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DALL'S PORPOISE (*Phocoenoides dalli*): California/Oregon/Washington Stock

STOCK DEFINITION AND GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

Dall's porpoise are endemic to temperate waters of the North Pacific Ocean. Off the U.S. west coast, they are commonly seen in shelf, slope and offshore waters (Figure 1; Morejohn 1979). Sighting patterns from aerial and shipboard surveys conducted in California, Oregon and Washington at different times (Green et al. 1992, 1993; Mangels and Gerrodette 1994; Barlow 1995; Forney et al. 1995) suggest that north-south movement between these states occurs as oceanographic conditions change, both on seasonal and inter-annual time scales. The southern end of this population's range is not well-documented, but they are commonly seen off Southern California in winter, and during cold-water periods they probably range into Mexican waters off northern Baja California. The stock structure of eastern North Pacific Dall's porpoise is not known, but based on patterns of stock differentiation in the western North Pacific, where they have been more intensively studied, it is expected that separate stocks will emerge when data become available (Perrin and Brownell 1994). Although Dall's porpoise are not restricted to U.S. territorial waters, there are no cooperative management agreements with Mexico or Canada for fisheries which may take this species (e.g. gillnet fisheries). For the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) stock assessment reports, Dall's porpoises within the Pacific U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone are divided into two discrete, non-contiguous areas: 1) waters off California, Oregon and Washington (this report), and 2) Alaskan waters.

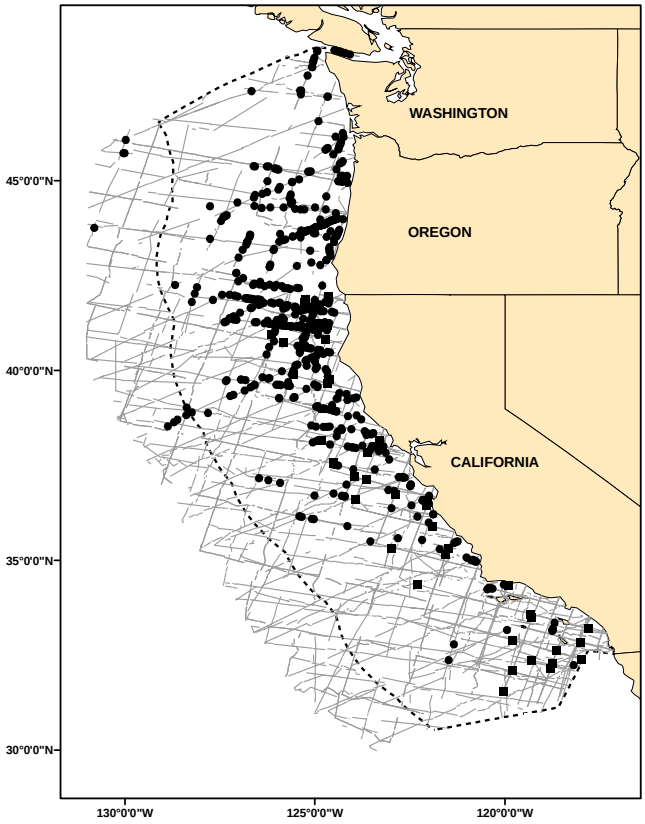

Figure 1. Dall's porpoise sightings based on aerial and shipboard surveys off California, Oregon, and Washington, 1991-2005 (see Appendix 2 for data sources and information on timing and location of survey effort). Dashed line represents the U.S. EEZ, thin lines represent completed transect effort of all surveys combined. Key: ● = summer/autumn ship-based sightings; ■ = winter/spring aerial-based sightings.

POPULATION SIZE

Shipboard surveys are expected to be more reliable for this species than aerial surveys because of the large, unknown fraction of diving animals missed from the air (Forney 1994). Two summer/fall shipboard surveys were conducted within 300 nmi of the coasts of California Oregon and Washington in 2001 (Barlow 2003) and 2005 (Forney 2007). The distribution of Dall's porpoise throughout this region is

highly variable between years and appears to be affected by oceanographic conditions (Forney 1997; Forney and Barlow 1998). Because animals may spend time outside the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone as oceanographic conditions change, a multi-year average abundance estimate is the most appropriate for management within U.S. waters. The geometric mean abundance estimate for California, Oregon and Washington waters based on 2001 and 2005 ship surveys is 57,549 (CV = 0.34) Dall's porpoise (Barlow 2003; Forney 2007). Additional numbers of Dall's porpoise occur in the inland waters of Washington state, but the most recent abundance estimate obtained in 1996 (900 animals, CV = 0.40) is over 8 years old (Calambokidis et al. 1997) and is not included in the overall estimate of abundance for this stock.

Minimum Population Estimate

The log-normal 20th percentile of the 2001-2005 average abundance estimate for the outer coast of California, Oregon and Washington waters is 43,425 Dall's porpoise.

Current Population Trend

No information is available regarding trends in abundance of Dall's porpoise in California, Oregon and Washington. Their distribution and abundance in this region varies considerably at both seasonal and interannual time scales as oceanographic conditions vary (Forney 1997; Forney and Barlow 1998).

CURRENT AND MAXIMUM NET PRODUCTIVITY RATES

No information on current or maximum net productivity rates is available for Dall's porpoise off the U.S. west coast.

