



Non-lethal options for mitigating catch depredation by toothed whales from pelagic longlines

Update #5 – July 2010: Kobe II By-catch Workshop

- Find this and other related documents at: <http://www.marinemammals.gov.au/regional-initiatives/depredation-project>
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5.1 *Background to By-catch Workshop*

The Kobe II By-catch Workshop, co-hosted by the United States and the Pacific Islands Fisheries Forum Agency (FFA), was recently held in Brisbane (Australia) between 23 and 25 June 2010. It was the fourth gathering of joint Tuna Regional Fishery Management Organisations (T-RFMOs) and other member state representatives. The main objective of the joint T-RFMOs is to address and mitigate by-catch of the five major taxa involved – whales, turtles, sharks, sea birds and other finfish species. The first meeting took place in the Japanese city of Kobe in 2005 and the name is now synonymous with tackling the important issue in tuna fisheries. Two international meetings and two international workshops have now been held, with the next meeting to be held in the United States in 2011.

5.2 *Benefits of attending*

Attendance of the most recent Workshop in Brisbane benefited this project for four main reasons. Firstly, the numerous presentations and representations given during the first two days provided a broad array of opinions and information on the topic, all of which confirmed that the issue of by-catch is a global problem facing tuna fisheries, including the pelagic longline industry. Secondly, it became apparent that the project managed by the Australian Marine Mammal Centre (AMMC) is the only one of its kind that focuses on the principal of physical deterrence and one of the only funded projects specifically aimed at mitigating marine mammal by-catch in fishing gear. Thirdly, a presentation given by Barry Baker (an environmental consultant from Tasmania) during the first day of the Workshop extensively outline this project and a related global review paper recently presented to the IWC Scientific Committee (first author Derek Hamer; PDF can be found on the project website). Fourthly, it provided a good opportunity to establish and reaffirm relationships with researchers with expertise in the fields of cetacean biology and ecology and interactions with fisheries.

5.3 *Progress and criticisms*

The joint T-RFMO by-catch reduction process has received criticism from some non-government conservatorium organisations (NGOs), who state that (i) members nations continue to disagree on fundamental terminology and definitions (such as: what is by-catch?), (ii) there is a limited understanding of the importance of data integrity and independence among members, (iii) the process (i.e. large annual gatherings) is laborious and slow, with little activity in between and (iv) the process is misguided, because it focuses on documenting by-catch rather than mitigating it.

Despite these criticisms, it was agreed that a technical working group comprised of experts in the field should be formed, to facilitate the development of monitoring programs, plus identify mitigation strategies and facilitate related research for all taxa that become by-catch in tuna fisheries, which include: marine mammals, turtles, sea birds, sharks and non-target finfish.