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**Statement from Eileen Sobeck, Assistant Administrator NOAA Fisheries**  
***Reducing bycatch remains top issue for NOAA Fisheries***

NOAA is strongly committed to reducing bycatch in U.S. fisheries. We actively monitor bycatch levels in U.S. fisheries through fisheries observers and electronic technologies. We also work directly with fishermen to develop selective fishing gears and practices to minimize bycatch.

NOAA implements regulations with regional fishery management councils as well as other stakeholders to minimize bycatch and reduce protected species interactions with fishing gear. NOAA Fisheries also carries out observer programs in each of its regions.

NOAA is, and will continue to be, proactive in the protection and conservation of marine species such as dolphins and sea turtles. For example, the agency currently manages seven marine mammal take reduction teams, which recommend bycatch reduction measures for over 30 marine mammal stocks in more than 25 commercial fisheries.

The agency evaluates these recommendations and implements regulatory requirements to achieve rigorous bycatch reduction goals as set by the Marine Mammal Protection Act. In addition, in 2012 NOAA's observer programs employed 974 observers in 47 fisheries nationwide, with over 83,000 sea days observed.

We are seeing success in reducing bycatch in U.S. fisheries. Examples include:

- Alaska longline fishing and seabird numbers down by 50 percent due to streamer lines; and
- The California drift gillnet fishery has completely eliminated beaked whale bycatch in the fishery based on NOAA Fisheries requirements to use pingers (acoustic harassment devices) as part of this fishery.
- In the West Coast groundfish bottom trawl fishery, bycatch made up 20 percent of total catch in 2010, down from 34 percent in 2005.

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**For more information:**

U.S. National Bycatch Report: [http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/by\\_catch/bycatch\\_nationalreport.htm](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/by_catch/bycatch_nationalreport.htm)

NOAA Fisheries' Bycatch Reeducation Engineering program:  
[http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/by\\_catch/bycatch\\_BREP.htm](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/by_catch/bycatch_BREP.htm)