With every day that passes we are acquiring a better understanding of these law and getting to perceive both the more immediate and the more remote consequences of our interference with the traditional course of nature . . . the more this progresses the more will men not only feel but also know their oneness with nature, and the more impossible will become the senseless contrast between mind and matter, man and nature, soul and body . . . .

-- Frederick Engels (1876)

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20:19/01. FISHERMEN, NGOs, AGENCIES COLLABORATE ON WHALE ENTANGLEMENT ISSUE: In response to an uptick in the number of whales entangling in trap and pot fishery buoy lines in California, fishermen, the environmental NGO community, and several governmental agencies participated in a public discussion in Oakland, CA on Thursday, 20 August, as a first step in devising a solution to this problem. The discussion was primarily an opportunity for the agencies, including the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) to share information with stakeholders on the issue of entanglements and to identify knowledge gaps on which those agencies should concentrate their research going forward.

Fishermen, who are acutely aware of the problem and who generally agree that one entanglement event is one entanglement too many, represented the majority of attendees at the discussion. They were eager to share their concerns about the problem, and to identify both
practical and impractical solutions so as to focus further discussions. For example, the NGO community had proposed multiple pots per buoy line as a means of reducing the number of vertical lines in the water, with the hope that fewer vertical lines would result in fewer entanglements. Several in the fishing community pointed out practical flaws in that idea, including the danger to fishermen posed by such a gear modification, and the increased likelihood that pot strings will entangle with one another, posing increased threat of entanglement to cetaceans.

Perhaps the most promising solution discussed at the meeting was to support the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Whale Entanglement Team (WET), a highly trained and regulated group that responds to reports of entanglements by satellite tagging entangled whales and removing line from those animals. There are currently four WET teams operating in California with limited resources. It was generally agreed that supporting and expanding the WET program could mitigate the impacts on whales without preemptively constraining the fishery.

The number of reports of entanglements has been on the rise since 2014, although no one is exactly sure why. Anomalous ocean conditions seem to be concentrating whale prey species nearshore, which concentrates the increasing populations of those species in areas where crab gear may also be deployed. Additionally, given increased public awareness of the problem, it may be that the number of actual entanglements has not changed, but instead that the number of reports is on the rise. Further complicating the problem is that it is exceedingly difficult to determine where entanglements occur, as whales can travel great distances over significant periods of time before the entanglement is reported. These knowledge gaps pose large barriers to constraining the fishery with preemptive gear modifications or season restrictions, as there is no way to tell whether such constraints would be effective.

The Dungeness crab fishery, on which CDFW intends to concentrate its efforts in developing solutions to the entanglement issue, is one of the most sustainable and minimally impactful fisheries in the state. This is largely because of several measures crabbers have voluntarily imposed on themselves that mitigate their environmental footprint. These include a limited entry program, which restricts the number of crab vessels operating in California; a pot limit program, which restricts the number of pots (and thereby vertical buoy lines) in the ocean; the California Dungeness Crab Task Force (DCTF), which oversees the fishery and acts as a conduit between fishermen, government and the public as to incorporate external concerns in the management of the fishery; and the expansion of pilot lost crab gear retrieval programs, which cleans up fishing grounds of lost or derelict crabbing gear as to further reduce the likelihood of impacts on marine mammals.

As a next step, meeting organizers in the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) are forming a work group of government representatives and stakeholders to narrow down workable solutions to the problem. Simultaneously, the DCTF will be considering expansion of the lost gear retrieval program at its next executive committee meeting on 2 September.

For more information, see the DCTF website which has information on past and upcoming meetings, as well as on the issues discussed at the 20 August meeting. See also this 19 August San Francisco Chronicle article (subscription required).

To report entanglement incidents to the WET, call the 24-hour hotline at 877-SOS-WHALE (877-767-9425) or hail the U.S. Coast Guard on VHF Ch-16. Do not approach an entangled whale, as interfering with a marine mammal could be a violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Instead, attempt to gather the following information:
• Date, time and location of sighting
• Species
• Photographs of the animal, especially of the underside of the tail, are very helpful
• Weather conditions/sea state
• Nature of distress (entanglement, other injury)
• Other details (speed and heading of animal, whether breathing, diving, etc.)

