

# U.S. COAST GUARD

## 2021 REPORT



## TO THE PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

**April 2022**

*Prepared By:  
Eleventh Coast Guard District  
Thirteenth Coast Guard District*

## **I. U.S. Coast Guard Resources**

The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) has two districts overseeing U.S. waters off the western coastal states. The Eleventh District's (D11) area of responsibility includes the waters off the coast of California out to 200 nautical miles. The Thirteenth District's (D13) area of responsibility includes the waters off the coasts of Washington and Oregon out to 200 nautical miles, as well as Washington internal waters and the Columbia River. Resources used for fisheries enforcement include cutters, aircraft, and boats from coastal stations.

### **Cutters**

Patrol Boats/Fast Response Cutters: The primary surface fisheries law enforcement patrol resources are the 87' Coastal Patrol Boats, 110' Patrol Boats, and 154' Fast Response Cutters. Due to sea keeping and endurance limitations, Patrol Boats typically operate within 50 nautical miles of shore. D11 Patrol Boats include twelve 87' Coastal Patrol Boats located at coastal ports throughout the state and four Fast Response Cutters in San Pedro. D13 Patrol Boats include seven 87' Coastal Patrol Boats located in Salish Sea ports, as well as one 110' Patrol Boat homeported in Port Angeles, Washington, and one in Coos Bay, Oregon. In May 2022, CGC CUTTYHUNK homeported in Port Angeles will be decommissioned and replaced with CGC ANACAPA, which will relocate in June 2022 from Petersburg, Alaska to Port Angeles, Washington. In June 2022, CGC PIKE homeported in San Francisco, California will be relocated from D11 to Petersburg, Alaska.

Buoy Tenders: Buoy tenders conduct periodic law enforcement, including fisheries enforcement, in conjunction with their primary mission of maintaining aids to navigation. D11 buoy tenders include one 225' Seagoing Buoy Tender home-ported in San Francisco and one 175' Coastal Buoy Tender in San Pedro. D13 uses one 225' Seagoing Buoy Tender, home-ported in Astoria, Oregon, for offshore fisheries. Medium Endurance Cutters: Two 210' Medium Endurance Cutters located in Astoria, Oregon, and one in Port Angeles, Washington are also assigned to dedicated west coast fisheries patrols. In 2021, CGC ASPEN transited to Baltimore for extensive repairs, CGC ALDER is expected to arrive in California to replace the CGC ASPEN by the end of 2022.

### **Aircraft**

Air Station Sacramento provides medium range fixed-wing HC-27J Spartan aircraft to conduct surveillance flights along the entire west coast. The primary rotary wing fisheries law enforcement resources on the west coast are MH-60 Jayhawk and MH-65 Dolphin helicopters. Due to endurance and safety limitations, offshore patrols are typically conducted within 100 nautical miles of the coast. D11's three helicopter air stations are located in Humboldt Bay (Eureka, California), San Francisco, and San Diego, along with an Air Facility at Naval Base Ventura County (Oxnard, California). D13's three helicopter air stations are located in Port Angeles, Washington, Astoria, Oregon and North Bend, Oregon, along with an Air Facility in Newport, Oregon.

## **Stations**

Small boats from coastal stations primarily conduct search and rescue. However, boat crews are trained in fisheries law enforcement, and conduct patrols to enforce domestic fisheries and safety regulations, typically within 20 nautical miles of shore. D11 has fourteen stations located along the California coast, while D13 has eleven coastal stations along the Washington and Oregon coasts, as well as three stations in Washington internal waters (Port Angeles, Bellingham, and Seattle) and one on the Willamette River (Portland). Two additional seasonal stations are operated in Bandon and Gold Beach, Oregon, during summer months, corresponding with periods of higher boating activity. Typical boat types at west coast stations include the 47' Motor Lifeboat, the 45' Response Boat-Medium, and the 29' Response Boat-Small.

## **Pacific Regional Fisheries Training Center**

All units involved in fisheries enforcement receive training from the Coast Guard's Pacific Regional Fisheries Training Center in Alameda, California. NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) agents and state fisheries enforcement officers routinely participate in the training, as well as ride on cutters and aircraft during fisheries enforcement patrols. The success of USCG fisheries enforcement operations is enhanced by collaboration with our enforcement partners from NOAA OLE, Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), and the states of California, Washington, and Oregon.

