

Whale Entanglements in the Oregon Dungeness Crab Fishery

Petition for Rulemaking



“To date, in 2025, four confirmed humpback whale entanglements have been reported involving gear attributed by NMFS to the Oregon commercial crab fishery.”

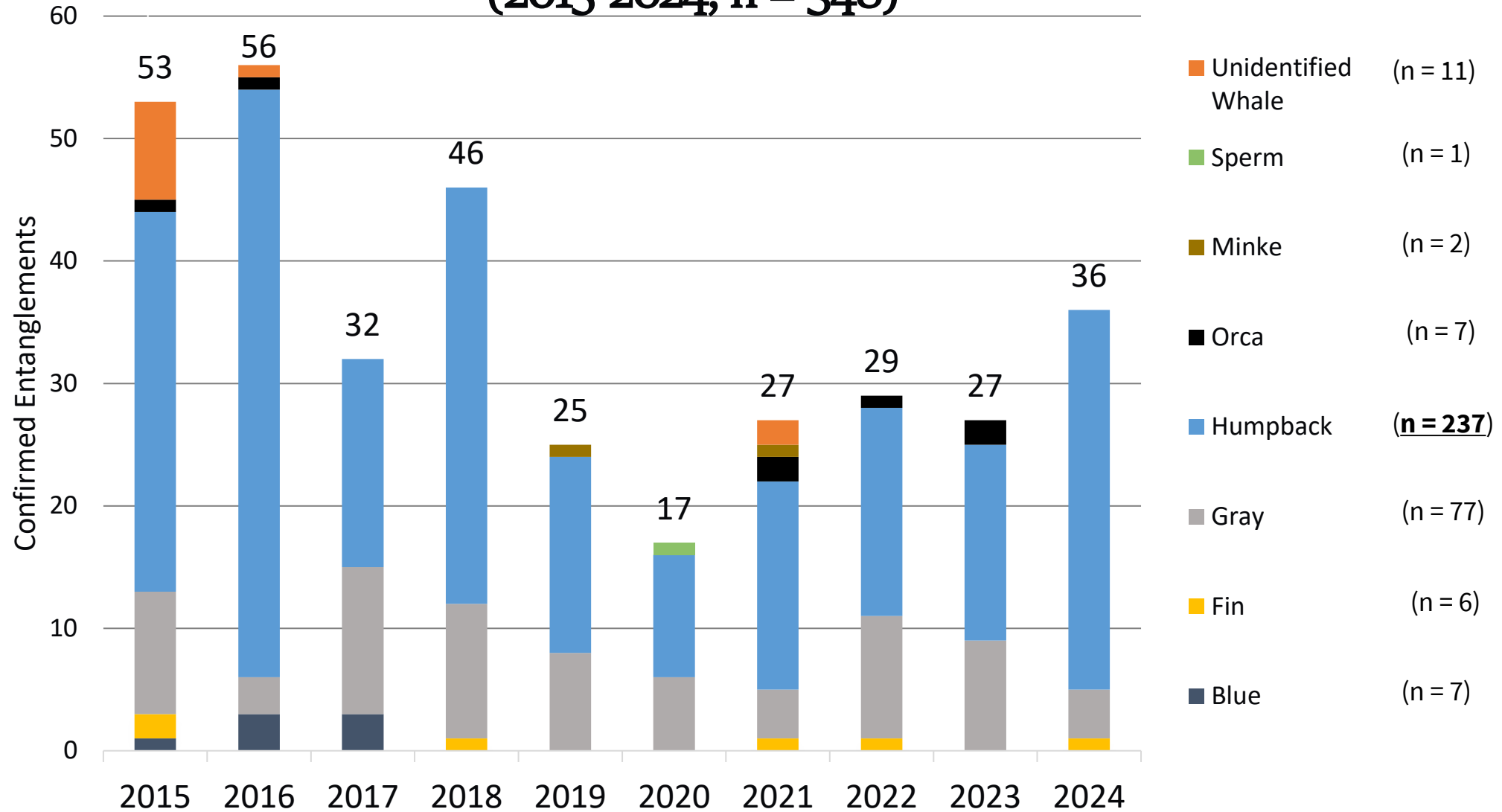
[ODFW December 2025 Commercial Fishing Fleet Advisory](#)



Ben Enticknap
December 12, 2025

Photo: NOAA/ West Coast Marine Mammal Stranding Network

U.S. West Coast Confirmed Large Whale Entanglements (2015-2024, n = 348)



