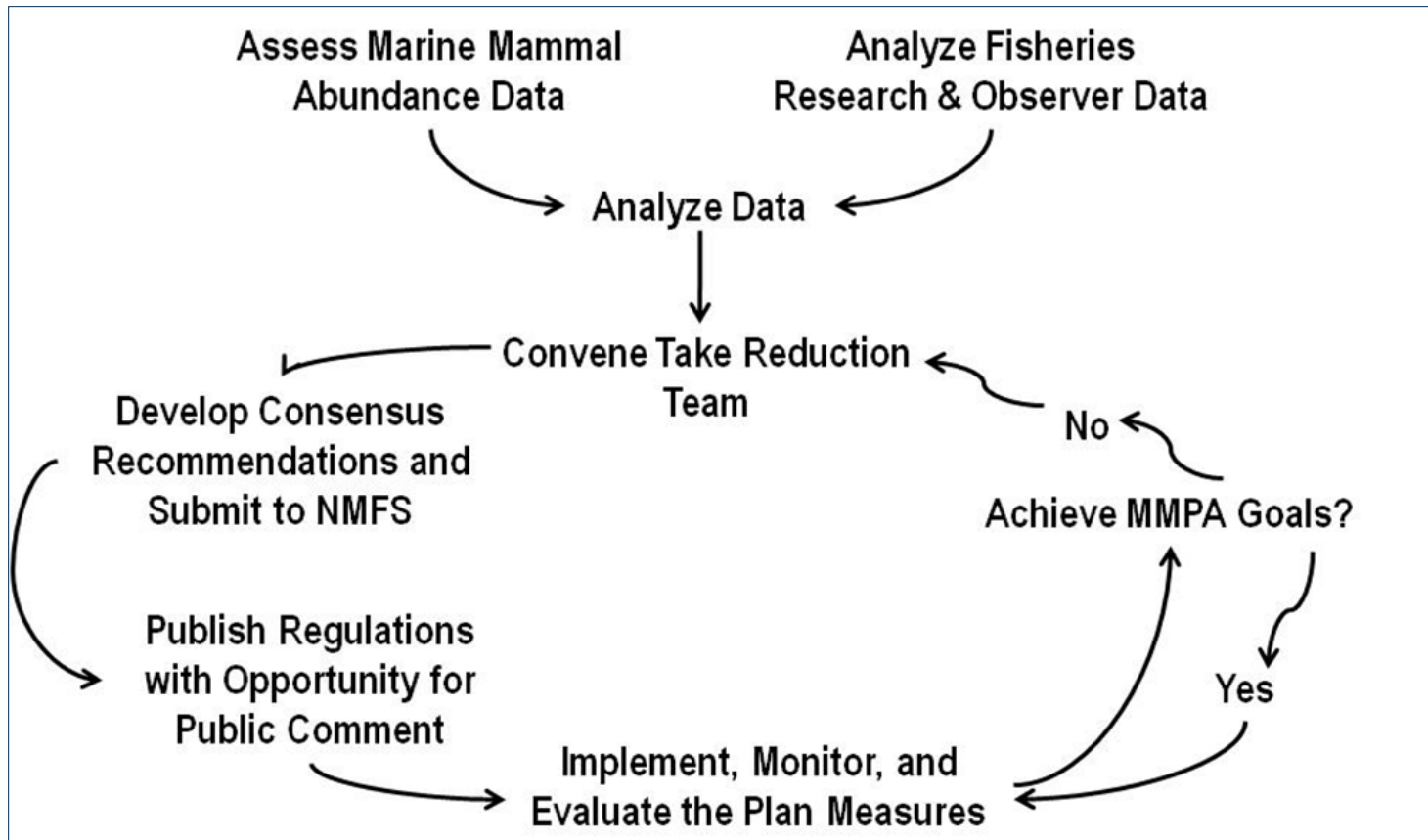


## Requirements for Category I and II Fisheries

- Register with NMFS to obtain authorization for lawful incidental take of marine mammals
- Carry an observer if requested
- Subject to the Take Reduction Program as applicable
- Report (via form) sent to NMFS within 48 hours following return to port – only serious injuries/mortalities of MM



## Take Reduction Plan Process





## Endangered Species Act

- No specific fishery management framework
- Impacts to ESA-listed species managed under section 7 (federal activities) and section 10 (state, private citizens)
- Humpback whales historically listed globally as endangered
- April 2015 NMFS proposed listing decisions for 14 distinct populations segments (DPS) based on breeding areas
  - Mexico DPS – no listing status under ESA
  - Central American DPS – threatened
- ENP gray delisted 1990s - WNP gray whale is endangered
- Recent tracking and photo ID confirm WNP gray whale presence on US west coast



