Reducing risk of whale entanglements in the Oregon Dungeness crab fishery

Whale Entanglement Science Workshop

Management Panel

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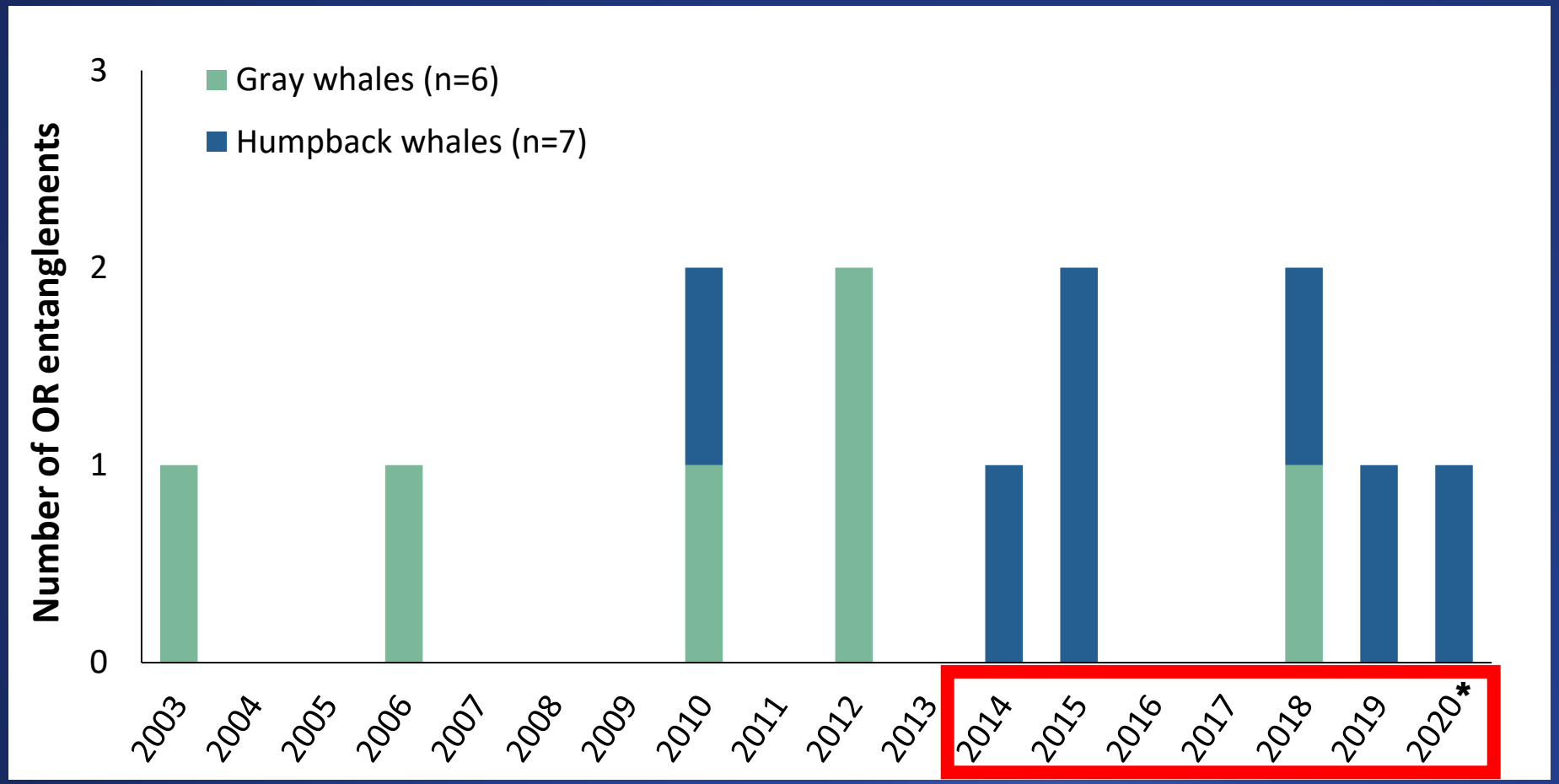
Crab gear whale entanglements (Oregon fishery)



** Data for 2020 are incomplete*

- 13 confirmed entanglements in Oregon commercial Dungeness crab gear (2003-present)
- Majority of recent entanglements are humpback whales
- Observations of entangled Oregon gear from Mexico-Washington