## **II. Fisheries Enforcement Efforts**

### **Integrity of the U.S. EEZ**

Efforts specific to the west coast were primarily associated with fisheries under the U.S./Canada Tuna Treaty. This year, the USCG continued to focus on robust air and surface surveillance along the U.S./Canada EEZ boundary as resource availability allowed. USCG efforts such as these, in support of ensuring the integrity of the U.S. EEZ, fall under D13's Operation Olympic Shield, a comprehensive and multi-agency enforcement plan to deter illegal incursions into the U.S. EEZ. Additionally, the USCG maintained vigorous air/surface surveillance along the U.S./Mexico EEZ boundary under Operation Baja Tempestad (OBT). While OBT is a counter-drug/migrant smuggling operation, units patrolling the maritime boundary line also ensure there are no EEZ incursions from foreign fishing vessels (FFVs) which directly supports Operation Western Flyer, District 11's EEZ enforcement operation. No EEZ incursions were documented by the Coast Guard within District Eleven or District Thirteen this year.

During the final month of the US/CA Treaty Albacore fishery, CGC STEADFAST embarked a NOAA OLE Enforcement Officer and a Canada DFO Fishery Officer, who joined Coast Guard Boarding Officers conducting at-sea boardings along the west coast. While no significant violations were detected, the operation advanced cross-border relationships between our three agencies, and facilitated international law enforcement cooperation.

Two Canadian tuna trollers were boarded while fishing in the U.S. EEZ this year with no violations detected. All other Canadian vessels observed or queried were in compliance with applicable treaty provisions. To ensure the integrity of the EEZ, the USCG works closely with various agency partners, including Canada DFO, NOAA OLE and General Counsel, state enforcement, and the U.S. Attorney's Office to ensure collaborative preparation for potential attempts by unauthorized Canadian tuna trollers to fish in the U.S. EEZ. No illegal activity has been detected or reported since reciprocal access resumed under the Tuna Treaty in 2013. The USCG will remain engaged in potential discussions regarding the future of reciprocal access under the Treaty, and enforcement strategies will be developed and employed to ensure compliance. The Coast Guard forward-deployed a C-27 maritime patrol aircraft and pushed our cutters out to the edges of our EEZ to ensure no Canadian vessels remained in the U.S. EEZ after the treaty season closure.

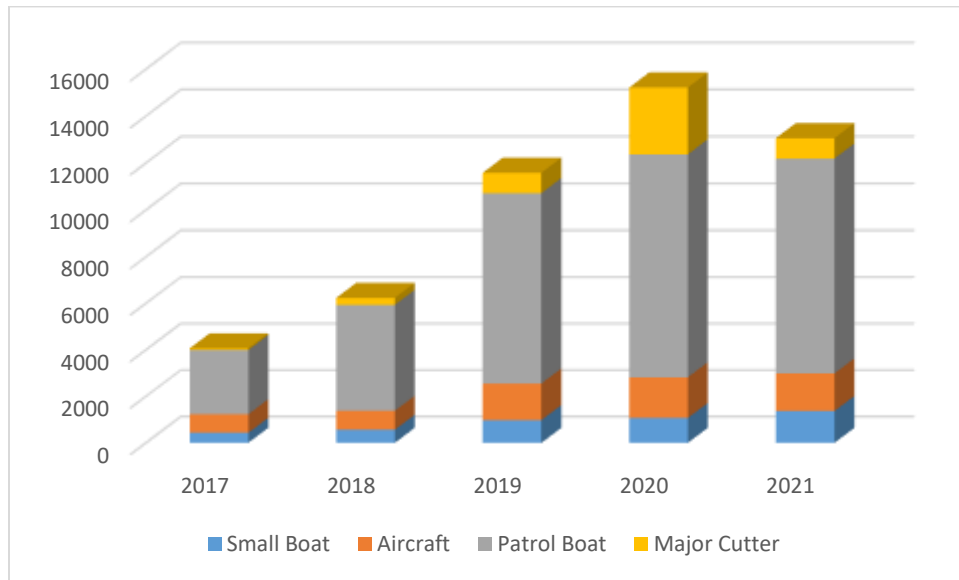
The Coast Guard also received reports of multiple Canadian Whiting vessels operating near the U.S. EEZ off the coast of northwest Washington. Aircraft and cutters were sortied to investigate and patrol the area with no incursions identified. The Coast Guard relayed the reports to NOAA OLE, who in turn notified Canada DFO who confirmed there was no illegal fishing by reviewing Electronic Monitoring data for the suspect vessels.

