

**False Killer Whale Take Reduction Team Meeting  
Via Teleconference: June 15, 2018**

**KEY OUTCOMES MEMORANDUM**

**I. OVERVIEW**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) held a False Killer Whale Take Reduction Team (FKWTRT or Team) meeting via teleconference on June 15, 2018. The goals of the teleconference were to review and finalize draft recommendations for the False Killer Whale Take Reduction Plan (FKWTRT) and outline next steps.

Additional materials provided to the Team for the teleconference include the Team's working draft recommendations developed during the April 10-13, 2018 FKWTRT meeting, and a separate document capturing additional suggestions and recommendations developed after the meeting.

**II. PARTICIPANTS**

Fifteen of 21 Team members participated in the teleconference. Participants included the following: Robin Baird, Hannah Bernard, Brendan Cummings, Roger Dang, Ann Garrett, Eric Gilman, Dennis Heinemann, Michael Jasny, Eric Kingma (observing for West Pac), John LaGrange, Kristy Long, Victoria O'Connell, Ryan Okano, Aude Pacini, Andy Reed, Trevor Ryder and Ryan Steen. Team members Clint Funderburg, Asuka Ishizaki, and Sharon Young were not able to participate. Eric Kingma participated as an observer.

Kevin Brindock and [Susan Pultz](#) with the NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) Protected Resources Division, Jamie Marchetti with the PIRO Observer Program, Amanda Bradford with the NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, and Karin Forney with the NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center also participated. Scott McCreary and Meredith Cowart with CONCUR served as neutral facilitators.

**III. MEETING MATERIALS**

As noted above, an agenda and other materials were provided to the Team prior to the meeting to support the discussion.

**IV. KEY OUTCOMES**

Below is a summary of the main topics and issues discussed. This summary is not intended to be a meeting transcript. Rather, it provides an overview of the main topics covered, the primary points and options raised in the discussions, and next steps.

## **A. Welcome, Introductions and Updates**

The teleconference began with a review of the agenda and a recap of the core meeting purpose by A. Garrett. S. McCreary reinforced the purpose and outlined the meeting protocols.

## **B. Report out**

K. Brindock provided a report out on the status of review of recent observed FKW interactions in the EEZ (two occurred on the same trip on May 23, 24 and one occurred on a separate trip on June 3). He stated that all interactions have now been confirmed by the Observer Program and that an expedited injury determination process has begun. K. Brindock will notify team members when the injury determination process has been completed. Consistent with the expedited injury determination timeline, the May 23 and 24 injury determinations are expected by July 9 and the injury determination for the June 3 interaction is expected by July 10.

## **C. Discussion: Working Draft Recommendations**

Team members discussed three main subsections of the draft proposal, (Gear Modifications/SEZ Recommendations, Handling and Training Recommendations and Move-On Recommendations), confirmed some areas of agreement, noted some areas where more discussion and work is needed, characterized the nature of emerging agreements, and offered a few suggestions for next steps.

***Gear Modifications/SEZ recommendations: S. McCreary reported that productive discussions had continued since the in-person meeting among and between respective caucuses of TRT members.*** R. Steen and B. Cummings reported that they (and their respective organizations/constituents) have been working together to develop a consensus proposal on the Gear Modifications/SEZ Recommendations. They have been developing iterative drafts, which though increasingly convergent, but have not yet reached a final, stable proposal. B. Cummings noted that these proposals reflect several items which appeared to have general consensus at the end of the last meeting, including:

- Transition to a  $\geq 2.3$  mm branch line standard for all LL vessels
- Move forward with a weak hook experiment on 4.2 mm hook to identify any potential changes in target catch
- Assuming Agency research minimal impact to the fishing industry, transition to a 4.2 mm hook standard for all LL vessels
- In the near term, relax or end SEZ closures (until there is full implementation of gear modifications)
- Once there is full implementation of the gear modifications, eliminate the SEZ

R. Steen and B. Cummings stated that they will continue to work together to reach a mutually agreeable proposal, and that they expect to have new version in about 2 weeks, at which point the proposal can be shared with the Team, and possibly voted on.

