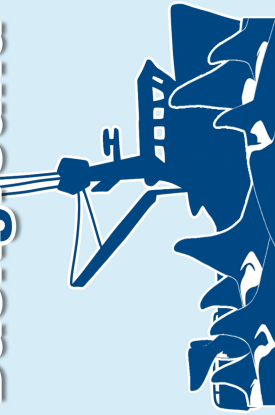


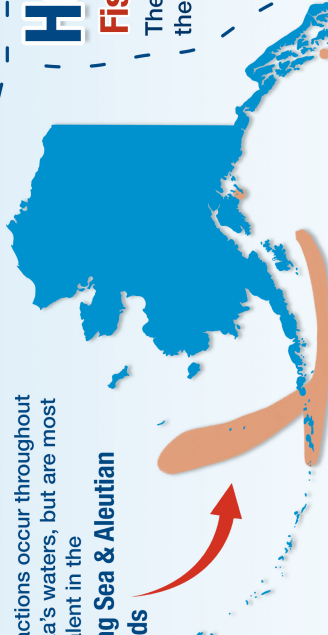
Understanding Killer Whales & Alaska's Fisheries

Background



Killer whales have been interacting with Alaska's fisheries since at least the **1960s**

Interactions occur throughout Alaska's waters, but are most prevalent in the **Bering Sea & Aleutian Islands**



Types of Interactions



Feeding on discards: feeding on lost or discarded catch

Depredation: removal of catch from fishing gear

Secondary foraging: feeding on non-target species attracted by fishing activity

Killer whales interact with commercial fisheries **all around the world**, particularly at high latitudes.



Fishing activity provides killer whales with opportunities to forage at a **low energetic cost**.



Not all interactions result in death or injury, though whales can be at risk of bycatch, entanglement, and vessel strikes.



Interactions with fisheries can result in **changed behavior** and may have broader ecosystem consequences.



Killer Whale Subspecies

Resident Killer Whale

(*Orcinus orca ater*)

Feeds exclusively on fish, no evidence of mammal predation

HIGHER level of interaction with fisheries

Depredate sablefish and flatfish from longlines and sometimes slinky pots



Feed on discards from trawlers and some pot fisheries

Bigg's Killer Whale

(*Orcinus orca recipinnus*)

Feeds exclusively on marine mammals, no evidence of fish predation

LOWER level of interaction with fisheries

Bigg's killer engage in **secondary foraging** around trawlers, likely seeking seals or sea lions that associate with the fisheries



How Are Interactions Being Addressed?

Fishery interactions with killer whales require management and monitoring

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and the fishing industry work together to manage and monitor interactions between killer whales and fisheries.



Protecting Catch

Pot gear protects sablefish catches from depredating killer whales. The use of pots in Alaska's sablefish fisheries in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska was approved by the NPFMC and NMFS in 2008/2017.



Minimizing Foraging Opportunities

Limiting discards, when possible, in the presence of killer whales reduces the incentive to scavenge around trawl vessels.



Gear Modifications

Gear modifications are being tested and implemented by the Amendment 80 trawl fleet to prevent the bycatch of killer whales.



Research & Monitoring

Research efforts are aimed at understanding killer whale behavior around fishing vessels in Alaska. Additionally, fishery observers monitor and document killer whale interactions and takes.