The Coast Guard is particularly concerned with continued reporting from the U.S. and Canadian Albacore fleets of net marked fish and potential movement of the Chinese fleet toward the US EEZ. Any fishermen with specific reports of vessel names, dates, and/or locations of Chinese vessels operating in the Northeastern Pacific Ocean are encouraged to make a report to any of the PFMC Enforcement Consultants.

### **Domestic Fisheries Efforts**

The majority of west coast offshore fisheries enforcement efforts are conducted by 154' Fast Response Cutters and 110' and 87' Patrol Boats, which patrolled for 9,200 hours in 2021. The Medium-Endurance Cutters and Buoy Tenders contributed 865 hours. Coast Guard aircraft patrolled for 1,623 hours while small boats patrolled for 1,370 hours.

## USCG Fisheries Resource Hours 2017-2021



*Figure 1. Coast Guard Living Marine Resource hours on the West Coast.*

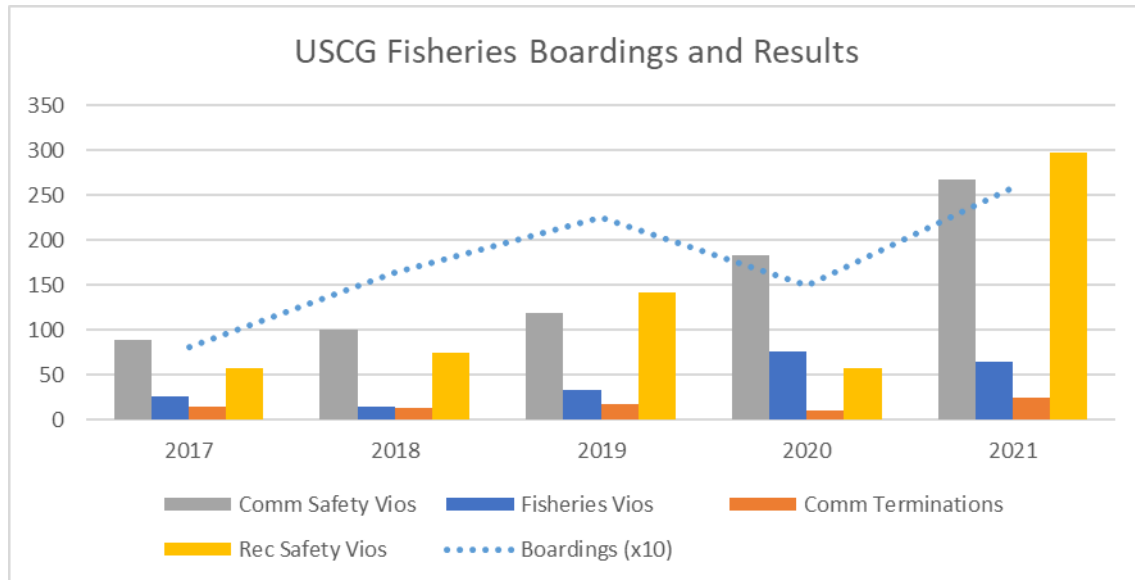
In addition to offshore fisheries patrols, USCG units enforced federal safety regulations and monitored tribal and state fisheries activity in Washington internal waters, as well as monitoring Columbia River Buoy 10, and other coastal bay recreational salmon fisheries. Operations were also conducted in internal waters to monitor high volumes of vessel traffic associated with certain fisheries openers. The majority of these targeted efforts included joint patrols, embarking riders, or sharing of information with state and NOAA fisheries enforcement personnel.

Coast Guard units conducted over 2,500 commercial and recreational fisheries boardings in Washington, Oregon, and California waters, covering federal, state, and tribal managed species. Approximately 1/4 of the boardings were on commercial fishing vessels, while the remainder were on recreational and charter vessels.

Similar to the benefits gained from working with enforcement partners, an open flow of communications between the USCG and fishing industry stakeholders is also vitally important to successful mission execution. Industry reports of potential enforcement concerns are extremely valuable to enhancing the USCG's maritime domain awareness. Reports from stakeholders are most effective when they are as timely, accurate, and detailed as possible. Even if an immediate response is not possible, these reports often assist in obtaining more assets to target a particular area of concern.