20:19/02. FEDS AGREE TO RELEASE LEWISTON DAM WATER TO PREVENT SALMON KILL ON LOWER KLAMATH: On Thursday, 20 August, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Bureau) agreed with fishery and tribal leaders’ requests to increase flows on the Klamath River as to head off a potential fish kill that would be caused by a parasite known as Ich, which thrives in rivers during periods of low flow and high temperatures. Ich, which was responsible for a massive die-off of salmon on the Klamath in 2002, has been found in dead adult salmon found on the Klamath during their migration to spawning grounds. The Bureau will release enough water from Lewiston Dam on the Trinity River, one of the main tributaries to the Klamath, as to achieve baseline flows of 2,800 cubic feet per second, with an additional provision to double flows on an emergency basis should the initial increase prove insufficient to protect salmonids. The increase is set to last through 20 September.

For more information, see this [20 August Eureka Times-Standard article](#).

20:19/03. COAST GUARD ISSUE SAFETY BULLETIN REGARDING COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL WORKLIGHTS: The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) last week issued a safety advisory that bar pilots operating out of the San Francisco Bay are having trouble identifying navigation lights of large vessels due to high-intensity work lights used by the commercial fishing fleet. USCG is reminding vessels operating outside of the Bay of International Navigation Rule 20, which states that “no other lights that may impair the visibility of the lights specified in the Rules shall be displayed from sunrise to sunset and during periods of low visibility.” USCG is also reminding mariners that a violation of Rule 20 could result in a $6,500.00 fine. Commercial salmon trollers often install work lights to improve vessel safety and working conditions. Enforcement of this policy may be complicated, as intensity of work light interference with navigational lights is dependent on distance, angle, and is largely a subjective determination.

For more information, see USCG Marine Safety/Security Information Bulletin 15-07, available at the IFR website.

20:19/04. FISHERY MANAGERS IMPROVE SCOTT CREEK COHO WITH INVESTMENT STRATEGY: The National Marine Fishery Service (NMFS) is employing a fundamental stock investment strategy to improve the viability of Central California Coast (CCC) coho salmon being raised in Scott Creek, a coastal stream that enters the Pacific near Aptos, CA (Santa Cruz County). NMFS Fishery managers are using the principle of portfolio diversification to hedge against environmental conditions that could affect the survival of CCC coho smolts released from Kingfisher Flat Hatchery, a small hatchery on a tributary to Scott Creek. The method involves released smolts over an eight-week period, rather than all at once, to improve the survival of the fish released into the inherently varied environmental and oceanic conditions over that period of time. In 2006, hatchery managers released all 25,000 smolts at the same time – only eighteen returned, all of which were male. In 2013, managers released the smolts over eight weeks, and are estimating a return of 162-192 fish, which represents a massive increase in survival.

For more information, see this [Summer 2015 NMFS post](#).
20:19/05. STATE OF WASHINGTON MOVES TO RESTRICT SUCTION DREDGE MINING TO PROTECT FISH DURING DROUGHT: Prompted by the effects of drought on streams supporting salmonids populations, the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife issued on 14 August emergency regulations to restrict suction dredge mining and certain construction activities on over sixty streams in the state. The impacts of low streamflow and high water temperatures on salmonids are exacerbated by suction dredge mining, in which miners use a vacuum to suck up river bottoms as to extract gold. That process can disturb spawning and rearing habitat, and release mercury stored in the sediment into the food web. The emergency regulations completely shut down mining on thirty-five rivers, and restrict mining activity during the warmest parts of the day on thirty other waterways. PCFFA and IFR are active in advocating for adequate regulation of suction dredge mining activity in Washington, Oregon and California as to reduce impacts on struggling salmonids populations.

For more information, see this 14 August WDFW press release.

20:19/06. MASSIVE TOXIC ALGAE BLOOM ON U.S. WEST COAST KILLING SEA LIFE, SHOWING NO SIGNS OF ABATING: Scientists with the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration are calling the huge algae bloom stretching at least from Alaska to the tip of Baja California the largest and most toxic bloom they’ve ever seen. There are several different species of algae in the bloom, which is thriving in this year’s exceedingly warm coastal waters. Among the toxins produced by the bloom is domoic acid, which doesn’t affect fish or shellfish, but bioaccumulates into the larger predator species such as sea lions and humans, in which it can cause seizures and death. Fear of domoic acid led to closures of shellfish fisheries in Oregon and Washington this year.

For more information, see this 17 August KQED story.

20:19/07. AMERICAN SAMOA TO DEVELOP TUNA PURSE-SEINER REGISTRY: American Samoa will be requiring registry of tuna purse seiners who wish to offload at canneries in that territory. The move is expected to assist the national Marine Fisheries Service’s monitoring of vessels operating in waters off of American Samoa. The U.S. purse-seiner fleet offloads half of its catch in the American Samoa capital of Pago Pago. Registration will permit that fleet to operate in the Exclusive Economic Zone, as well as the high seas. Supporters hope the move with deter illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the area.

