

# MARINE MAMMAL INCIDENTAL TAKE FORM INSTRUCTIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

The Marine Mammal Incidental Take Form is used for the collection of information on marine mammals incidentally taken in the Atlantic pelagic longline fishery. It was revised in 2006 to reflect recommendations of the Atlantic Pelagic Longline Take Reduction Team to improve and enhance information on the nature and frequency of interactions, specifically how and where animals are hooked or entangled, actions taken by the vessel to release the animal, amount and type of gear remaining on the animal upon release, and the condition of the animal upon release. It was also revised to collect information on the presence of other marine mammal at the time of capture and any actions taken by the captain or crew to deter marine mammals. Data collected on this form is critical to the development and refinement of conservation and recovery strategies for reducing incidental takes of marine mammals in the pelagic longline fishery, and for reducing the impact of these interactions on the short and long-term survival of released animals.

## GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

Complete a Marine Mammal Incidental Take Form for each marine mammal taken during pelagic longline fishing operations. In the case of long and short-finned pilot whales, and other species that can be difficult to distinguish in the field, it is important to attempt to collect a biopsy sample for genetic analysis, if possible. Photographs of the animal are also helpful in confirming species identification and for other analyses. When an animal has been hooked or entangled, every effort should be made to thoroughly document the activities taken by the captain and crew to dehook or disentangle the animal.

The layout of the form represents an attempt to reduce the amount of writing required by observers as much as possible. If given a choice, place a check mark next to the answer to the question. Some answers do require a written description, or explanation. When filling in these data fields be as complete as possible.

## INCIDENTAL TAKE INFORMATION

**Observer/Trip ID:** Record the 6 character observer/trip identifier number assigned for this trip. It is the same identifier recorded on all logs within a single trip.

**Haul #:** Record the number of the haul in which the incidental take occurred.

**Year, Month, Day:** Record the month, day, year in which the incidental take occurred.  
Example: 07/30/2006.

**Time:** Record the time of day (24 hr clock) when the incidental take occurred.

**Location of Take:** Latitude: record the degrees and minutes of latitude at the time of the incidental take, circle N or S for north or south of the equator; Longitude: record the degrees and minutes of longitude at the time of the incidental take.

**Specimen number by trip:** Record the abbreviation MAM followed by a two digit consecutive number (e.g., MAM01, MAM02, ...) for each specimen taken during the trip.

**Specimen field number:** Record the Observer/Trip ID and Specimen number by trip. This specimen number should be recorded on all labels that accompany samples taken from this specimen. Labels should also include date sample taken, species ID, and sample type (e.g., biopsy, tooth).

## **SPECIES IDENTIFICATION**

**Species code:** Place by the check appropriate species name which corresponds to the species of the animal taken. If you are unable to identify to a species, check one of the four unknown species options (“Unid. marine mammal”, “Unid. beaked whale”, “Unid. dolphin”, “Unid. pilot whale”).

**Diagnostic features:** Note any determining characteristics of the animal in as much detail as possible, including shape, size, color, form, markings, etc.

**Confidence level of species ID:** Check the degree to which you are confident in your species identification. “Good,” meaning that you are quite certain you have identified most of the distinguishing characteristics of the species; “Fair,” meaning that you have identified some but not all of the most distinguishing characteristics of the animal; or “Poor,” you were only able to see one or no distinguishing characteristics of the species.

**Photos taken?:** Circle “Y” if photos were taken of the animal or “N” if no photos were taken.

**Number of photos taken:** Indicate how many photos were taken. Take a spacer photo after every incidental take.

## **HOOKING OF MARINE MAMMAL**

**Was Animal Hooked?:** Circle “Y” if the animal was hooked, “N” if the animal was not hooked, or “Unknown” if it is unknown whether the animal was hooked. If you circle “N” skip to the next section.

**Number of gangions to next float:** Indicate the number of gangions/leaders from the hooked animal to the next float.

**Location:** Indicate where in the body the animal was hooked.

- If internally hooked, indicate whether the hook is visible by circling “Y” for Yes or “N” for No. Then indicate whether the hook is “Visible to insertion point” if most or all of the hook is visible, “Partial hook” if only part of the hook is visible, or “Not visible” if the hook is not visible at all.