## Violation and Enforcement Summary

**2021 by the Numbers**  
*2,578 Fisheries Boardings*  
*65 Fisheries Violations*  
*168 Commercial Safety Violations*  
*24 Commercial Voyages Terminated*  
*298 Recreational Safety Violations*



*Figure 2. 2017-21 Coast Guard Boardings and Fisheries/Safety Violations*

The violations involved documentation of non-compliance with federal fisheries regulations, which were forward to NOAA for adjudication, as well as suspected violations of state and tribal regulations that were forwarded to the appropriate agency/tribe for disposition. Some examples of these fisheries violations include:

- Broadcasting incorrect Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) declaration codes (particularly at the start of Dungeness Crab season)
- Failure to broadcast Automatic Identification System (AIS) inside 12 NM
- Gear violations (i.e. using barbed hooks while fishing for salmon)
- Failure to carry Highly Migratory Species (HMS) logbook
- Fishing in closed areas (federal/state marine reserves)
- Fishing during closed periods
- Violations of Observer regulations

## **High Seas Illegal, Unregulated, Unreported (IUU) Fishing**

USCG Illegal, Unregulated, Unreported (IUU) fisheries enforcement efforts are typically conducted out of District 17 (D17-Alaska) and District 14 (D14-Hawaii). Although direct involvement with specific IUU activities have historically been relatively low on the West Coast, as summarized below, D11 and D13 remain alert to potential issues involving portions of respective areas of responsibility or activity with the potential to impact fisheries or stakeholder representatives related to the Council.

NOAA and the USCG have worked closely with enforcement agencies from Canada, China, Japan, South Korea, and the Russian Federation. The international community has come together to further emphasize the importance of maintaining sustainable fisheries by creating the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC), the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC) and the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum (NPCGF). The USCG's annual IUU fisheries enforcement operation, known as Operation North Pacific Guard, was conducted again during the summer of 2021.

Operation North Pacific Guard (NPG) is an annual operation, running for 25+ years, designed to detect and deter illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing activity on the high seas of the North Pacific Ocean. CGC BERTHOLF patrolled for 51 days, covered 27,000 NMs and completed 27 boardings on foreign flagged vessels, finding 42 potential violations during NPG 2021. Canada provided aircraft, shipriders, and intelligence support for this year's operation. Global Fishing Watch (GFW) contributed with intelligence support, including targeting and patrol planning analysis. NPG 2021's improved information and intelligence sharing between the U.S., Canada, Japan, Korea, and GFW produced intelligence-driven targeting which resulted in this Operation's highest ever number of violations per boarding, with over half of the violations detected being serious violations.

In support of OP JADE SPEAR, the PRC-flagged FU YUAN YU fleet owned by Pingtan Marine Enterprise Ltd (PME) were priority targets for boardings. PME has a history of illicit activity, to include human rights and IUU fishing violations. After completing five boardings on People's Republic of China (PRC) vessels finding four violations, including two serious violations, PRC-flagged fishing vessels summarily denied further boardings, alleging that the international boarding team was not wearing appropriate COVID-19 mitigating protective gear. Of note, the boarding team's protective gear exceeded the best practices outlined by the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMO), North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC).

Operation North Pacific Guard upholds international maritime governance in the North Pacific by supporting several RFMO, multilateral bodies that adopt legally binding conservation and management measures to protect migratory fish stocks on the high seas. The convention areas of the NPFC, WCPFC, and NPAFC - RFMOs established to conserve and govern important commercial fisheries including squid, tuna, and salmon – are patrolled during the operation. These

RFMOs have adopted monitoring, control, and surveillance measures, including high seas boarding and inspection in various forms. The United States views high seas boarding and inspection authorities in RFMOs to be critically important to monitoring and compelling compliance with regulatory measures. At-sea inspections level the playing field for legitimate operators and challenge IUU fishing bad actors by shining a light on their illicit activities.

### **III. Marine Protected Resources**

In addition to fisheries enforcement, the USCG has an active Marine Protected Resources protection program. Patrolling surface units routinely provide information on ESA-listed species, migratory birds, and marine mammal sightings and interactions, as well as working closely with agency partners and other stakeholders through stranding networks, National Marine Sanctuaries, and state Marine Reserves and Marine Protected Areas.