General Approach & Timeline

Oregon Vision: Aligned management & conservation goals allow co-existence of an economically viable commercial Dungeness crab fishery and whales

General Approach & Timeline

1. Research & monitoring
   - Co-occurrence of whales & gear (mapping & modeling) (2010-present)
2. Education & Awareness (2015-present)
3. State regulations (ocean commercial)
   - Fishery limitation & biotoxins (1984-2019) – season, LE permits, pot tiers
   - Phase I: Accountability (Sept 2019)
   - Phase II: Entanglement risk reduction (Sept 2020)
4. Federal authorization
   - Conservation Plan packages up state regs, adds adaptation measures (2021)

Phase II: Reduce risk ***proposed*** regs (9/2020)

- Primary measures:
  - Reduce pot limits May 1 by 20%; gear excluded outside 30 fathoms; season tag. (Package has 3-year sunset, 2023)
- Additional measures:
  - Elimination of replacement tags
  - Elimination of 2-week gear clean-up period (post-season)*
  - Taut line provisions*
  - Reduction of meat yield criteria
  - Prohibit gear markings from other states

** currently a temporary rule; the Sept action will consider making this permanent*

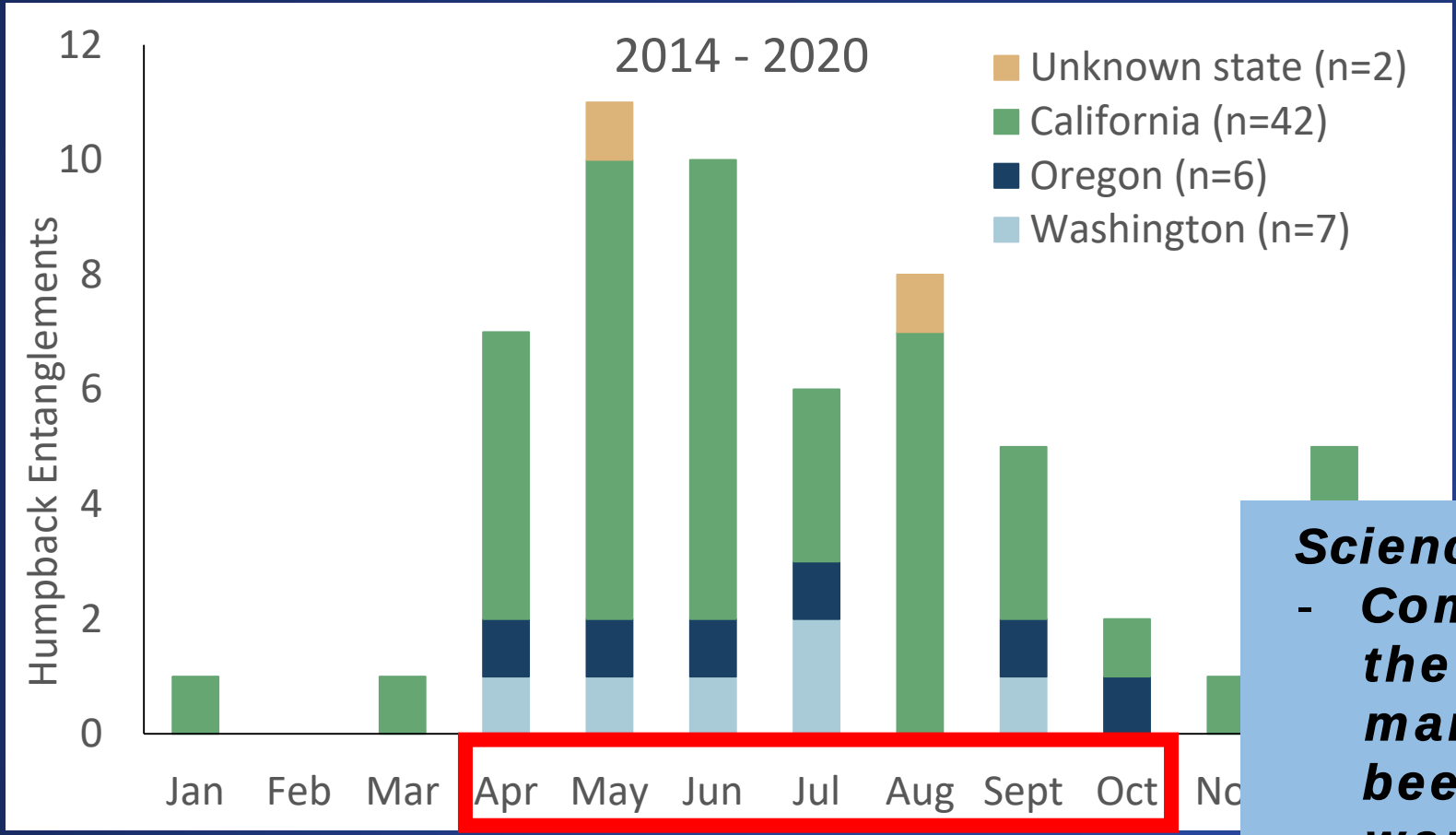
Risk reduction alternatives

Minimize change to fishery						
Status quo	10%	15%	20%	25%	30%	Closure
	June 1	May 15	May 1	April 15	April 1	
	40 fa	35 fa	30 fa	25 fa	20 fa	
Maximize conservation benefit to whales						

Science needs:

- ***Whale distribution by depth, by month, by DPS***
- ***Effective, affordable gear modifications***

Risk reduction uncertainty



- Seasonality
- Depth distribution
- Autonomous monitoring of whales (to detect/predict changes)

Science needs:

- ***Compelling information that the problem persists and that management measures have been and will be effective (to warrant costs to industry)***

Industry / public / academic / peer engagement

Oregon Advisors:

- Oregon Whale Entanglement Working Group (OWEWG)
- Augmented Oregon Dungeness Crab Advisory Committee (ODCAC)
- Ad hoc whale biology/ecology advisory group

Oregon crab fleet and public outreach:

- Public Meetings – 2018 and 2019
- Industry Notices
- Annual Crab Newsletters
- OFWC Briefings & Exhibits – June, Sept 2019; Aug (today), Sept 2020

Regional:

- Tri-State Dungeness Crab Committee
- CA/WA Working Groups
- Forensics workshop, PSMFC, Entanglement Science Workshop, etc.


Oregon Commercial Dungeness Crab Fishing

Directive to Minimize Whale Entanglement Risk

Last Updated Fall 2018

Recommended by the Oregon Whale Entanglement Working Group

