

## Marine Mammal Authorization Program (MMAP)

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The Marine Mammal Authorization Program (MMAP) allows commercial fishers to lawfully "[incidentally take](#)" a marine mammal in a commercial fishery.

### FAQs

1. **Do I need an authorization?**

Any owner of a commercial vessel or non-vessel gear engaging in a **Category I or II fishery** must obtain a marine mammal authorization from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), or its designated agent, in order to lawfully incidentally take a marine mammal in a commercial fishery.

2. **How do I know if I am in a category I or II fishery?**

The MMPA requires all commercial fisheries to be placed in one of three categories, based on the relative frequency of incidental serious injuries and mortalities of marine mammals in the fishery:

- **Category I** designates fisheries with **frequent** serious injuries and mortalities incidental to commercial fishing;
- **Category II** designates fisheries with **occasional** serious injuries and mortalities;
- **Category III** designates fisheries with a **remote** likelihood or no known serious injuries or mortalities.

NMFS reviews and revises annually its list of Category I, II, and III fisheries. Consequently, the requirement to register with NMFS may change from one year to the next. Changes to the [list of fisheries](#) are published annually in the *Federal Register* and on this website.

3. **How do I obtain a marine mammal authorization?**

If you have a state and/or Federal fishery license for your commercial fishery, you are not required to submit an MMAP registration/renewal form or the \$25 processing fee in order to receive or renew your Authorization Certificates.

If you do not have a state or Federal fishery license, you should [contact your regional NMFS office](#).

For more information, please see the [Northeast Region MMAP website](#) or the [Southeast Region MMAP website](#).

NMFS' goals for the integrated registration program include:

- ensuring consistency in registration procedures across a greater number of fisheries
- increasing the number of registrants to better reflect the level of participation in the fisheries
- conducting outreach to the fishing industry with regard to MMPA requirements
- reducing the registration burden on the fishing industry

- facilitating the protection and conservation of marine mammals through increased outreach efforts

4. **How do I report a mortality/injury of a marine mammal incurred during the course of fishing operations?**

Complete the [MMAP mortality/injury reporting form](#) [pdf].

All vessel owners or operators, regardless of the category of fishery they participate in, **must** report all incidental injuries and mortalities of marine mammals that have occurred as a result of commercial fishing operations. Reports must be sent to NMFS, by mail or fax (301-713-4060 or 301-713-0376), **within 48 hours** of the end of a fishing trip in which the serious injury or mortality occurred, or, for non-vessel fisheries, within 48 hours of the occurrence.

Failure to report all incidental injuries and mortalities within 48 hours of the end of each fishing trip (or within 48 hours of an occurrence of an incidental injury or mortality in a non-vessel fishery) will subject such persons to **suspension, revocation, or denial** of a marine mammal authorization.

NMFS provides postage-paid reporting forms to all Category I and II vessel owners and also provides major ports and marinas with a supply of postage-paid reporting forms.

5. **How do I know if I've injured a marine mammal?**

NMFS has defined a marine mammal injury as a wound or other physical harm. Signs of injury may include, but are not limited to:

- bleeding
- gear ingestion
- loss of or damage to an appendage or jaw
- inability to use one or more appendages
- asymmetry in the shape of the body or body position
- any swelling or hemorrhage (bruising)
- laceration (deep cut)
- puncture or rupture of eyeball
- listlessness or inability to defend itself
- inability to swim or dive after release from fishing gear
- signs of equilibrium imbalance
- released trailing gear/gear perforating body

6. **Can I deter marine mammals from fishing gear and catch?**

While you are strictly prohibited from intentionally lethally taking marine mammals in the course of commercial fishing operations, intentional lethal take is authorized if imminently necessary in self-defense or to save the life of another person. If a marine mammal is killed in self-defense or to save the life of another person, a report **must** be filed with NMFS within **48 hours** of the end of the fishing trip or, for non-vessel fisheries, within 48 hours of the mortality.

7. **Which fisheries carry observers?**

NMFS places observers on any Category I or II vessel. The observer programs help us:

- obtain reliable estimates of incidental serious injury and mortality of marine mammals
- determine the reliability of reports submitted by vessel owners and operators

- identify changes in fishing methods or technology that may increase or decrease incidental serious injury or mortality.

Fishing industry representatives will be notified and public meetings will be held whenever possible to provide advance notification to a fishery that observers will be required. Vessels that are notified of their requirement to carry an observer **must** comply with regulations regarding:

- advance notification of anticipated fishing activity,
- cooperation with the observer in the performance of the observer's duties, and
- when feasible, the collection and retention of marine mammals incidentally killed.

Vessel owners may wish to consider liability insurance to protect themselves if an accident occurs and an observer is ill, disabled, injured, or killed in the course of service.

## Contacts

For more information on the MMAP, or to obtain hardcopies of marine mammal authorization or reporting form, please see <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/interactions/mmap/> or contact your nearest NMFS office:

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