



**NOAA
FISHERIES**

Pacific Islands
Regional Office (PIRO)

Sustainable Fisheries
Division (SFD)

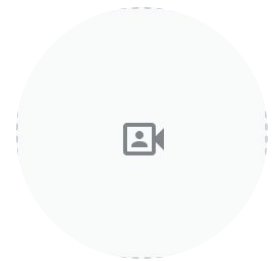
JASON MEHLINGER

**Protected Species Workshops & Crew
Training Program
(Hawaii/American Samoa Longline fleet)**



NOAA Fisheries: Protected Species Workshops

- Weekly protected species workshops for owners and operators of Hawai'i and American Samoa permitted longline vessels that covers:
 - **Regulatory requirements**
 - **Handling and release techniques**
 - **Protected species identification** (sea turtles, seabirds, marine mammals, sharks/ray, biology, and mitigation)
- **Objectives are to ensure that longline fishing vessel owners and operators are well-versed on the most up-to-date interaction mitigation techniques for protected species.**
- **Certifications are valid for 1 year**



COMPARISON OF PROTECTED SPECIES REGULATIONS

1. SAFE HANDLING PROCEDURES

- **WCPFC:** Bring small turtles aboard; leave large turtles in the water. Cut lines as close to the hook as possible. Do not lift by the line, gaff, or pull by flippers/head.
- **HI/AS LONGLINE:** Bring small turtles aboard; leave large turtles in the water. Cut lines as close to the hook as possible. Do not lift by the line, gaff, or pull by flippers/head.

2. TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

- **WCPFC:** No commission-wide annual training mandate.
- **HI/AS LONGLINE:** Annual Protected Species Workshop (PSW) certificate required for vessel owners and operators.
 - a. **Incoming 2026** - Crew training and trained individual on-deck during all protected species interactions requirements



COMPARISON OF PROTECTED SPECIES REGULATIONS

3. REQUIRED HANDLING TOOLS

- **WCPFC:** Dip nets, line cutters, de-hookers, wire/bolt cutters, piece of wood for a mouth gag. (No specified dimensions).
- **HI/AS LONGLINE:** Dip nets, line cutters, de-hookers, wire/bolt cutters, long-nose pliers, specified mouth openers (e.g., avian speculum, canine chew bone), car tire. (Tool dimensions specified based on vessel freeboard height).

4. RESUSCITATION PROTOCOLS

- **WCPFC:** Elevate hindquarters. Keep the turtle secure, shaded, and moist.
- **HI/AS LONGLINE:** Elevate hindquarters 6 inches. Keep the turtle secure, shaded, and moist. Observe for a minimum of 4 hours up to a maximum of 24 hours before release.

5. REPORTING

- **WCPFC:** Record interactions in vessel logbooks.
- **HI/AS LONGLINE:** Record interactions in electronic logbooks



Rules and Regulations - Crew Training Program

PACIFIC LONGLINE REQUIRED TRAINING GUIDE

New Crew Training Regulations

1. NEW REQUIREMENT: Crew Training (What's Changed)

Focus: Expanding protected species safety to the deck crew

The "2-and-1" Rule



2 Trained Aboard:

A minimum of two trained individuals must be onboard the vessel (the operator and at least 1 crew member).



1 On Deck:

At least one trained individual must be on deck during gear retrieval.



Certification:

Valid for 2 years. Valid certificates for all certified crew must be onboard.



Represents
collaboration
between crew and
operators to meet
ESA compliance

2. EXISTING REQUIREMENT: Operator Duties (Still in Effect)

Focus: Supervision, oversight, and accountability



Supervision:

Captains must supervise and maintain visual or verbal contact with crew during any marine mammal handling or release



Training:

Owners/Operators must attend the Protected Species Interaction Workshop annually. Valid certificates for the operator must be onboard.