## Recent NMFS Efforts Addressing West Coast Whale Entanglement

- Characterize fixed gear fisheries (“Gear Guide”) – 2011
- Risk assessment of fixed gear fisheries and large whale co-occurrence – 2013
- Large whale entanglement workshop - November 2013
- Public meetings in Oregon fishing community - September 2014
- Engagement with CDFW to connect with CA fishing community – now
- Paper detailing record of whale entanglements on US west coast – in prep





## NMFS Priorities Going Forward

1. Continue to improve data gathering on large whale entanglements and efforts to understand entanglement sources and impacts to whales.
2. Engage fishing community, State managers, and other interested stakeholders in efforts to understand and minimize risks/severity of whale entanglements across US west coast.
3. Enhance safe and effective interventions to improve the probability for survival of entangled whales.



## NMFS Engagement With Fishing Community

- (1) provide outreach to the community about the overall issue of whale entanglements in fixed gear, including the science and management contexts
- (2) initiate discussion of conceptual design and evaluation of possible actions to minimize the extent of entanglements
- (3) improve entanglement reporting and facilitate involvement of the fishing community in the disentanglement response network.

## LARGE WHALES IN DISTRESS

### — Response and Reporting Card —

California W.E.T. (Whale Entanglement Team) is a group of marine mammal professionals and volunteers under the direction of NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Office of Protected Resources. W.E.T. is tasked with responding to whales entangled in fishing gear and marine debris. These highly trained and experienced teams include marine biologists, veterinarians, mariners, and other volunteers coordinating with several governmental agencies including NMFS, NOAA Enforcement, US Coast Guard, and state agencies under the authority of the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program permit #932-1489.

Ocean users can play an important role in efforts to save whales in distress from pain, deformity, and death. Please report injured, entangled, and ship-struck whale concerns to the 24/7 W.E.T. hotline at (877) SOS-WHALE (767-9425) or hail the U.S. Coast Guard on VHF CH-16. Prompt reporting is the best way to help the distressed animal. Standing by until responders can arrive is also valuable. The back of this card prompts important information necessary to launch an appropriate response. The information provided may also help reduce incidents in the future.

Please be aware that it is sometimes not possible or appropriate to respond to every entangled or otherwise distressed marine mammal. Ship-struck animals may be monitored and assessed.

Safety first! Rescue attempts can be dangerous for would-be rescuers and the animal. Do not assist distressed marine mammals without guidance from authorities. Stay a safe distance away—100 yards minimum. Don't touch, feed, pursue, disturb, or otherwise approach marine mammals unless authorized to do so.

If possible, draw an approximation of the entanglement (below), indicating lines, objects, color, and distinguishing marks on the whale.



# CA/OR/WA (877) SOS-WHALE

- Phone number to call and report whales in distress (injured, entangled, stranded or ship-struck)
- Outreach: Reporting cards & Gear Guide
  - *Need photos and/or video & information on date, GPS location, species, nature of distress*

Entangled Whale Hotline: (877) SOS-WHALE (767-9425)

### Marine Mammals in Distress Reporting Card

Report injured, entangled, stranded, and ship-struck whale concerns as soon as possible. Reports will be relayed to responders. Authorized personnel will guide you as to what to do next. Prompt reporting is the best way to help distressed animals. The following information will aid responders in mounting an appropriate response.

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ TIME OF LAST SIGHTING: \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

VESSEL NAME/CALL SIGN: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER (Cell): \_\_\_\_\_

GENERAL LOCATION (Landmarks): \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIFIC LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_ °N \_\_\_\_\_ °W

SPECIES (If known; use a guide): \_\_\_\_\_

APPROXIMATE SIZE/AGE CLASS: \_\_\_\_\_

NATURE OF THE DISTRESS (Describe what you see): \_\_\_\_\_

GENERAL CONDITION OF THE WHALE: \_\_\_\_\_

WEATHER/SEAS (Wind, swell, visibility): \_\_\_\_\_

IS THE ANIMAL MOVING? Y / N speed \_\_\_\_\_ heading \_\_\_\_\_

CAN YOU STAND BY? Y / N HOW LONG? \_\_\_\_\_ PHOTOS? Y / N VIDEO? Y / N

Report incidents of marine mammal harassment to NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement at (800) 853-1964. In Northern California, report live stranded marine mammals (on the beach) to The Marine Mammal Center at (415) 289-SEAL (7325). Report injured/stranded sea turtles to the Moss Landing Marine Lab Turtle Research Program at (831) 771-4422. Report dead marine mammals to California Academy of Sciences at (415) 379-5381. There are ten other organizations authorized to respond to stranded marine mammals in California. The W.E.T. Hotline operator will be able to route the report to the appropriate responder(s).

