

Atlantic Trawl Gear Take Reduction Plan



Goal:

To reduce serious injuries and mortalities of pilot whales, common dolphins, and white-sided dolphins due to accidental entanglement in commercial fishing gear.

Affected Fisheries:

- Mid-Atlantic Mid-Water Trawl (Including Pair Trawl)
- Mid-Atlantic Bottom Trawl
- Northeast Mid-Water Trawl (Including Pair Trawl)
- Northeast Bottom Trawl



What's the status of the Plan?

Background

In April 2003, a settlement agreement was signed between the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) and NOAA Fisheries Service requiring the agency to convene a take reduction team to address takes of pilot whales and common dolphins in the Atlantic Squid, Mackerel, and Butterfish fisheries (currently known as the Mid-Atlantic mid-water trawl fishery) by September 30, 2006. The settlement agreement also required that NOAA Fisheries Service conduct abundance surveys and observer programs for the fishery in order to obtain at least two successive years of updated marine mammal injury and mortality estimates for common dolphins and pilot whales prior to convening the take reduction team. As mandated by the settlement agreement, NOAA Fisheries Service has undertaken stock assessment surveys for both species as well as white-sided dolphins.

Atlantic Trawl Gear Take Reduction Team

In September 2006, NOAA Fisheries Service will convene a take reduction team (TRT) with the goal of developing consensus recommendations for a take reduction plan to reduce the serious injuries and mortalities of pilot whales, common dolphins, and white-sided dolphins incidental to the Mid-Atlantic mid-water trawl fishery, as well as other trawl fisheries.

The Atlantic Trawl Gear Take Reduction Team will consist of fishing industry representatives, environmentalists, marine mammal experts, state and federal officials, and other interested parties. Information about the process and the Atlantic Trawl TRT is available on the following website: http://www.nero.noaa.gov/prot_res/atgtrp/

Atlantic Trawl Gear Take Reduction Team

Short-Term Goal:

To reduce, within 6 months of implementation of the take reduction plan, the mortality and serious injury of marine mammals taken in the course of commercial fishing operations to levels less than the Potential Biological Removal (PBR) Level, which is the calculated number of human-caused deaths per year each marine mammal stock can withstand and still reach its optimum sustainable population level.

Long-Term Goal:

To reduce, within 5 years of implementation of the take reduction plan, incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals incidentally taken in the course of commercial fishing operations to insignificant levels approaching a zero rate, taking into account the economics of the fisheries, the adaptability of existing fishery technology, and existing state or regional fishery management plans.

Zero Mortality Rate Goal:

The MMPA requires fisheries to reduce incidental mortalities and serious injuries of marine mammals to insignificant levels approaching a zero rate, also known as ZMRG. In order to meet this requirement and implement ZMRG, NOAA Fisheries Service established an insignificance threshold level for mortalities and serious injuries as 10 percent of the PBR level of a marine mammals stock. The insignificance threshold applies to all commercial fisheries that have serious injuries and mortalities of a stock, and indicates the maximum amount of incidental mortality and serious injury that can be considered to be approaching a zero rate.

Questions?

Please contact Mark Minton, Atlantic Trawl Plan Coordinator, at (978) 281-9300 x-6534 to learn more about upcoming meetings, the process, and team members who are representing your interests.



U.S. Department of Commerce
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