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NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE PUBLISHES FINAL 2006 LIST OF FISHERIES

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service published its annual list of commercial fisheries that interact with marine mammals today. The List of Fisheries (LOF) categorizes each U.S. commercial fishery based on the level of interaction each fishery has with marine mammals. The annual list is required by the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA).

Each fishery is placed into one of three categories according to whether it has a frequent (Category I), occasional (Category II), or remote likelihood (Category III) of incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals.

After reviewing marine mammal stock assessment reports and other new information -- such as observer and marine mammal stranding data -- NOAA Fisheries Service implemented several classification changes for this year's report.

The California purse seine fishery, the mid-Atlantic menhaden purse seine fishery and the Chesapeake Bay inshore gillnet fishery have been elevated to Category II from Category III.

Also, NOAA Fisheries Service reclassified the Alaska Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands Greenland turbot longline fishery to Category III from Category II.

Seven additional fisheries were added to the LOF for the first time, and classified as Category III. The new fisheries include the American Samoa longline fishery, the Western Pacific squid jig fishery, the Hawaii Kona crab net loop fishery, the Hawaii offshore pen culture fishery, the California marine shellfish aquaculture fishery, the California white seabass enhancement net pen fishery and the Southeast Atlantic inshore gillnet fishery.

The annual List of Fisheries classifies fisheries based on a two-tiered, stock-specific approach that first addresses the total impact of all fisheries on each marine mammal stock, and then addresses the impact of individual fisheries on each stock. The annual rate of marine mammals seriously injured or killed incidental to commercial fisheries is compared to the Potential Biological Removal (PBR) level for each stock. The PBR level is defined in the MMPA as the maximum number of animals that may be removed from a marine mammal stock, while allowing that stock to reach or maintain its optimum sustainable population. Tier 1 considers the cumulative fishery-related incidental mortality and serious injury for a particular stock, while Tier 2 considers fishery-specific incidental mortality and serious injury for a particular stock.

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- Tier 1: If the total annual mortality and serious injury across all fisheries that interact with a stock is less than or equal to 10 percent of the PBR level of such stock, then all fisheries interacting with that stock would be placed in Category III. Otherwise, these fisheries are subject to the next tier to determine their classification.
- Tier 2 - Category III: Annual mortality and serious injury in a given fishery is less than or equal to one percent of the PBR level.
- Tier 2 - Category II: Annual mortality and serious injury in a given fishery is greater than one percent but less than 50 percent of the PBR level.
- Tier 2 -Category I: Annual mortality and serious injury of a stock in a given fishery is greater than or equal to 50 percent of the PBR level.

Commercial fishers who participate in fisheries placed in Category I or II must register with the Marine Mammal Authorization Program and submit a \$25 fee, unless registration has been integrated with an existing state or federal registration program. The MMPA requires that all commercial fishers, regardless of Category, submit a report to NOAA Fisheries Service within 48 hours of the end of each fishing trip if a marine mammal is injured or killed incidental to fishing operations.

The final 2006 List of Fisheries was published in the Federal Register today. Copies of the final rule can be found on the Internet at: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/PR2/Fisheries_Interactions/list_of_fisheries.html or by contacting the Office of Protected Resources, NOAA Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910/(301)713-2322, ext. 132.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public. To learn more about NOAA Fisheries Service, please visit: www.nmfs.noaa.gov.

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