For more information, see this 19 August Fisheries Information Service article.

20:19/08. CALIFORNIA TWIN TUNNELS PLANNERS INTEND TO SEIZE DELTA FARMS VIA EMINENT DOMAIN: Documents released last week pursuant to a California Public Records Act request show that Governor Jerry Brown’s administration intends to take three hundred parcels of private land through eminent domain in order to construct two massive water conveyance tunnels under the largest estuary on the west coast of the Americas. The plan, which is to be carried out within the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), would condemn family farms that for the last 150 years have been operating on some of the most fertile farmland in the state.

This is the latest illustration of the intense irony of channeling water that naturally sustains those farms through a massive systems of canals, pumps and ditches, so some of the least naturally productive farmland in the state. IFR and PCFFA are strongly opposed to the Cal Water Fix, as the Bay Delta Conservation Plan has recently been rebranded, which would divert
water from the Sacramento river through two forty-foot tunnels that would ultimately convey the water for central valley industrial irrigation at the expense of salmon and salmon fishermen.

For more information, see this 18 August Indy Bay article, which includes links to the planning documents. See also this 19 August Chico Enterprise-Record editorial.

20:19/09. NOMINATION PERIOD EXTENDED FOR TWO SEATS ON INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION: the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced on 18 August that the nomination period for two vacating seats on the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC). The IPHC is an International Fisheries Organization composed of Canadian and American representatives responsible for managing the halibut fishery on the coasts of member nations, with its main offices in Seattle. The current commissioners’ terms will be expiring on 31 December 2015. Nominations for the two U.S. seats require Presidential approval.

For more information, see this 18 August NMFS press release.

To make a nomination, email IPHC2015nominations@noaa.gov, or snail mail to the following address:

Mr. Patrick Moran
National Marine Fisheries Service Office of International Affairs
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

20:19/10. LONGTERM EFFECTS OF ANIMAS RIVER SPILL DIFFICULT TO PREDICT, POTENTIALLY DEVASTATING: After the 5 August spill of three million gallons of wastewater contaminated with heavy metals such as cadmium, arsenic, lead and zinc from a former gold mine into Cement Creek, a tributary to the Animas River in Colorado, officials are saying the lasting effects are currently unknown. However, the Animas has for years been dealing with reproductive problems in fish species such as rainbow trout that are attributed to the presence of heavy metals in the watershed. The presence of heavy metals in those waterways is known to have caused a deterioration in fisheries, although the effects of those contaminants are exacerbated by drought, high water temperatures, and sedimentation. The spill from the Gold King Mine made international news earlier this month when it turned the Animas River a shocking orange color. The spill illustrates the need to take every precaution in dealing with heavy metal contamination in watersheds that support fisheries.

For more information, see this 18 August Denver Post article.

20:19/11. BBC PROGRAM ON MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY BIG BLUE LIVE TO PREMIER IN U.S. ON TUESDAY: A three-part live presentation of marine life on the U.S. west coast is set to premier this week on PBS affiliates around the country. The broadcast will feature a discussion between scientists, filmmakers and animal behaviorists of the dramatic restoration of the ecosystem in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Big Blue Live hopes to capitalize on the confluence of ocean conditions and animal migration to showcase the abundance of wildlife in the area by showcasing marine creatures as they are spotted. The program will air live on 31 August through 2 September at 8:00 PM EST/PST (there will be both east and west coast editions).

For more information, see this PBS press release.
YOUR NEWS, COMMENTS, CORRECTIONS: Submit your news items, comments or any corrections to Editor at: tsloane@ifrfish.org, or call the IFR/PCFFA office with the news and a source at either: (415) 561-FISH (Southwest Office) or (541) 689-2000 (Northwest Office). If you have any trouble subscribing or unsubscribing, contact IFR/PCFFA directly at: tsloane@ifrfish.org. Sublegals is a weekly fisheries news bulletin service of Fishlink. “Fishlink” and “Sublegals” are registered trademarks of the Institute for Fisheries Resources. All rights to the use of these trademarks are reserved to IFR. All photos are by IFR unless otherwise accredited. This publication, however, may be freely reproduced and circulated without copyright restriction. Articles taken from Fishlink Sublegals may be freely reposted or reprinted with attribution to “Fishlink Sublegals.” If you are receiving this as a subscriber, please feel free to pass it on to your colleagues.

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