

ALWTRT Webinar

Tuesday, November 29, 2016: 1:00pm-3:30pm
Key Outcomes

I. Overview

The Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (Team) held a webinar on Tuesday, November 29, 2016. Objectives of the webinar included:

- a. Review abundance, bycatch and compliance numbers from recent years
- b. Review plans for improvements to fishing effort and SPUE data
- c. Discuss status of Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan and potential future plans

II. Participants

TRT Members/Alternates

Beth Casoni	John Haviland (and Steve Keane)	Patrice McCarron	Brian Sharp	Regina Asmutis-Silva
Sarah Uhlemann (and Kristen Monsell)	Jane Davenport	Mason Weinrich	Sharon Young	Colleen Giannini
Dan McKiernan (and Erin Burke)	Cheri Patterson	Scott Olszewski	Terry Stockwell (and Sarah Cotnoir)	Michael Greco
Red Munden	Samantha Hoover	Lisa Bonacci	Clay George	Tom Pitchford
David Laist	Shanna Madsen	Bob Kenney	Amy Knowlton (for Scott Kraus)	Scott Landry (for Stormy Mayo)
Bill McLellan	Buddy Powell	Jooke Robbins	Mark Swingle	

Staff from Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, NOAA General Counsel, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, NMFS Office of Protected Resources, NMFS Southeast Regional Office and members of the public also participated (see attachment).

III. Topics Presented/ Discussed

- a. Welcome, Agenda Review, Membership Changes (Swails)
 - i. All presentations are posted on the Team's meeting webpage.
<https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected/whaletrp/trt/meetings/index.html>
 - ii. See Swails's presentation for a list of membership changes since the Team last met.

- b. Abundance, Serious Injury, Mortality and Entanglements (Pace, Swails, Merriman)
 - i. Pace presented the draft abundance and SI/M numbers from the 2016 Stock Assessment Report. http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/sars/pdf/atl2016_draft.pdf
 - 1. Right whale abundance is in a decline and SI/M continues to be above PBR.
 - 2. Latent mortality is a growing concern for all species. The Center is trying to figure out how to better take this into consideration when assessing stock health.
 - ii. Swails presented preliminary entanglement numbers for 2015 and 2016. The serious injury determinations for these entanglements are not complete. In 2015 there were 36 new confirmed entanglements and in 2016 there were 43 new confirmed entanglements. In 2016 NMFS was able to identify to the US 42% of the cases where gear was recovered as compared to 2015 which was 25%. The new gear marking (larger, more frequent marks) is increasing the chance of recovering a gear that was marked.
 - 1. The Team requested that entanglement numbers be broken down by species and gear type. They also asked if gear recovered could be broken down by management area (ALWTRP, LMA), and offshore vs inshore. One member requested NMFS consider prior to disentanglement, how many entanglement cases were SI? If the whale had not been disentangled, how many of these entanglements could have resulted in mortality? A commenter suggested that, in advance of the April meeting, a small group of ALWTRT members get together to identify ways we want entanglement information to be broken out for the team.
 - a. By the next meeting in April, we will have more detail information on the breakdown of the entanglement cases. Based on available information, each case will be analyzed to the maximum extent possible based on the Team's suggestions.
 - iii. Cathy Merriman and Alan Reeves presented right whale updates from Canada's DFO. DFO recently released an Action Plan for Right Whale Entanglements. DFO is at the early stages of gathering information and approaching industry. As a result, there are not a lot of specifics to provide at this time. There is a definite need to better understand whale distribution and overlap with fishing gear. As a result, DFO will be working on developing spatial distribution models similar to the ALWTRT's co-occurrence model. DFO will attend the April TRT meeting.
- c. Enforcement Updates (Provencher/Heckwolf)
 - i. Eric Provencher, Office of Law Enforcement, provided an update on actions taken with JEA state funding for MA, RI, ME, NH, and NJ in FY'2015. A total of 623 contacts were compliant for a compliance rate of 94.49%. There were 113 non-compliant contacts.