POTENTIAL BIOLOGICAL REMOVAL

The potential biological removal (PBR) level for this stock is calculated as the minimum population size (43,425) times one half the default maximum net growth rate for cetaceans (½ of 4%) times a recovery factor of 0.40 (for a species of unknown status and mortality rate CV; Wade and Angliss 1997), resulting in a PBR of 347 Dall's porpoise per year.

HUMAN-CAUSED MORTALITY AND SERIOUS INJURY

Fishery Information

A summary of recent fishery mortality and injury for this stock of Dall's porpoise is given in Table 1. More detailed information on these fisheries is provided in Appendix 1. Mortality estimates for the California drift gillnet fishery are included for the five most recent years of monitoring, 2000-2004 (Carretta and Chivers 2004, Carretta et al. 2005a, 2005b). After the 1997 implementation of a Take Reduction Plan, which included skipper education workshops and required the use of pingers and minimum 6-fathom extenders, overall cetacean entanglement rates in the drift gillnet fishery dropped considerably (Barlow and Cameron 2003). However, because of interannual variability in entanglement rates and the relative rarity of Dall's porpoise entanglements, additional years of data will be required to fully evaluate the effectiveness of pingers for reducing mortality of this particular species. Mean annual takes in Table 1 are based on 2000-2004 data. This results in an average estimate of 1.2 Dall's porpoise taken annually.

Drift gillnet fisheries for swordfish and sharks exist along the entire Pacific coast of Baja California, Mexico and may take animals from this population. Quantitative data are available only for the Mexican swordfish drift gillnet fishery, which uses vessels, gear, and operational procedures similar to those in the U.S. drift gillnet fishery, although nets may be up to 4.5 km long (Holts and Sosa-Nishizaki 1998). The fleet increased from two vessels in 1986 to 31 vessels in 1993 (Holts and Sosa-Nishizaki 1998). The total number of sets in this fishery in 1992 can be estimated from data provided by these authors to be approximately 2700, with an observed rate of marine mammal bycatch of 0.13 animals per set (10 marine mammals in 77 observed sets; Sosa-Nishizaki et al. 1993). This overall mortality rate is similar to that observed in California driftnet fisheries during 1990-95 (0.14 marine mammals per set; Julian and Beeson, 1998), but species-specific information is not available for the Mexican fisheries. Previous efforts to convert the Mexican swordfish driftnet fishery to a longline fishery have resulted in a mixed-fishery, with 20 vessels alternately using longlines or driftnets, 23 using driftnets only, 22 using longlines only, and seven with unknown gear type (Berdegué 2002).

Low levels of mortality for Dall's porpoise have also been documented in the California/Oregon/Washington domestic groundfish trawl fisheries (Perez and Loughlin 1991; Perez 2003). Between 2000 and 2004 with 80%-100% of the fishing effort observed, one Dall's porpoise was reported

killed in the at-sea processing portion of the Pacific whiting trawl fishery. In addition, one Dall's porpoise was reported killed in 2004 under the MMAP self-reporting program. Currently, there are no estimates of Dall's porpoise mortality available from this fishery.

Table 1. Summary of available information on the incidental mortality and injury of Dall's porpoise (California/ Oregon/Washington Stock) in commercial fisheries that might take this species. All observed entanglements of Dall's porpoise resulted in the death of the animal. Coefficients of variation for mortality estimates are provided in parentheses; n/a = not available. Mean annual takes are based on 2000-2004 data unless noted otherwise. MMAP refers to fisher self-reports of incidental takes under the Marine Mammal Authorization Program.

Fishery Name	Data Type	Year(s)	Percent Observer Coverage	Observed Mortality	Estimated Annual Mortality	Mean Annual Takes (CV in parentheses)
CA/OR thresher shark/swordfish drift gillnet fishery	observer data	2000 2001 2002 2003 2004	22.9% 20.4% 22.1% 20.2% 20.6%	0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0	0 (n/a)
WA/OR/CA domestic groundfish trawl	Observer data	2000 2001 2002 2003 2004	80.6% 96.2% 100% 100% 100%	0 0 1 0 0	0 0 1 (0) 0 0	0.2 (n/a)
	MMAP	2004	n/a	1	1	≥1 (n/a)
Puget Sound salmon drift gillnet (tribal fishery, Area 5, Strait of Juan de Fuca)	MMAP	2000-2004	n/a	1	1	≥0.2 (n/a)
Minimum total annual takes						1.4 (n/a)

Other Mortality

Two Dall's porpoise strandings between 2000-2004 showed evidence of a vessel collision as the cause of death. This results in an average annual mortality of 0.4 Dall's porpoise caused by vessel collisions.

STATUS OF STOCK

The status of Dall's porpoise in California, Oregon and Washington relative to OSP is not known, and there are insufficient data to evaluate potential trends in abundance. No habitat issues are known to be of concern for this species. They are not listed as "threatened" or "endangered" under the Endangered Species Act nor as "depleted" under the MMPA. The average annual human-caused mortality in 2000-2004 (fishery mortality + vessel collisions = 1.8 animals) is estimated to be less than the PBR (347), and therefore they are not classified as a "strategic" stock under the MMPA. The total fishery mortality and serious injury for this stock is less than 10% of the calculated PBR and, therefore, can be considered to be insignificant and approaching zero mortality and serious injury rate.

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