If the hook is in the mouth, indicate “Upper” if it is in the upper part of the mouth, “Lower” if it is in the lower part of the mouth, “Side” if it is in the side or corner of the mouth, “Swallowed” if the hook appears to have been swallowed, or “Other/Unknown” if the location of the hook inside the mouth is unknown (provide an explanation in this case).

- If externally hooked, indicate where on the body the animal is hooked by checking “Front Flipper”, “Dorsal fin”, “Body”, “Head/Neck”, or “Tail.” If the animal is hooked anywhere other than one of these places, or it is not known where the animal is hooked, check “Other/Unknown” and provide an explanation.

**Was hook removed from animal?:** Circle “Y” if the hook was removed from the animal, “N” if the hook was not removed, or “Unknown” if it is not known whether the hook was removed.

**If No, was line intentionally cut?:** Circle “Y” if line was intentionally cut, or “N” if line was not cut. Indicate “N” also if line snapped but was not intentionally cut.

**Amount of line left trailing (in ft):** Record the approximate amount of line left trailing, in feet (ft).

## ENTANGLEMENT OF MARINE MAMMAL

**Was animal entangled?:** Circle “Y” if animal was entangled, “N” if animal was not entangled, or “Unknown” if it is not known whether the animal was entangled. If you circle “N” skip to the next section.

**Entanglement location:** This refers to the location of gear on the animal’s body. Check all areas of the animal’s body entangled with gear. If the gear is on a part of the body not listed, indicate where under “Other” and provide a description.

**Gear Involved:** Check type(s) of gear in which the animal was entangled.

**Was gear removed from the animal?:** Circle “Y” if gear was removed from the animal, “N” if gear was not removed, “Partial” if the gear was only partially removed, or “Unknown” if more gear may exist on the animal that could not be seen.

**If No, amount of gear left on animal gear was removed (in ft):** Record the approximate amount of gear left on the animal, in feet (ft).

**Were wraps cut?:** Circle “Y” if wraps were cut, “N” if wraps were left on animal intact, “Partial” if all wraps were not completely cut, or “Unknown” for Unknown

**Description of gear removal/gear remaining:** Record in as much detail as possible what steps were taken to remove the gear, and what amount and type of gear left remaining on the animal upon release. Use additional paper if necessary.

## SKETCH OF ANIMAL

**Sketch of animal showing where gear was hooked or entangled on body:** On the outline of the marine mammal provided, draw the approximate location of where gear was hooked or entangled on the body. Also include any other identifying marks, notches, or scars, as appropriate.

## CONDITION OF MARINE MAMMAL UPON RELEASE

**Condition of marine mammal upon release:** Check “Alive, swam away normally” if animal was alive upon release and swam away normally, “Alive, swam away abnormally” if the animal was listing, not diving and remaining at surface, or otherwise behaving abnormally, or “Dead” if the animal was dead upon release. Use the data sheet and any additional paper needed to provide as much detail as possible to describe the animal’s behavior upon release. For example, did it swim away strong, or did it seem weakened. Did the animal come back, or rejoin a pod, etc. If the animal was dead, all attempts should be made to bring the animal close to the vessel for biopsy sample, photographs, measurements, examination, and a gross or full necropsy, as appropriate.

## WAS ANIMAL BOARDED?

**Was animal boarded?:** Circle “Y” if animal was brought onto the vessel, or “N” if animal was not brought onto the vessel. If No, record the approximate length of the animal, in feet (ft). Length is measured from tip of rostrum to fluke notch. [Note: Extreme caution should be taken in bringing a live animal onto the vessel.]

**If the animal was boarded:** If the animal was boarded, the following data fields are to be recorded **at a minimum**.

- Total length is measured from tip of rostrum to fluke notch, and is recorded in centimeters (cm). Indicate “Straight” if it was taken as a straight line measurement (preferred), “Curved” if it was taken along the curve of the body, or “Estimated” if the measurement was estimated.
- Sex: Indicate “M” for Male, “F” for female, or “Unknown” if sex could not be or was not determined. In females, the genital slit is longer and more prominent than for males. It encompasses the closer spaced genital and anal openings, and is flanked by a small slit on each side containing the nipples. It is anteriorly directed internally (i.e., an object inserted into the opening will be directed toward the head). In males, the genital slit usually has two openings, one behind the other, separated by a bridge of tissue. It is posteriorly directed internally (i.e., an object inserted into the opening will be directed toward the flukes). Photos should be taken to confirm sex determination.

