Revised 3/15/2022

HARBOR PORPOISE (*Phocoena phocoena*): Northern California/Southern Oregon Stock

STOCK DEFINITION AND GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

In the Pacific, harbor porpoise are found in coastal and inland waters from Point Conception, California to Alaska and across to Kamchatka and Japan (Gaskin 1984). Harbor porpoise appear to have more restricted movements along the western coast of the continental U.S. than along the eastern coast. Regional differences in pollutant residues in harbor porpoise indicate that they do not move extensively between California, Oregon, and Washington (Calambokidis and Barlow 1991). That study also showed regional differences within California (although the sample size was small). This pattern stands as a sharp contrast to the eastern coast of the U.S. and Canada where harbor porpoise are believed to migrate seasonally from as far south as the Carolinas to the Gulf of Maine and Bay of Fundy (Polacheck *et al*. 1995). A phylogeographic analysis of genetic data from northeast Pacific harbor porpoise did not show complete concordance between DNA sequence types and geographic location (Rosel 1992). However, an analysis of molecular variance (AMOVA) of the same data with additional samples found significant genetic differences for four of the six pair-wise comparisons between the four areas investigated: California, Washington, British Columbia, and Alaska (Rosel *et al*. 1995). These results demonstrate that harbor porpoise along the west coast of North America are not panmictic or migratory, and movement is sufficiently restricted that genetic differences have evolved. Subsequent genetic analyses of samples ranging from Morro Bay, California to British Columbia indicate that there is small-scale subdivision within the U.S. portion of this range Chivers *et al.*, 2002, 2007; Morin *et al*., 2021). Six harbor porpoise stocks have been designated off California/Oregon/Washington, based on genetic analyses and density discontinuities identified from aerial surveys. The stock boundaries in waters off California and southern Oregon are shown in Figure 1. For the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) Stock Assessment Reports, Pacific coast harbor porpoise stocks include: 1) the Morro Bay stock (this report) 2) the Monterey Bay stock, 3) the San Francisco-Russian River stock, 4) the northern California/southern Oregon stock, 5) the northern Oregon/Washington coast stock, and 6) the Inland Washington stock. Three additional Alaskan harbor porpoise stocks are reported separately in the Alaska Stock Assessment Reports.

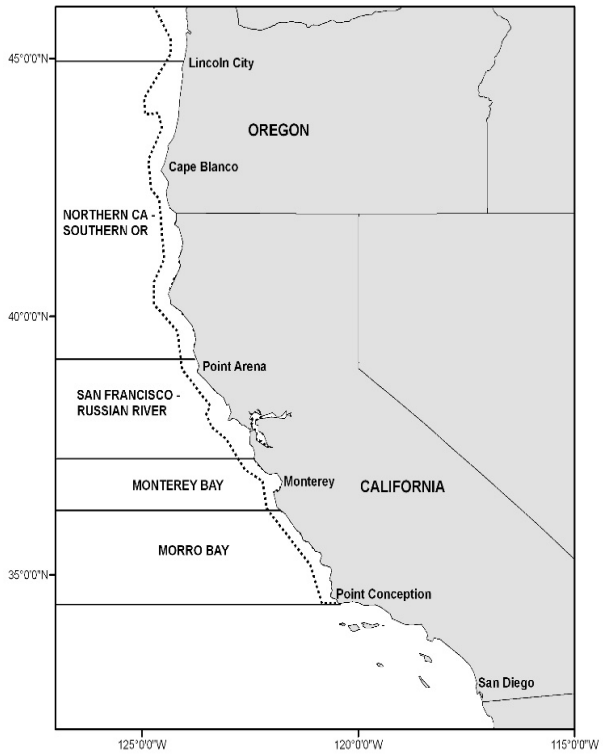

Figure 1. Stock boundaries and distributional range of harbor porpoise along the California and southern Oregon coasts. Dashed line represents harbor porpoise habitat (0-200 m) along the U.S. west coast.