The Coast Guard responded to three requests for assistance with stranded or entangled whales off the west coast last year. The primary role of the Coast Guard in these cases is relocating the affected animal and tracking it until NOAA and Marine Mammal Stranding Network assets arrive on scene, which involved both aircraft and surface assets.

Additional Marine Protected Resource focused operations, which involved NOAA OLE, WDFW, OSP, and/or CDFW, were conducted in 2021, including:

- Operation Be Whale Wise: D13's operation focused on the protection of Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW), in particular, vessel approach zones. In 2021, USCG also focused on the new WDFW regulations requiring commercial whale watching licenses and AIS. Additionally, Sector Puget Sound conducted a surge operation targeting recreational Chinook and Coho salmon fishing in Puget Sound, geared toward ensuring conservation regulations on the SRKW key forage species are followed. This operation will be conducted again in 2022.
- Operation Buoy 10: D13's operation focused on enforcing regulations protecting ESA-listed Coho salmon on the Columbia River. Several minor violations were detected and referred to WDFW/OSP. This operation will be conducted again in 2022.
- Operation Coleridge: D13's operation focused on the requirement for groundfish longliners to use tori lines when setting gear to avoid interactions with endangered Short-Tailed Albatross. No violations were detected in 2021. This operation will be conducted again in 2022.
- Operation Fluke: D13's operation focused on reducing crab gear interaction offshore with endangered and threatened whales by assisting WDFW and OSP in locating derelict crab gear after the commercial season closes. In 2021, the operation was expanded to assist



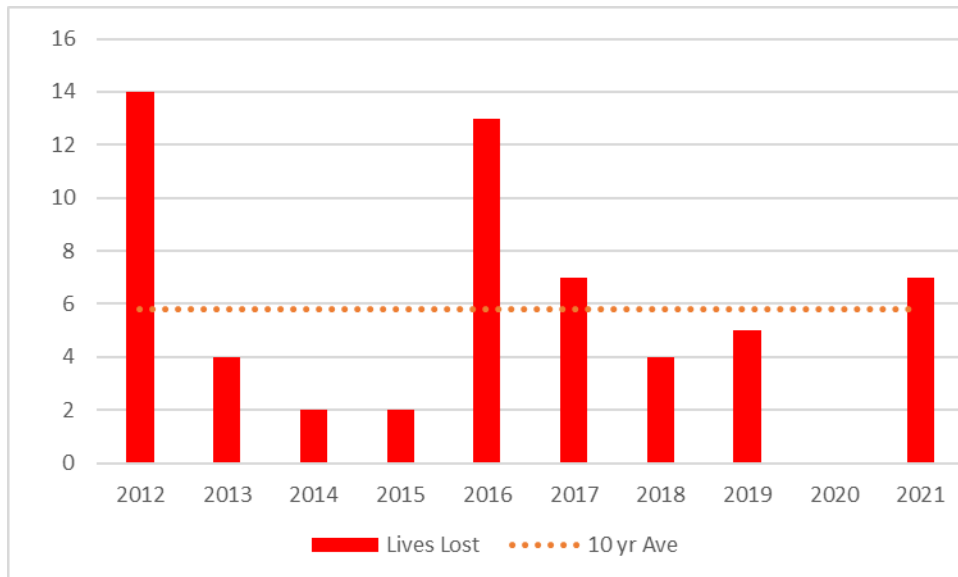
OSP enforcing the removal or movement of crab gear when the crab depth limit shifts to 40 fathoms. This operation will be conducted again in 2022.

- Operation Ocean Protector: D11’s recurring marine protected resources/marine protected species operation. Air Station Sacramento provided two dedicated National Marine Sanctuaries flights per month. This operation will be conducted again in 2022.
- Operation Silver Surf: D13’s operation focused on enforcing regulations protecting ESA-listed Coho salmon on the central and southern Oregon Coast. No significant violations were detected. This operation will be conducted again in 2022.

#### IV. Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety

One of the USCG’s primary objectives during the Council process is to identify ways to improve the safety of all fishing activity, whether it is related to commercial or recreational trips; whether the fisheries are administered by the federal government, the states, or the tribes; and whether the activity takes place in the ocean or within navigable internal waters. In addition to USCG representation on the Council, multiple USCG personnel attend Council meetings in order to engage with stakeholders to answer questions, especially regarding safety. USCG representatives are also available at similar venues throughout the year to collect information, provide advice, and pursue opportunities to enhance safety among the maritime community.