Data from NOAA Fisheries, West Coast Entanglement Program

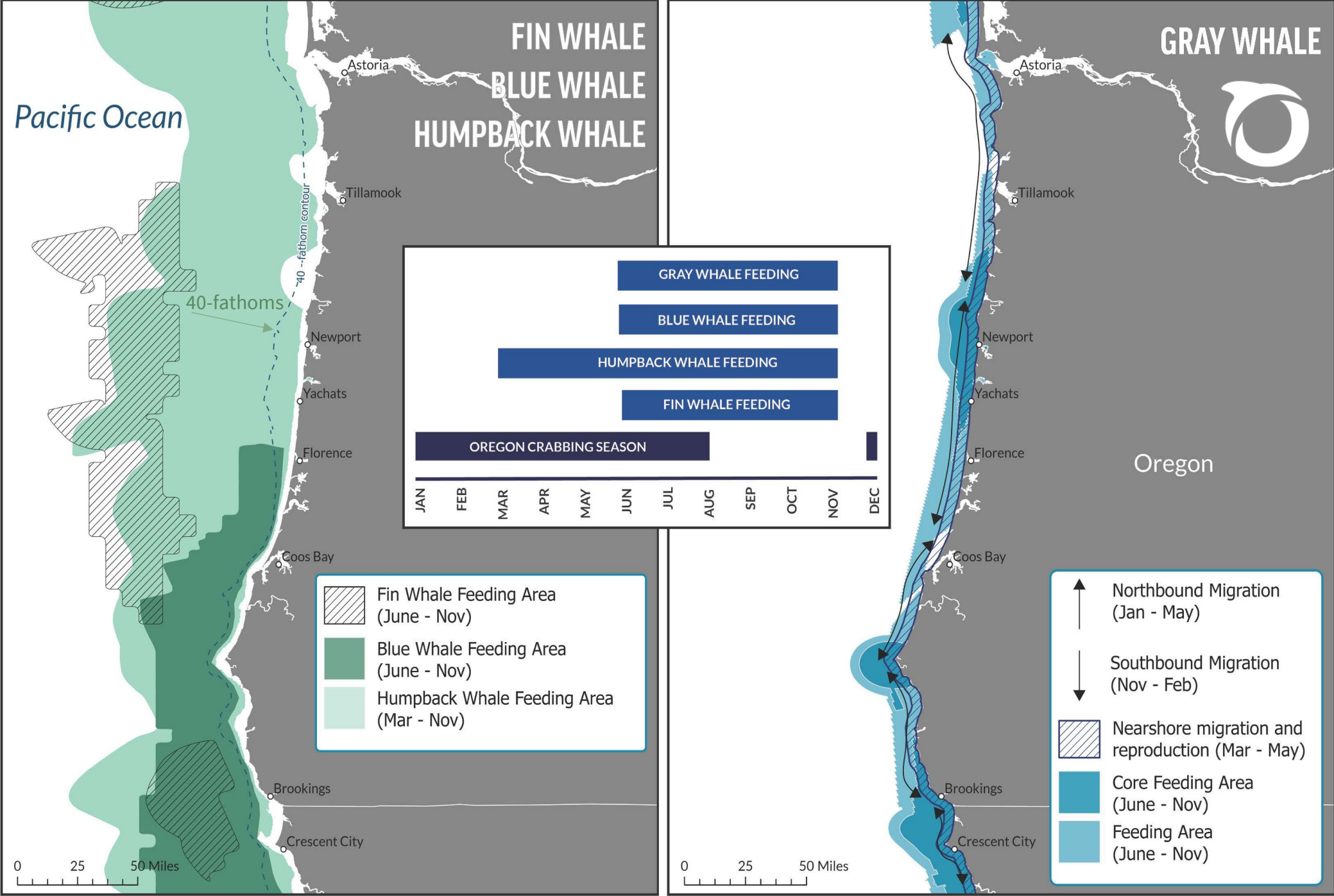
Petition Elements

- Strengthen Oregon's existing entanglement risk reduction measures
- Prohibit the use of conventional pot gear starting on April 1 each year, effective in 2028
- Approve the use of pop-up gear that meet criteria for being detectable, retrievable, and identifiable
- Require the Department to publicly report entanglements in Oregon gear
- Establish emergency closures for conventional pot gear in the event of *unauthorized* ESA-listed species takes

Petitioners: American Cetacean Society, Center for Biological Diversity, Natural Resource Defense Council, Oceana