POPULATION SIZE

Previous estimates of abundance for California harbor porpoise were based on aerial surveys conducted between the coast and the 50-fm isobath during 1988-95 (Barlow and Forney 1994, Forney 1999). These estimates did not include an unknown number of animals found in deeper waters. Barlow (1988) found that the vast majority of harbor porpoise in California were within the 0-50-fm depth range; however, Green *et al.* (1992) found that 24% of harbor porpoise seen during aerial surveys of Oregon and Washington were between the 100m and 200m isobaths (55 to 109 fathoms). A systematic ship survey of depth strata out to 90 m in northern California showed that porpoise abundance declined significantly in waters deeper than 60

m (Carretta *et al*. 2001). Since 1999, aerial surveys extended farther offshore (to the 200m depth contour or 15 nmi distance, whichever is farther) to provide a more complete abundance estimate (Forney *et al.* 2014). A recent analysis of long-term trends in the northern California portion of this harbor porpoise stock between 1989 and 2016 (Forney *et al.* 2020) estimated a northern California population size of 12,160 (CV=0.663) porpoises during 2016. These estimates include a correction factor of 3.42 (1/g(0); g(0)=0.292, CV=0.366) (Laake *et al*. 1997), to adjust for groups missed by aerial observers. The most recent estimate available for the entire northern California / southern Oregon stock is the sum of the 2016 California estimate of 12,160 (Forney *et al.* 2020), plus the 2007-2011 southern Oregon estimate of 12,525 (CV = 0.48; Forney *et al.* 2014), totaling 24,685 (CV = 0.41).

Minimum Population Estimate

The minimum population estimate for harbor porpoise in northern California/southern Oregon is taken as the lower 20th percentile of the log-normal distribution of the abundance estimate given above, or 17,713 animals.

Current Population Trend

A hierarchical Bayesian analysis of harbor porpoise trends for the northern California portion of this stock between 1989 and 2016 (Forney *et al.* 2020) suggests largely stable population during this period, although there is considerable uncertainty in the estimates because of limited survey coverage (Figure 2). No trend estimates are available for the entire northern California/southern Oregon range of this stock.

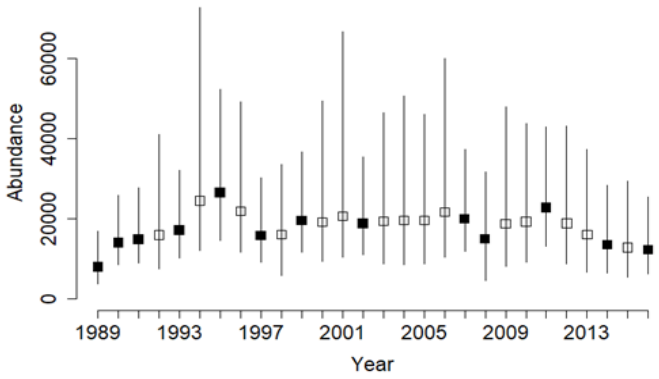

Figure 2. Population trends for the northern California portion of the Northern California / Southern Oregon harbor porpoise stock, 1986-2016 (from Forney *et al.* 2020). Estimates represent median abundance (with 95% credible intervals) for years with survey effort (solid symbols) and without survey effort (open symbols).

CURRENT AND MAXIMUM NET PRODUCTIVITY RATES

Based on what are argued to be biological limits of the species (i.e. females give birth first at age 4 and produce one calf per year until death), the theoretical, maximum-conceivable growth rate of a closed harbor porpoise population was estimated as 9.4% per year based on a human survivorship curve (Barlow and Boveng 1991). This maximum theoretical rate represents maximum survival in a protected environment and may not be achievable for any wild population (Barlow and Boveng 1991). Woodley and Read (1991) calculate a maximum growth rate of approximately 5% per year, but their argument for this being a maximum (i.e. that porpoise survival rates cannot exceed those of Himalayan thar) is not well justified. Because a reliable estimate of the maximum net productivity rate is not available for this harbor porpoise stock, we use the default maximum net productivity rate (R_{MAX}) of 4% for cetaceans (Wade and Angliss 1997).