**Commercial Fishing Vessel Lives Lost 2012-2021**



*Figure 3. Lives lost from West Coast commercial fishing vessels since 2012.*

Seven lives were lost in West Coast commercial fisheries during 2021. The number of lives lost is slightly higher than the average from the preceding ten-year period (5.8 lives lost per year). The USCG remains diligent in efforts to determine contributing factors to past losses, and steps are being taken to mitigate and reduce potential future losses.

Examples of major Search and Rescue cases involving west coast fishing vessels include:

- In January, a 30-foot wood hulled crab vessel with 3 people onboard became disabled off Patrick's Point. The vessel drifted into the surf and the 3 POB were rescued by an Air Station Humboldt Bay helicopter with minor injuries. The vessel sank and broke up in the surf and was a total loss.
- Also in January, a 51-foot wooden troller with 3 POB became disabled, dragged anchor and ran aground in the Humboldt Bay Entrance Channel. One POB was launched off the boat and recovered. All 3 POB were hoisted by helo and transported to EMS ashore. Vessel sank and was a total loss.
- Also in January, a 28 year-old crewmember onboard a 50-foot crabber died from a drug overdose while moored at Pier 45 in San Francisco.
- In February, a 38FT crabber with 4 POB, capsized as they were inbound crossing the Tillamook Bay bar. The Coast Guard launched a helicopter and two 47' Motor Lifeboats that recovered all 4 crewmembers who were transported to awaiting EMS on shore: 2 responsive and 2 unresponsive. The debris field was reported to be throughout the channel and the vessel overturned against the South Jetty. At the time of the incident, the Tillamook Bay bar was restricted to all recreational and uninspected passenger vessels.
- Also in February, Tacoma Fire Department notified Sector Puget Sound that the CFV ALEUTIAN FALCON was on fire at Pier 25 in Tacoma. Tacoma Fire reported the fire was out of control, with the vessel listing 10 degrees. No one was reported to be onboard. Tacoma Fire fought the fire from both the shore and waterside. The fire is believed to be from hot work that was conducted in the blast freezer on the main deck. There was 9,800 pounds of ammonia, 200lbs of compressed liquid chlorine and 48,000 gallons of diesel on board. The Vessels condition deteriorated and it took a starboard list of 15-20 degrees. The fire burned for several days before it was completely extinguished. A Safety Zone was established by USCG boats and cutters around the vessel and Unified Command with stood up with USCG, WA ECY, and Tacoma Fire Department to manage the fire and pollution concerns. The vessel was declared a total loss.
- In March, Sector Puget Sound received a mayday call reporting a dive accident involving a commercial geoduck dive boat. The diver reportedly snagged on the bottom while diving for geoduck, removed their mask, became unresponsive and was assisted to the surface.

The diver was transported to Olympic Medical Center where he was pronounced deceased.

- In April, a 50' CFV was found idling with no one onboard in San Francisco Bay. The owner/operator was found 2 days later under a pier, deceased, not wearing a lifejacket.
- In June, a 32-foot fiberglass salmon troller with 2 people onboard ran aground in Drakes Bay, CA due to fatigue. There were no injuries. Due to limited access from land and sea, POB were rescued by a Sector San Francisco helicopter. The vessel broke up in the surf and was a total loss.
- In July, Sector North Bend received a report of a collision between a 38 foot troller and a 47 foot troller approximately 12NM west of Yaquina Bay, OR. The Coast Guard launched two 47 Motor Lifeboats from Station Yaquina Bay and a helicopter from Air Station North Bend. Both CFV's were safely escorted to Newport, OR. Post-Search and Rescue Boardings resulted in 5 safety violations aboard one boat and 3 on the other, including failure to maintain a proper lookout as required by Navigation Rule 5.
- In November, a 70-foot steel foot tuna boat 350NM west of Monterey with 7 people onboard had a fire in the pilothouse that became uncontrollable. After sending out a MAYDAY, all POB abandoned ship into the liferaft and were rescued by a passing commercial freighter that was participating in the Automated Mutual-Assistance Vessel Rescue (AMVER) system.
- Also in November, a 67-foot Hagfish vessel reported they were taking on water approximately 20NM offshore the Umpqua River. The crew reported they were abandoning ship onto their lift raft. The vessel's Emergency Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) was activated. The Coast Guard launched 2 helicopters which recovered all 5 survivors. No serious injuries were reported. The vessel was last observed with a small portion of the keel showing above the water, and presumed sunk.
- In December, a runaway 38-foot trawler with 1 POB was found off Santa Barbara with no one onboard. The vessel owner/operator was reported to typically fish alone. After an extensive search, he was presumed to be deceased and the search efforts were suspended.
- Also in December, a 32-foot squid light boat was found aground on the rocks in the Channel Islands with a deceased owner/operator in the pilothouse.