- NMFS-approved handling/release placard (posted prominently)
- Valid operator training certificate



Reporting:

Submit **MMAP Mortality/Injury Reporting Form**

Due within 48 hours of trip completion

Mandate: Protected species handling and release training is now required for crew members.



Sea Turtles, Handling and Release Guidelines

Handling - turtle small enough to bring aboard

SMALL
TOOLS

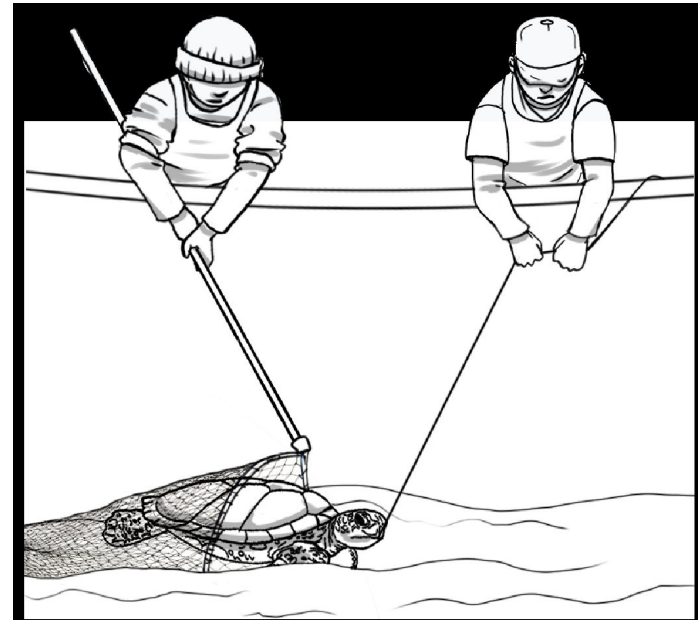
Step 1

- ☐ **Stop** vessel



Step 2

- ☐ **Use dip net** to bring **small turtles** onboard to remove gear



Interaction Goals

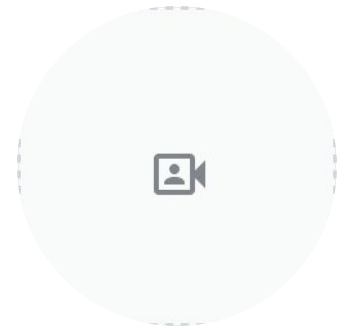
VIDEOS

Our goal is to:

- Consider safety first for ALL on board
- Remove all or as much gear as possible - Cut close to the hook
- Handle and release animals safely and in accordance with the law

Why?

- Keeps us fishing - Keeps our fishery healthy
- Reduces new and changing regulations in reaction to interactions



Interaction Best practices - Keeping it simple

Owners/Captains can set crew up for success by...



→ **Everyone is aware of guidelines**

- ◆ Safety is #1
- ◆ Big Tools / Small Tools / Safe Tools
- ◆ Attending Crew Training - Practicing - Translated Resources

→ **Keeping tools together where crew can easily access them**

→ All tools are **maintained and in working order**

→ Informing crew of **best practices** and **safety tools** like...

- ◆ Flyback prevention devices (weighted jug, buoy)
- ◆ Fight lines (dyneema/Float line)
- ◆ Fight line device (FLD)



→ **Captains/owners are aware of tool locations and reporting requirements**

Sea Turtles, Handling and Release Guidelines

Required Gear Onboard

You are **required** to carry and use specific equipment for handling and releasing sea turtles, seabirds, and marine mammals, and/or to follow specific procedures if you hook or entangle these animals. **Failure to have all of these items, in working order, on your vessel at all times can result in fines starting at \$1,000.**

❑ **Must carry the following ten (10) handling/de-hooking gear items on board**

1. Long-handled line clipper
2. Long-handled dip net
3. Long-handled de-hooker
4. Long-handled gaff to pull an “inverted V”
5. Car tire
6. Short-handled de-hooker
7. Long-nose or needle-nose pliers
8. Wire or bolt cutters
9. Monofilament line cutters
10. At least two mouth opener and gags



Crew Training Program - 6-step Handling Method

Small Animal/Small Tools & Big Animals/Big Tools

6-step handling pattern for **BIG & SMALL** animal interactions

- Same for all protected species
- Safety 1st - Safety is #1
- Get/Use right tools for the right job
- Safe/Efficient/Effective

Goal is always the same.

