



**COMMISSION  
SEVENTEENTH REGULAR SESSION**  
Electronic Meeting  
8 – 15 December 2020

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**BEST HANDLING PRACTICES FOR THE SAFE RELEASE OF CETACEANS**

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**WCPFC17-2020-DP03  
7 November 2020**

**Submission by United States of America**

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## Best Handling Practices for the Safe Release of Cetaceans

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**Discussion Paper Prepared by the United States of America  
for the  
Seventeenth Regular Session of the Commission for the Conservation and Management of  
Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean**

As noted in paragraph 520 of the WCPFC16 Summary Report, “*The Commission tasked the Scientific Committee in 2020 (SC16) to develop and recommend best handling practices for the release of cetaceans, taking into account existing standards and guidelines adopted in other fora, for consideration at WCPFC17*”.

Due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the SC16 agenda was limited to essential items necessary to progress the scientific work of the Commission in 2020 and to provide scientific advice to inform key decisions at WCPFC17. Consequently, the work tasked to SC16 to develop and recommend best handling practices for the release of cetaceans was delayed. In order to ensure that this work remains a priority in 2021, the United States suggests the following decision from WCPFC17:

**Recognizing the disruptions caused by COVID-19 and the resulting limited agenda of the Scientific Committee in 2020, the Commission tasks the Scientific Committee in 2021 (SC17) to prioritize the development and recommendation of best handling practices for the safe release of cetaceans for consideration at WCPFC18.**