If possible, a full necropsy should be performed for all dead animals and data from the necropsy recorded on a Level A stranding form. All samples taken must be accompanied by a label indicating Observer/Trip ID, Specimen number by trip, Date sample taken, Species ID, and Sample type (e.g., biopsy, tooth).

**Disposition of carcass:** For dead animals, indicate what action was taken to dispose of the carcass.

**Additional comments:** This area may be used to record any additional details regarding the condition, disposition, or unusual features of the animal. If the animal was dead prior to capture, include reference to that here.

### **BIOPSY SAMPLES TAKEN?**

**Biopsy samples taken?:** Circle “Y” if biopsy samples were taken, “N” if biopsy samples were not attempted, or “Attempted (unsuccessful)” if biopsy samples were attempted but not able to be collected. *Refer to Appendix A for Biological Sampling Protocol.*

**If yes, itemize samples:** List each sample taken on the form. All samples taken must be accompanied by a label indicating Observer/Trip ID, Specimen number by trip, Date sample taken, Species ID, and Sample type (i.e., biopsy).

### **PRESENCE OF MARINE MAMMALS**

**Were other marine mammals present at time of capture?:** Circle “Y” if other marine mammals were seen to be present in the area 5 minutes before or after the time of capture, “Did not look” if a search of the area was not conducted, or “Looked but did not see” if a search was conducted but no marine mammals were seen in the area 5 minutes before or after the time of capture.

**Number of other marine mammals present:** Record the appropriate number for each of the three fields: min, max, and best guess, even if the number is zero.

**Same species as animal captured:** Circle “Y” if other animals in area were the same species as the animal captured, “N” if different, or “Unknown” if unknown. If the animals are different, indicate species ID or description.

**Approximate distance from vessel (in ft):** Indicate the approximate distance of the other marine mammals in the area to the vessel, in feet (ft).

### **DETERRENCE/AVOIDANCE**

**Were actions taken to deter or avoid animals?:** Circle “Y” if actions were taken to deter or avoid marine mammals, “N” if no actions were taken, or “Unknown” for Unknown.

**Describe:** Describe any actions that were taken, in detail, and indicate whether they were taken before, during, or after the capture, and whether they were observed by you or reported to you by the captain or crew. Use additional sheets if necessary.

## **APPENDIX A.**

### **Biological Sampling Protocol**

The samples collected will be used for genetic species identification. Therefore the following protocol must be followed in order to properly preserve the DNA collected.

To obtain a biopsy sample from a marine mammal requires the use of a 12' anodized aluminum biopsy pole and disinfected stainless steel biopsy corer. Assemble the pole sections. Wearing latex or nitrile gloves clean the end of the threaded stud on the biopsy pole with an alcohol swab. Remove a clean, unused biopsy corer from its vial and screw it tightly onto the end of the pole.

To collect the skin sample, jab the pole at a slight angle to the body so that the biopsy corer is scraped along the surface of the skin and a ribbon of tissue is collected. A forceful jab may be necessary to break the skin and begin the ribbon. Dolphin and pilot whale skin is fairly thin and so it is not necessary to go very deep on these species. Suitable regions on the body include the central back behind or parallel to the dorsal fin, and along the side of the body below the dorsal fin. The head and blowhole regions should be avoided. It may be possible to collect from the tail, particularly if the animal is dead.

When the sample is collected, unscrew the corer from the pole and place the entire corer with tissue into a vial of sodium chloride saturated 20% DMSO. Do not attempt to remove the tissue from the corer. Again, wear gloves. Label the vial with the following information: Observer/Trip ID, Specimen number by trip, Date sample taken, Species ID, and Sample type (i.e., biopsy). Biopsy samples should be kept at room temperature; do not freeze or expose to extreme heat.

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