POTENTIAL BIOLOGICAL REMOVAL

The potential biological removal (PBR) level for this stock is calculated as the minimum population size (17,713) times one half the default maximum net growth rate for cetaceans (½ of 4%) times a recovery factor of 1.0 (for a species within its Optimal Sustainable Population; see Status of Stock section; Wade and Angliss 1997), resulting in a PBR of 354.

HUMAN-CAUSED MORTALITY

Fishery Information

There were no harbor porpoise strandings in this stock's range with evidence of fishery interactions during 2015-2019 (Carretta *et al.* 2021).

Table 1. Summary of available information on incidental mortality and injury of harbor porpoise (northern California/southern Oregon stock) in commercial fisheries that might take this species during 2015-2019 (Carretta *et al.* 2021). n/a indicates that data are not available.

Fishery Name	Year(s)	Data Type	Percent Observer Coverage	Observed Mortality	Kill/Day	Estimated Mortality (CV in parentheses)	Mean Annual Takes (CV in parentheses)
Unknown fishery	2015-2019	Stranding	n/a	none	n/a	n/a	0 (n/a)
	Minimum total annual takes						0 (n/a)

STATUS OF STOCK

Harbor porpoise in northern California/southern Oregon are not listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act nor as depleted under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The northern California portion of this harbor porpoise stock was determined to be within their Optimum Sustainable Population (OSP) level in the mid-1990s (Barlow and Forney 1994), based on a lack of significant anthropogenic mortality. Because the known human-caused mortality or serious injury (zero harbor porpoise per year) is less than the PBR (354), this stock is not considered a "strategic" stock under the MMPA, and fishery mortality can be considered insignificant and approaching zero mortality and serious injury rate. Harbor porpoises are sensitive to disturbance by a variety of anthropogenic sound sources, and the limited range of several U.S. West Coast harbor porpoise stocks makes them particularly vulnerable to potential impacts (see overview in Forney *et al*. 2017). A recent habitat concern along the U.S. West coast includes the use of acoustic deterrent devices ('seal bombs') that are used in commercial fishing activities off California (Simonis *et al*. 2020), especially in the Monterey Bay region.

REFERENCES

Barlow, J. 1988. Harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) abundance estimation in California, Oregon and Washington: I. Ship surveys. Fish. Bull. 86:417-432.

Barlow, J. and P. Boveng. 1991. Modeling age-specific mortality for marine mammal populations. Mar. Mamm. Sci. 7(1):84-119.

Barlow, J. and K. A. Forney. 1994. An assessment of the 1994 status of harbor porpoise in California. U.S. Dep. Commer., NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-SWFSC-205. 17 pp.

Barlow, J. and D. Hanan. 1995. An assessment of the status of harbor porpoise in central California. Rept. Int. Whal., Special Issue 16:123-140.

Calambokidis, J. and J. Barlow. 1991. Chlorinated hydrocarbon concentrations and their use for describing population discreteness in harbor porpoises from Washington, Oregon, and California. pp. 101-110 In: J. E. Reynolds III and D. K. Odell (eds.) Marine mammal strandings in the United States. NOAA Tech. Rep. NMFS 98.

Carretta, J.V., B.L. Taylor, and S.J. Chivers. 2001. Abundance and depth distribution of harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) in northern California determined from a 1995 ship survey. U.S. Fishery Bulletin 99:29-39.

Carretta, J.V., J. Greenman, K. Wilkinson, J. Freed, L. Saez, D. Lawson, J. Viezbicke, and J. Jannot. 2021. Sources of human-related injury and mortality for U.S. Pacific West Coast Marine Mammal Stock Assessments, 2015-2019. NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-SWFSC-643. 157 pp.

Chivers, S.J., A.E. Dizon, P.J. Gearin, and K.M. Robertson. 2002. Small-scale population structure of eastern North Pacific harbour porpoises, (Phocoena phocoena), indicated by molecular genetic analyses. Journal of Cetacean Research and Management 4(2):111-122.

Chivers, S.J., B. Hanson, J. Laake, P. Gearin, M.M. Muto, J. Calambokidis, D. Duffield, T. McGuire, J. Hodder, D. Greig, E. Wheeler, J. Harvey, K.M. Robertson, and B. Hancock. 2007. Additional genetic evidence for population structure of *Phocoena phocoena* off the coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington. Southwest Fisheries Science Center Administrative Report LJ-07-08. 16pp.