B. Cummings noted that while there is strong convergence on the types of gear modifications needed, there is not yet agreement on the timeline or sequence for implementing those changes, or a contingency plan in case Agency research does demonstrate changes in target catch.

R. Steen emphasized that this emerging agreement is also contingent upon an Agency commitment to implementing a weak hook (4.2 mm) experiment, and on this study demonstrating minimal impact to the industry. He noted that gear modification transitions are expensive and time-consuming and that industry cannot commit to a term that could require the fishery to implement a new hook without knowing the impact or having to do so on short notice.

In response, A. Garrett stated that the Agency can commit to carrying out a study within 24 months, but that 12 months may not be possible. R. Steen stated that a study by the end of 2019 is needed.

R. Steen asked the Agency to provide information on the months during which the largest bigeye/highest abundance of bigeye catch was observed over the last three years, in order to help determine the timing of the weak hook experiment. K. Brindock noted that these data are already being compiled, and that the Agency expects to have these data before or during the next FKWTRT follow up phone call.

***Electronic Monitoring:*** A. Read noted that the SEZ proposal regarding adoption of universal fleet wide electronic monitoring (EM) is likely to be a “sticking point” as some Team members are strongly in favor of EM and others are opposed or are unsure on the operational nature of EM in its current state.

***Handling and Training Recommendations:***

- Team members confirmed that there is strong consensus around the implementation of a monetary incentive program that rewards crew members when they have successfully released FKW by straightening hooks on observed trips.
- Team members confirmed that there is general agreement the proposal should recommend further research dedicated to studying post-release mortality rates, but that the specific language still needs work.
- The Team agreed that rigorous training of both crew bosses and crew is needed, in addition to training of captains. The Team also agreed that both NOAA and the fishing industry should undertake separate but coordinated training efforts.
- Team members agreed that training and handling guidelines should emphasize the goal of captain/crew actions in a given situation, and provide examples of ways in which that goal can be achieved, rather than prescribing one specific solution.

Team members noted that overarching goals will be more effective than specific guidelines, given that conditions are highly variable, crews are already highly skilled and adaptive, and that wording is likely to be interpreted differently by different people.

- The Team agreed that the text “active pressure” in “Working Drafting Handling and Training Recommendations” should be replaced simply with “tension” to reflect the bullet above.
- The Team agreed that the first three handling and training recommendations (or bullets) under “Working Drafting Handling and Training Recommendations” should be kept under handling and training, whereas the following recommendations would be better captured under another section (i.e. research, injury determinations).

***Move-On Recommendations:*** The Team agreed that the Move-On Recommendations in the Corrected Working Draft are agreeable and can be considered stable.

***Agreement to Move Forward with Proposal Elements that are Already Agreed Upon:*** A team member noted, and K. Brindock confirmed, that some proposal measures (e.g. Handling and Training) for which there is widespread agreement, could potentially be implemented before others for which further discussion and/or information is needed (e.g. Gear Modifications/SEZ recommendations). The intention and goal, though, remain to arrive at a complete package of measures for which the team can reach consensus.

## **V. NEXT STEPS**

Based on the Team deliberations, the following next steps were identified:

- K. Brindock will notify team members when the injury determination process for the 3 recent FKW interactions has been completed. The May 23 and 24 injury determinations are expected by July 9 and the injury determination for the June 3 interaction is expected by July 10.
- Two follow-up calls will be set for approximately two weeks and four weeks from June 15, 2018. R. Steen and B. Cummings will strive to provide team with a consensus proposal on Gear Modifications/SEZ Recommendations in advance of the next call.
- CONCUR will develop a draft Key Outcomes Memo for this meeting within five business days, to be reviewed by K. Brindock and then circulated to the Team for red-line review.
- K. Brindock will provide the Team with data on the density of fishing effort at the location and time that the last 3 FKW interactions occurred.
- K. Brindock will provide the Team information on the months during which the largest bigeye/highest abundance of bigeye catch was observed over the last three years (in order to help determine the timing of the weak hook experiment) before or at the next FKWTRT phone call (2 weeks from June 15, 2018).

Questions or comments regarding this meeting summary should be directed to S. McCreary or K. Brindock. Scott can be reached at 510-649-8008; Kevin at 808-725-5146.