Biologically Important Areas for Whales

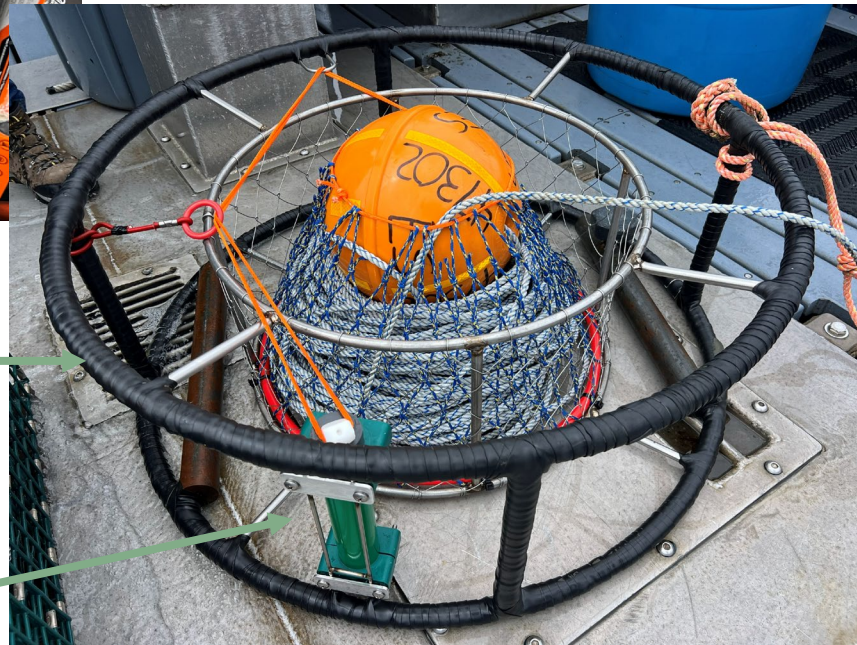
Map, Oceana. Data from: Calambokidis et al (2024) Biologically Important Areas II for cetaceans within U.S. and adjacent waters - West Coast Region. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 11:1283231. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2024.1283231



Pop-Up Gear



Deck box: used to send acoustic signal to release mechanism on seafloor



'Sled' stores rope and hard buoy on seafloor

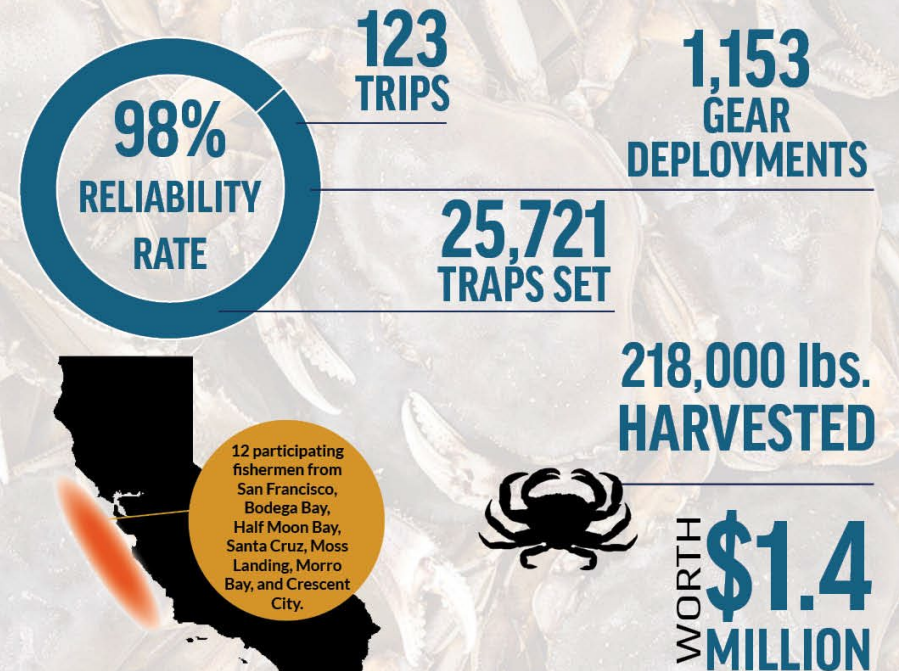
Release mechanism rotates when signaled to release buoy and rope

Manufactured by: Subsea Sonics and Guardian Ropeless Systems

WHALE SAFE CRAB - 2025 TRIALS

SUCCESSFUL TESTING SHOWS POP-UP GEAR IS READY FOR SPRINGTIME APPROVAL

In spring 2025, California commercial Dungeness crab fishermen conducted the third consecutive year of pop-up fishing gear trials of gear designed and built by Sub Sea Sonics and Guardian Ropeless Systems. These trials occurred in areas that were closed to conventional Dungeness crab fishing gear due to the risk of entangling threatened and endangered whales and therefore at a time when crab fishermen would otherwise not have been able to fish. This year, the California Fish and Game Commission approved fishermen to use their full allotment of traps and connect up to 50 traps per string. Consistent with previous years, this is the most successful demonstration of pop-up gear on the U.S. West Coast, and one of the largest trials in the world. These results support the authorization of pop-up gear in the spring off the California Coast. Here are some highlights.



*Testing conducted using gear and training from Sub Sea Sonics, Guardian Ropeless Systems and Sustainable Seas Technology under EFPT2-001