d. Co-Occurrence Model

- i. **May TRT Work Group:** A small group of TRT members met in Gloucester in May to discuss ways to improve fishing effort data. Key Outcomes from this meeting are available on the Team's website. The group gave suggestions on what type of data to collect and began a discussion on how to collect it. These discussions will continue at the April TRT meeting.
- ii. **ASMFC Lobster Reporting:** Since the work group met the ASMFC had a work group meeting to discuss improvements to the current lobster reporting requirements including VTR data and 100% harvester reporting. Specific details are available in the ASMFC letter posted on the TRT website. These requirements could develop into an addendum when the lobster board is meets in February with a potential for a comment period next summer. NMFS will provide an update on this action at the April TRT meeting.
Update to SPUE data: IEC is beginning discussions with Duke to see about incorporating Duke's recent habitat based cetacean density modeling efforts into the co-occurrence model. IEC is aiming to develop an open system to incorporate various data from different sources. However, there needs to be data standards developed so data can be incorporated from all sources. Partnering with Duke provides an avenue to explore this desire, especially as the model uses similar data formats and inputs as the co-occurrence model currently developed by IEC. In the end, partnering with Duke will provide additional information that will only help further improve the current co-occurrence model. NMFS plans on inviting Duke to the April meeting to expand on their work and how it may improve the co-occurrence model.
- iii. **Future of Model:** In addition to efforts to improve data for the model IEC is also working on improving the platform for the model and upgrading its software. The Team discussed linking location of entanglement cases to co-occurrence and also asked if the model can take into consideration rope thickness/weight and its spatial distribution relative to whales. While it is possible, it hasn't been done to date. There hasn't been sufficient data available to input into the model to try to run such scenarios. However, with sufficient data, incorporation of such data into the model may be possible in the future. Until that time, such assessments can't be done.

e. Save the Dates

- i. NMFS Right whale workshop in Gloucester on March 14-17th. Open to the public. The workshop will focus on the status of the right whale population.
- ii. Marine Mammal Commission Annual meeting in Woods Hole on April 5-7th. Open to the public. Focus of this meeting is right whales and increasing pinniped populations in the Northeast.
- iii. Face to Face TRT meeting location TBD on April 25-27th.

f. Other Updates

- i. **Right whale 5 year review:** NMFS is undergoing a 5 year review. The last review was published in 2012. NMFS is accepting literature and field season reports for incorporation into the review. The emphasis of this review is not to just look at the past 5 years of research but also to look at how NMFS is doing overall on right whale recovery.
- ii. GARFO has undergone a reorganization that created a new group within the Protected Resources Division. This group will focus efforts on Monitoring and Outreach. Some staff from the Marine Mammal/Sea Turtle group has moved over to this new group including, Dave Gouveia who will lead this new group. The TRT program will continue to be run under the Marine Mammal/Sea Turtle group.
- iii. **Public Comment:** A member of the public offered use of a model they currently use to help with developing the co-occurrence model further. Their model is not a co-occurrence model per say; however, it can be tailored to look at the consequence or uncertainties of certain TRT measures (i.e., validate model or determine areas of improvement.
 1. NMFS is trying to develop the best model that we can to address the issues relative to the goals and objectives of ALWTRP. Specifically we are interested in making the model more predictive. Although we are open to looking at different models, and we are aiming to have an open platform to accommodate data from all resources available, we do not want to introduce conflicting models. We would be interested in similar models that enhance or support the near and long term goals of the ALWTRP. To that extent, we are open to working with others and hearing any ideas they may have to improve our existing co-occurrence model.

IV. Next Steps

- a. NMFS will inform the Team of details about the RW workshop, MMC meeting, and April TRT meeting as they become available.
- b. NMFS will continue to analyze recent entanglements to provide the Team with a more detailed gear analysis at the April meeting.
- c. NMFS will continue to work with Duke to discuss incorporating their data and modeling into the co-occurrence model.
- d. NMFS will continue to coordinate with Peter Burns on lobster reporting requirements and will discuss how to improve fishing effort information from other fisheries at the April meeting.

Attachment: Additional Webinar Participants

NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office

Michael Asaro
David Gouveia
Danielle Palmer
Mark Minton
Eric Provencher
Peter Burns
Peter Kelilher

NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Richard Pace

NMFS Southeast Regional Office

Jessica Powell

NMFS Office of Protected Resources, Headquarters

Lisa White

NMFS Office of General Counsel

Joseph Heckwolf

Canada DFO

Cathy Merriman
Allen Reeves

Industrial Economics, Inc

Neal Etre
Brian Morrison
Daniel Shark

Public

Katie Moore, United States Coast Guard
Bennett Brooks, Consensus Building Inc.
Scott McCreary, Concur
Erin Summers, Maine DMR
Lori Caron, Southshore Lobster Fishermen's Association
Rob Martin, Southshore Lobster Fishermen's Association
Paula Moreno, University of Southern Mississippi
Mark Baumgartner, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute