

Whale Entanglements: ODFW issues fleet advisory

August 17, 2023



During recent surveys researchers observed aggregations of both blue and humpback, in addition to other large whales in waters as shallow as 20 fathoms (36 m).

These sightings were primarily in waters off the southern Oregon Coast from Charleston to Gold Beach. However, because these observations only provide information within a small survey area and time span be aware that whale aggregations may exist in un-surveyed areas and may shift over short periods of time.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is issuing this fleet advisory for both recreational and commercial fixed-gear fisheries from Charleston south to Gold Beach. Fishing vessels should remain vigilant and move or avoid setting gear in areas where whales are transiting or foraging to minimize risk of entanglement as much as possible. This advisory is effective immediately and will remain in effect through Sept. 1, 2023.

We want to remind fishery participants about best fixed-gear fishing practices to help reduce risk of entanglements at all times, but especially when higher numbers of ESA-listed humpback whales and blue whales are present off Oregon.

Please remember to:

- Remove any fishing gear that you are not actively tending and promptly remove all gear from the ocean when finished fishing.
- Use the minimum amount of scope required to compensate for tides, currents, and weather.
- Adjust the length of buoy lines when moving gear to shallower water to maintain taut vertical lines.
- Minimize surface gear and ensure no excess line is floating at the surface.
- Avoid setting gear in the vicinity of large feeding aggregations of whales.
- Maintain gear to ensure lines and buoys are in good working condition and clearly marked.
- Report any derelict gear to ODFW by emailing Joel.A.Prickett@odfw.oregon.gov.
- If commercially licensed:
 - o Bring in derelict gear to shore;
 - o Participate in derelict gear recovery by getting a permit to recover gear or reporting locations of derelict gear for permitted vessels to target for removal.

Please share this advisory and reminders about fixed-gear fishing best practices to reduce risk of marine life entanglements with your networks. Also, consider reporting whale sightings using the WhaleAlert app and sharing the locations of unusually high whale or sea turtle activity with ODFW and with other fishermen.

All entangled marine mammals or sea turtles should be promptly reported by calling 1-877-SOS-WHAlE (1-877-767-9425).

Thank you for taking these important, proactive steps to avoid entanglements with fishing gear.

Contacts for more information: Kelly Corbett 541-270-5083 or Kelly.C.Corbett@odfw.oregon.gov Troy Buell 541-961-8135 or Troy.V.Buell@odfw.oregon.gov