

PROCESSING FALSE KILLER WHALE INTERACTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TRP AND ESTIMATED TIMELINE

This protocol and timeline begin when an observer returns from a trip and arrives back at PIRO for debriefing. The length of time between the observed interaction and the beginning of the debriefing will vary, depending on factors such as the length of the fishing trip and when the interaction occurs relative to the start of the trip.

All timeframes described below are estimates or targets. We will work at each step to accomplish the tasks in the targeted amount of time or faster, but the actual amount of time needed to complete each step may vary.

1. Observer Program

- Debrief
 - o Prioritize debriefing of deep-set trips with marine mammal interactions
 - o Confirm species identification - use internal or outside mammal identification experts if necessary
 - o Once the species is identified (or determined to be unidentified), the Observer Program will determine which “track” to follow:
 - FAST TRACK - interactions that *might* count toward the Southern Exclusion Zone (SEZ) trigger, which include deep-set interactions inside the EEZ with: a) false killer whales, with and without biopsy; b) blackfish with biopsy; and c) other species, with biopsy, that could be confused with false killer whale (e.g., Risso’s dolphin, short-finned pilot whale, pygmy killer whale)
 - Observer Program approves the data associated with the marine mammal interaction (this step includes three required data editing stages)
 - If there is a biopsy sample, Observer Program emails SWFSC to alert them of the rush sample, and sends the sample to SWFSC for processing
 - Observer Program provides approved data forms to the Injury Determination staff (PIFSC, SWFSC, SEFSC)
 - Timeline for data approval and transmittal to Injury Determination staff: **target of 5 business days** from when the observer begins debriefing
 - INTERMEDIATE AND “OTHER” TRACK – interactions that would not count against the SEZ trigger. *Intermediate* track includes those interactions that will inform TRT discussions and evaluation of TRP performance (all false killer whales and blackfish not identified as fast track, including those by the deep-set fishery outside of the EEZ and those taken anywhere by the shallow-set fishery). “*Other*” track includes all other marine mammal interactions.
 - Normal (not expedited) data processing and approval

2. Injury Determination – Science Centers, PIRO, and SRG

- FAST TRACK (for interactions identified as fast track by Observer Program)
 - o Injury Determination staff conduct independent evaluation of the interaction [**target: 5 business days**]

- Injury Determination staff discuss their evaluations and attempt to reconcile any differences. PIFSC staff member sends joint preliminary determination and summary materials to PIRO and PSRG [**target: 5 business days**]
- PSRG and PIRO review the interaction and preliminary injury determination concurrently within a **target of 5 business days**.
- Injury Determination staff consider PSRG and PIRO input, and make and document a final injury determination within a **target of 5 business days**. PIFSC transmits the determination and documentation to PIRO for use in SEZ implementation, as appropriate.
- INTERMEDIATE TRACK
 - PIFSC Injury Determination staff member will obtain approved data from the Observer Program and make preliminary injury determinations
 - As appropriate (e.g., at meetings, in email updates), PIRO will provide to the TRT a preliminary determination for each injury
 - Preliminary determinations will be included in the normal annual injury determination review and finalization process
- ALL OTHER (everything else)
 - Normal annual injury determination process

3. Genetic Analysis of Samples - SWFSC Genetics Lab (concurrent with step 2, Injury Determination)

Comment [n1]: This section is subject to change pending further discussions with SWFSC.

- FAST TRACK
 - Upon receipt of biopsy sample from PIRO Observer Program, SWFSC will conduct genetic analysis, including species identification and, if appropriate, stock identification
 - Stock identification will be fast-tracked only for those animals taken within the range of the MHI insular and NWHI false killer whales
 - Results of the analysis will be provided to PIFSC and PIRO within an **estimated 10-15 business days**, depending on the lab's priorities and work load

4. SEZ Closure Implementation

- If applicable, PIRO will draft and initiate review and clearance of a Federal Register rule to close the SEZ.
 - Estimated timeframe for PIRO, NMFS HQ, NOAA, and Department of Commerce review of SEZ closure rule and transmittal to the Office of the Federal Register: **estimated 15-20 business days**
- Per the TRP regulations, an SEZ closure will go into effect **7-15 calendar days** (not business days) from the date of publication in the Federal Register

Summary of Fast Track injury determination actions and estimated timeline.

Step	Resulting Action	Duration (Business Days)	Elapsed Time (Business Days)
Debrief observer of marine mammal interaction	Determine if interaction should be fast-tracked		0
Fast track interaction forms and supporting information cleared through Observer Program	Provide forms and supporting data to Determination staff; if applicable, send biopsy sample to SWFSC	5	5
Determination staff review interaction data and conduct independent determination Concurrently, if applicable, SWFSC conducts genetic analysis	Determination staff send independent determinations to Amanda	5	10
Determination staff review individual determinations, resolve and document differences, and issue joint preliminary determination Concurrently, if applicable, SWFSC conducts genetic analysis	Send joint preliminary determination and summary of resolution process to PIRO & SRG liaison	5	15
SRG & PIRO review of joint preliminary determination Concurrently, if applicable, SWFSC conducts genetic analysis	SRG and PIRO review results sent to PIFSC If applicable, SWFSC provides results of genetic analysis to PIRO and PIFSC	5	20
Determination staff evaluate SRG & PIRO review and issue final determination	Transmit final determination to PIRO	5	25

If applicable, SEZ closure package will undergo review for an estimated 15-20 business days and closure will be effective 7 – 15 calendar days after the rule publishes in the Federal Register. Thus, if applicable, SEZ closure will begin 4-6 weeks after the final injury determination is made.