Additional reported casualties included:

- Disabled and Adrift (engine/shaft/rudder/battery issues)
- Minor collisions at sea (net entanglements, low visibility, improper lookout)
- Sinkings at the dock (deferred maintenance)

- Flooding (pumped out and repaired on-scene)
- Minor injuries (first aid)
- Soft groundings (refloated-no damage)
- Fire (electrical, etc)

These incidents make clear that hazards in the fishing industry are not isolated to a particular fishery, gear type, geographic area, or time of year. The USCG is constantly working to identify trends and take preventive actions in fisheries where incidents occur more frequently, as well as taking steps to attempt to improve the overall safety of the industry.

2021 boarding statistics indicate approximately 17% of commercial fishing vessels boarded had some type of discrepancy involving safety gear carriage requirements or other federal safety regulations (reversing an upward trend of 21% in 2019 and 36% in 2020). Approximately 5% of all commercial fishing vessels boarded had their voyages terminated at sea or were issued a Captain of the Port Order during a post-SAR boarding in port for existence of especially hazardous conditions. Especially hazardous conditions, which are defined in Section 46 of the Code of Federal Regulations can include conditions such as the lack of adequate immersion suits, lack of adequate firefighting equipment, and other conditions having the possibility of presenting an immediate threat to a vessel and its crew. The USCG very carefully considers all circumstances related to the potential termination of a vessel's voyage and issuance of a Captain of the Port Order. The final decision will only be made by the cognizant District Commander or a senior officer to whom the authority has been delegated. Following the termination of a vessel's voyage and issuance of a Captain of the Port Order, the vessel's operator must correct the discrepancies noted and receive permission from the USCG Captain of the Port prior to getting underway again.

In addition to verifying the status of safety gear during at-sea boardings, USCG units also place a significant emphasis on ensuring compliance with Rule 5 of the International Rules of the Road, which requires all vessels to maintain an appropriate bridge watch or lookout. Not maintaining a bridge watch has been identified as a contributing factor to several vessel accidents at sea in the past few years.

USCG fishing vessel safety personnel also work closely with the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program to identify safety concerns on vessels carrying observers. USCG personnel are involved in drill conductor classes and other outreach opportunities to promote at-sea safety, as has been the case for over a decade. USCG fisheries enforcement and commercial fishing vessel safety staff have also worked with NOAA to develop a standard protocol for observers to report to enforcement personnel regarding vessel safety or other concerns at sea. The USCG has a close working relationship with NOAA OLE, which shares information regarding observer debriefings after vessel deployments resulting in observations of suspected safety or MARPOL violations requiring potential follow up by the USCG.

Further details, as well as updates on the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act rulemaking and other important commercial fishing vessel safety information are available at: [www.fishsafewest.info](http://www.fishsafewest.info).

## **V. Recreational Fishing Safety**

Recreational boaters fishing in ocean waters off the West Coast face similar dangers as their commercial vessel counterparts, which are inherent when operating within the coastal environment. Similar to efforts being made to improve the safety of commercial fisheries, every Coast Guard District has a Recreational Boating Safety program focused on enhancing the safety of recreational boaters, including those engaged in fishing.

Coast Guard units work closely with fisheries enforcement and first responders to place a particular emphasis on being present to monitor activity associated with fisheries openers and other timeframes anticipated to result in significant offshore vessel participation. Unlike commercial fisheries, the Coast Guard isn't the lead agency charged with investigating casualties on recreational boats. Because the root cause of incidents is often unknown or unreported to the Coast Guard, it is much more difficult to determine trends or patterns in recreational vessel incidents when compared to commercial fishing vessel casualties.