- **Cut** as close to the hook as possible
- **Remove** as much gear as possible
- **Resuscitate** if necessary
- **Report** to captain/in logbook

HANDLING AND RELEASE PATTERN

1. ANNOUNCE

- STOP VESSEL
- ALERT CAPTAIN IF WHALE/DOLPHIN

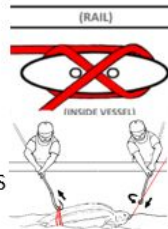
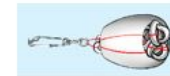


2. GRAB TOOLS

- SMALL TOOLS? / BIG TOOLS?
- WHALE/DOLPHIN? – TIE OFF TO VESSEL/FIGHT LINE

3. CHECK SAFETY/GRAB LINE

- FLYBACK / FLD



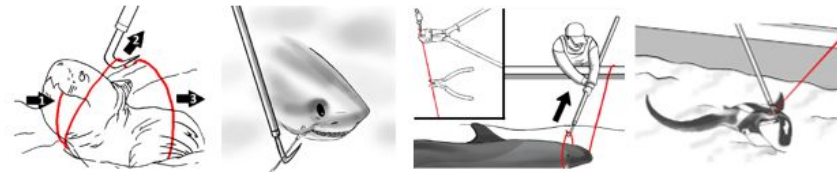
4. LOCATE HOOK

- IF HOOKED – REMOVE HOOK W/ TOOLS
- IF SWALLOWED – CUT LINE AS CLOSE TO THE HOOK AS POSSIBLE
- IF TANGLED – CUT LINE FROM HEAD/MOUTH TOWARD TAIL

5. REMOVE LINE AND HOOK

- CUT AS MUCH GEAR OFF AS POSSIBLE AND AS CLOSE TO THE HOOK AS POSSIBLE

6. RELEASE ANIMAL WITH NO GEAR REMAINING



Handling and Release Pattern: **Step 1** - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6

#1: Call out / Announce





and Release Pattern: **Step 1 - 2** - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6

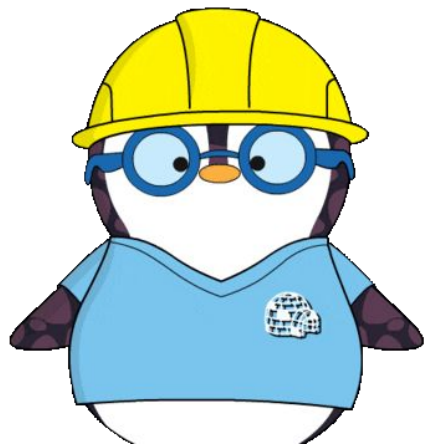
MALL TOOLS / **BIG TOOLS** / **SAFE TOOLS** ?



Handling and Release Pattern: Step 1 - 2 - **3** - 4 - 5 - 6

#3: Safety (Safe Tools)