Forney, K. A. 1999. The abundance of California harbor porpoise estimated from 1993-97 aerial line-transect surveys. Admin. Rep. LJ-99-02. Southwest Fisheries Center, National Marine Fisheries Service, P.O. Box 271, La Jolla, CA 92038. 16 pp.

Forney K.A., J.V. Carretta, S.R. Benson. 2014. Preliminary estimates of harbor porpoise abundance in Pacific Coast waters of California, Oregon and Washington, 2007-2012. U.S. Dep. Commer., NOAA Tech Memo NMFS-SWFSC-537. 21 p.

Forney, K.A., Southall, B.L., Slooten, E., Dawson, S., Read, A.J., Baird, R.W. and Brownell Jr, R.L., 2017. Nowhere to go: noise impact assessments for marine mammal populations with high site fidelity. Endangered species research, 32, pp. 391-413.

Forney, K.A., J.E. Moore, J. Barlow, J.V. Carretta and S.R. Benson. 2020. A multi-decadal Bayesian trend analysis of harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) populations off California relative to past fishery bycatch. Marine Mammal Science 2020; 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1111/mms.12764.

Gaskin, D. E. 1984. The harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena* L.): regional populations, status, and information on direct and indirect catches. Rep. int. Whal. Commn 34:569_586.

Green, G. A., J. J. Brueggeman, R. A. Grotefendt, C. E. Bowlby, M. L. Bonnell, and K. C. Balcomb, III. 1992. Cetacean distribution and abundance off Oregon and Washington, 1989-1990. Ch. 1 In: J. J. Brueggeman (ed.). Oregon and Washington Marine Mammal and Seabird Surveys. Minerals Management Service Contract Report 14-12-0001-30426 prepared for the Pacific OCS Region.

Laake, J. L., J. C. Calambokidis, S. D. Osmek, and D. J. Rugh. 1997. Probability of detecting harbor porpoise from aerial surveys: estimating g(0). J. Wildl. Manag. 61:63-75.

Morin P.A., B.R. Forester, K.A. Forney, C.A. Crossman, B. Hancock-Hanser, K.M. Robertson, L.G. Barrett-Lennard, R.W. Baird, J. Calambokidis, P. Gearin, M.B. Hanson, C. Schumacher, T. Harkins, M. Fontaine, B.L Taylor, and K. Parsons. 2021. Population structure in a continuously distributed coastal marine species, the harbor porpoise, based on microhaplotypes derived from poor quality samples. Molecular Ecology. https://doi.org/10.1111/mec.15827

Polacheck, T., F. W. Wenzel, and G. Early. 1995. What do stranding data say about harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*). Rep. Int. Whal. Comm., Special Issue 16:169-179.

Rosel, P. E. 1992. Genetic population structure and systematic relationships of some small cetaceans inferred from mitochondrial DNA sequence variation. Ph.D. Dissertation, Univ. Calif. San Diego. 191pp.

Rosel, P. E., A. E. Dizon, and M. G. Haygood. 1995. Variability of the mitochondrial control region in populations of the harbour porpoise, Phocoena phocoena, on inter-oceanic and regional scales. Can. J. Fish. and Aquat. Sci. 52:1210-1219.

Simonis, A.E., Forney, K.A., Rankin, S., Ryan, J., Zhang, Y., DeVogelaere, A., Joseph, J., Margolina, T., Krumpel, A. and Baumann-Pickering, S., 2020. Seal Bomb Noise as a Potential Threat to Monterey Bay Harbor Porpoise. Frontiers in Marine Science, 7, p.142

Wade, P. R. and R. P. Angliss. 1997. Guidelines for Assessing Marine Mammal Stocks: Report of the GAMMS Workshop April 3-5, 1996, Seattle, Washington. U. S. Dep. Commer., NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-OPR-12. 93 pp.

Woodley, T. H. and A. J. Read. 1991. Potential rates of increase of a harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) population subjected to incidental mortality in commercial fisheries. Can. J. Fish. Aquat. Sci. 48:2429-2435.