



National Marine Fisheries Service, West Coast Region
7600 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115
www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov



PUBLIC NOTICE

For Information Contact:
The Groundfish Branch (206) 526-6140

NMFS-SEA-15-28
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 18, 2015

PACIFIC COAST GROUND FISH FISHERY **Implementation of Seabird Avoidance Program**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces the implementation of the Seabird Avoidance Program. The final rule implementing this program published on November 18, 2015, and is effective on December 18, 2015.

In summary this program:

- Requires the use of streamer lines in the commercial longline fishery of the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery for non-tribal vessels 55 feet in length or greater;
- Requires vessels to deploy one or two streamer lines depending on the type of longline gear being set;
- Requires that streamer lines meet technical specifications and be available for inspection; and,
- Allows for a rough weather exemption from using streamer lines for safety purposes. The threshold for the rough weather exemption is a Gale Warning as issued by the National Weather Service.

Visit the NMFS West Coast Region website for current groundfish regulations, VMS information, and RCA boundary coordinates.

<http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/>

Groundfish E-mail Group

Subscribe to “**wcgroundfish**” by visiting the following website:

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/publications/fishery_management/groundfish/public_notices/groundfish_email_group_signup.html

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Applicability

This program applies to all non-tribal commercial vessels greater than or equal to 55 ft (16.8 m) LOA engaged in commercial fishing for groundfish with bottom longline gear as defined in § 660.11 pursuant to the gear switching provisions of the Limited Entry Trawl Fishery, Shorebased IFQ Program.

Gear Requirements

Different streamer line requirements apply depending on the type of gear used, however, several requirements apply in all cases. The operator of any applicable vessel must use streamer lines that are spaced a maximum of every 16 feet, have individual streamers, that hang attached to the mainline to 10 inches above the waterline in the absence of wind, and have streamers constructed of material that is brightly colored, UV-protected plastic tubing or 3/8 inch polyester line or material of an equivalent density.

Snap Gear

When using snap gear a vessel operator must deploy a minimum of a single streamer line, which is a minimum length of 147 ft 7 in (45 m) and be deployed so that streamers are in the air a minimum of 65

ft 7 in (20 m) aft of the stern and within 6 ft 7 in (2 m) horizontally of the point where the main groundline enters the water before the first hook is set.

Longline

Vessels using bottom longline gear but not snap gear must use paired streamer lines meeting the following requirements:

- Streamer lines must be a minimum length of 300 feet (91.4 m).
- Streamer lines must be deployed so that streamers are in the air a minimum of 131 ft (40m) aft of the stern for vessels under 100 ft (30.5 m) LOA and 197 ft (60m) aft of the stern for vessels 100 ft (30.5 m) or over.
- At least one streamer line must be deployed in accordance with the overall streamer requirements before the first hook is set and a second streamer line must be deployed within 90 seconds thereafter.
- For vessels deploying bottom longline gear from the stern, the streamer lines must be deployed from the stern, one on each side of the main groundline.
- For vessels deploying bottom longline gear from the side, the streamer lines must be deployed from the stern, one over the main groundline and the other on one side of the main groundline.

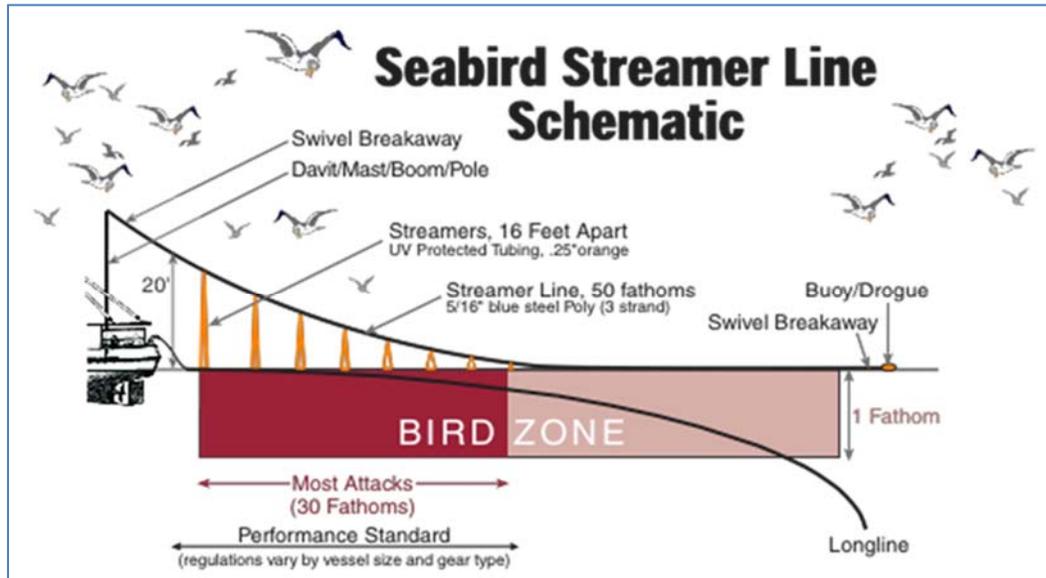
Free Streamer Lines

Free streamer lines are still available by contacting LFS at 206.789.8110, seattle@lfsinc.com. This program expires in June 2016, therefore NMFS encourages all interested participants to contact LFS for their streamer lines.

Additional Information

The Washington Sea Grant Program published a helpful guide regarding seabird avoidance measures that can be found here

http://seabirdbycatch.washington.edu/wp-content/uploads/What-Fishermen-Should-KnowLtr_opt.pdf



What should you do if you encounter a shirt-tailed albatross?

If a dead, injured, or sick short-tailed albatross is located, call USFWS at 541-867-4588 or 503-231-6179 for handling instructions.

Short-tailed albatrosses recovered dead should be retained, tagged for identifications, and frozen immediately. Any bird retained (alive or dead), must be surrendered as soon as possible as directed by USFWS. If an observer is on board, they are responsible for carrying out instructions provided by USFWS; otherwise the boat captain is responsible.

How can I get more information on how to use streamer lines?

Washington Sea Grant provides regular port visits where training on the use of streamer lines occurs. To find out upcoming dates please see the Washington Sea Grant webpage at: <http://seabirdbycatch.washington.edu/>

For more information contact: NMFS West Coast Region at 206-526-6140 or visit our website at <http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov>; Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife at 360-249-4628; Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife at 541-867-4741; or the California Department of Fish and Wildlife at 707-441-5797 (Eureka), 650-631-6789 (Belmont), 831-649-2804 (Monterey), 562-342-7111 (Los Alamitos).

Any discrepancies between this public notice and the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.