SAFETY FIRST



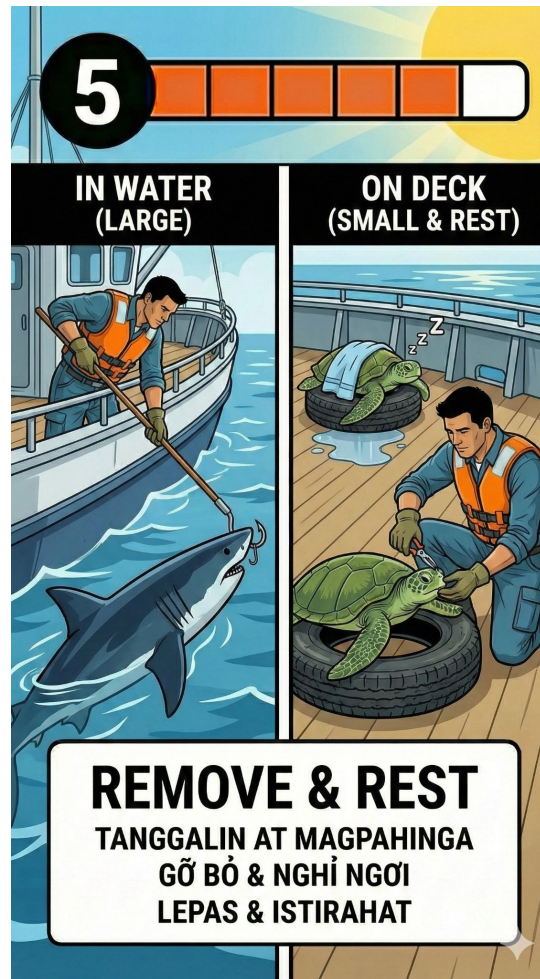
Handling and Release Pattern: Step 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6

#4: Retrieve/ Review - Locate hook



Handling and Release Pattern: Step 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - **5** - 6

#5: Remove & Rescue



Handling and Release Pattern:

Step 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - **6**

#6: Release

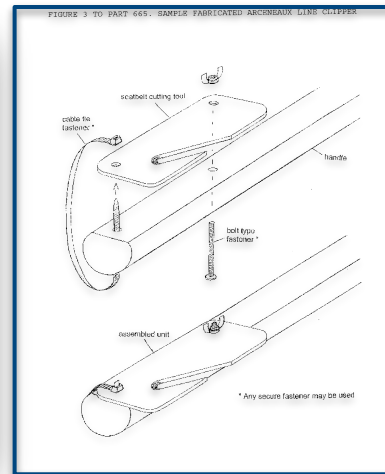
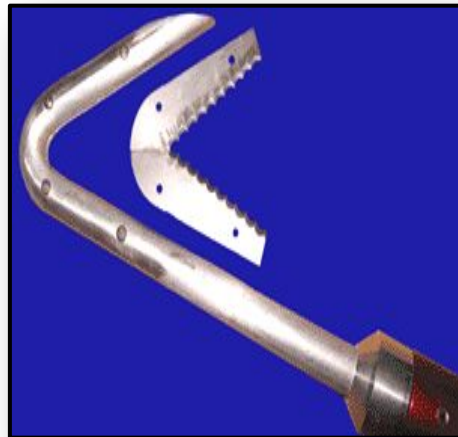
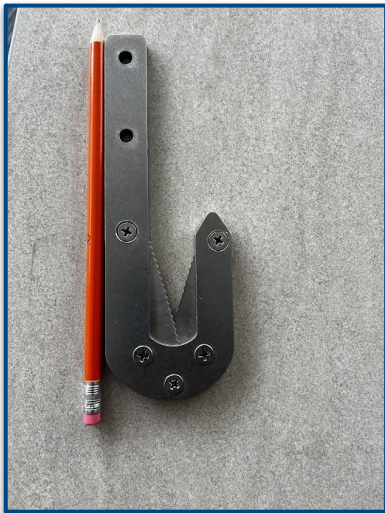


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Buidling a community of good pracitce - Lessons learned

Focus on habit changes and practical solutions

- How are are setting crew members up for success?
 - Have we communicated expectations effectively?
 - Is there a mutually understood process and goal?
 - Do they have the tools to be successful?



Long handled line cutters are not only expensive but locally only available as a made-to-order product.



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Scan here to visit the Protected Species
Workshop Website

[YOUTUBE Video Link](#)

Questions?

