



## Meeting Summary

# Oregon Entanglement Advisory Committee

March 16, 2023, 1 – 5pm

### Attendance

**ODFW facilitators:** Caren Braby, Troy Buell, Kelly Corbett, Brittany Harrington

**Present members:** Cari Brandberg, John Calambokidis, Susan Chambers, Ben Enticknap, Sheila Garber, Amanda Gladics, Scott Hartzell, Gway Kirchner, Tim Novotny, Leigh Torres, Heather VanMeter, Colleen Weiler, Justin Yager

**NMFS advisors:** Justin Greenman, Dan Lawson

**Non-members:** Cody Chase, Solène Derville, Angee Doerr, Jon Gonzalez, Francine Kershaw, Katy Nalven, Heather Nicholson, Mike Pettis, Fran Recht, Lauren Saez, Lorna Wargo

### **Introduction, Recent Entanglement Record, and Conservation Plan and Incidental Take Permit Status Update** (slides 2-5 of the [meeting presentation](#))

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) convened the second meeting of the Oregon Entanglement Advisory Committee (OEAC) on March 16, 2023.

ODFW reviewed all entanglements that occurred on the West Coast and in Oregon in 2022. The group briefly discussed what constitutes a confirmed entanglement and the process that takes place when an entanglement occurs, including the investigation and gear owner interview process that is used to help narrow down entanglement timing and location (as opposed to when and where it is reported), when possible. ODFW and NMFS advisors clarified that while there is an apparent West Coast pattern where the entanglement report location often matches the location of gear origin, this is dominated by California entanglements and the pattern does not hold true for Oregon entanglements.

ODFW provided an update on the Oregon CP and ITP application status, including coordination efforts, regulatory actions, and CP development. This included a brief introduction to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (OFWC) rulemaking package that is expected to be presented in August or September of this year. ODFW confirmed that the draft CP is being revised to be consistent with new stock delineations presented in the draft 2022 humpback whale stock assessment reports.

### **OSU Research Updates** ([OSU presentation](#))

OSU researchers, Leigh Torres and Solène Derville, provided an update on ongoing Section 6 whale distribution and co-occurrence modeling efforts, as well as upcoming research plans. The need for this work came from a critical information gap, first identified by the Oregon Whale Entanglement Working Group, for more comprehensive and recent information on the spatiotemporal distribution of whales in Oregon waters. The objectives of the study are to understand the environmental drivers of seasonal whale distribution in Oregon waters, predict

whale distribution year-round in near-real time and during the last decade, and analyze co-occurrence with crab gear to understand and reduce entanglement risk.

The researchers provided a brief overview of the multi-species study methods and results to-date, which have been presented in two published papers ([Derville et al., 2022](#) and [Derville et al., 2023](#)). They shared their take-home messages that:

- This work improved knowledge of whale distribution in Oregon and the environmental conditions that are the best predictors of whale occurrence;
- Retrospective analysis of overlap with fishing effort shows that entanglement risk changes through time and space; and
- Risk patterns and drivers are different in Oregon than in California emphasizing the importance of research to inform management at the state level.

The researchers described their next steps which include improving models with more observational data and the addition of prey metrics, using genetics and photo identification techniques to assess site fidelity in Oregon waters, and developing a high-resolution whale density mapping tool. They also described an additional project that is just getting started, looking at whale scar rates to assess how entanglement rates change in time or space in Oregon waters and help assess the effectiveness of new management measures.

The researchers addressed a number of clarifying questions from the group and elaborated on the usefulness and caveats to how these models may be applied by managers in decision making processes going forward.

## **2023 Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission Package** (slides 6-22 of the [meeting presentation](#))

ODFW provided an overview of the upcoming three-year evaluation of Oregon's primary risk reduction measures (i.e., 20% pot limit reduction, 40 fathom depth restriction, and late-season tag requirement beginning May 1 each season). These measures were effective beginning in the 2020-21 crab season with a three-year sunset date. ODFW is in the process of evaluating the effectiveness of these measures and will present their recommendations to the OFWC later this year. ODFW shared their current draft recommendation with OEAC which includes maintaining the current measures and removing the sunset date, based on collective analyses which indicate that: (a) there has not been any increase in entanglements following implementation of the measures, and (b) entanglement risk has been reduced in the late-season, as expected, with low to moderate impacts on late-season crab fishery participants. ODFW then walked through a suite of analyses looking at entanglement incidence, fishery effort, line-days (a metric of entanglement risk), and fishery impacts.

ODFW addressed several clarifying questions from the group regarding the entanglement record and line-days metric. The group discussed the challenge with drawing any conclusions from only two years of entanglement data, given the rarity of events. The group also discussed using caution when interpreting landings and economic data from 2020 and 2021 since those years were not representative of normal conditions and represent two different extremes. Members pointed out how the forecasts for other fisheries (e.g., shrimp, salmon) impact

participation in late-season crabbing. Several members requested additional economic analyses or consideration of other management scenarios (e.g., different depth and/or implementation date). ODFW requested any additional feedback from this group, if they have it, in the next couple of months to start meeting OFWC deadlines which begin in June.

ODFW then reviewed the rationale for line marking and provided an overview of stakeholder feedback received since sharing the Department's fall 2022 line marking proposal. ODFW introduced a revised draft proposal which would require manufactured bi-colored (yellow and black) line on all trailer buoy lines and the upper 20 fathoms of the main line, required on the water by the 2027-28 crab season. The group discussed the rationale and logistical considerations for this proposal. Some members expressed concern over the expense of transitioning line and encouraged ODFW to look into some sort of funding or trade-in program. Several members expressed their preference for manufactured line over individual solid marks. A few members expressed concern about how the proposal would work operationally when moving gear to different depths and a preference for requiring less than 20 fathoms manufactured line top shot. It was suggested that 14 fathoms could work.

Given the lengthy discussion on earlier agenda items, ODFW did not have time to present proposals for a maximum surface gear limit and two industry-proposed changes. They encouraged group members to review those proposals in the meeting slides and provide any feedback after the meeting.

### **Public Comment**

ODFW staff provided time for public comments. One attendee commented on changes that they would like to see made to the post-season derelict gear recovery program, including not allowing for vessels to keep the pots they recover and tying non-payment of recovered pots by owners to denial of crab permit renewal. ODFW clarified that a change like that could be pursued but would likely require statutory change.

ODFW staff wrapped up the meeting by thanking everyone for their participation and relaying that a meeting summary will be provided to the group soon. Follow-up questions can be provided via email or phone.