NOAAMMHSRP A 18786

Reasons for Directives

National Marine Fisheries Service has confirmed significant increases in large whale entanglements starting in 2014, and specifically in Dungeness crab fishing gear. This situation threatens the stability of the fishery and coastal fishing communities. By using these voluntary best practices, the Oregon Dungeness crab fleet can take an important step towards reducing the risk of whale entanglements.

The best knows way to reduce risk of whale entanglement is to reduce the amount of gear and line in the water during the spring and summer months, when threatened whales are in the area.

Best Practices During Crab Season

- Use the minimum amount of scope required to compensate for tides, currents and weather. Whales are more likely to become entangled with slack lines, which can potentially create a "floating snare".
- When changing set location across depths, adjust the length of pot lines by adjusting shots (i.e., measured length of line) to maintain taut vertical lines.
- No excess lines should be floating at the surface. Floating line should only be between the main buoy and trailer buoy(s).
- Remove any fishing gear you are not actively tending during the season.
- Avoid setting gear in the vicinity of large feeding aggregations of whales, especially humpback whales, whenever possible.
- Communicate the locations of unusually high whale activity to other fishermen.

Keep line between pot and main buoy running taut and as vertical as possible.

Why Report?

Understanding where, when, and how entanglements occur is essential to prevent future entanglements. Timely reporting is critical to facilitate response efforts, when appropriate.

Report Entangled Whales

1-877-SOS-WHALe

Report entangled whales IMMEDIATELY to the NMFS whale entanglement response hotline at 1-877-SOS-WHALe (1-877-767-9425) or hail the U.S. Coast Guard on Channel 16. If possible, stand by.

Photograph Entangled Whales

WHALE: side view of dorsal fin (or hump); tail flukes (especially if underside is raised); head; any part of the body where gear may be present.

ENTANGLEMENT: buoy(s); tags; lines on the body; trailing lines (including distance from whale); netting (if present); any other gear if present. *Do not approach within 100 yards.*

Respond Promptly if Contacted

If you are contacted about a whale entangled in your gear, please respond. You can help prevent future entanglements by providing as much information as possible about your fishing gear and practices.