

INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION PROGRAM

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW PANEL

34TH MEETING

LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA (USA)

9-10 OCTOBER 2003

DOCUMENT IRP-34-09

MONITORING THE ACTIVITIES OF VESSELS OF LESS THAN 363 T CARRYING CAPACITY

1. INTRODUCTION

The *Plan of action to enhance the success of the AIDCP* requires the Secretariat to present a detailed report concerning the extent of possible non-compliance with the prohibition against intentional sets on dolphins by vessels of less than 363 T carrying capacity, including a review of common equipment and other similarities among identified cases.

The AIDCP, and therefore the observer program used to verify compliance with the requirements of the AIDCP, covers only purse-seine vessels of carrying capacity greater than 363 T. This arbitrary cutoff point, originally established in 1992 under the La Jolla Agreement, was chosen because it coincided with IATTC capacity Class 6 (devised for an entirely different purpose) and also excluded almost all vessels that did not fish on dolphins. Fishing on dolphins generally requires equipment, especially two or more speedboats, that smaller vessels may not carry, and the data available from vessel logbooks at that time showed that these vessels made very few sets on dolphins. Also, the cost of the observer program was to be financed in part by vessel fees, and this would have had a disproportionate impact on smaller vessels, since the cost of an observer is the same regardless of vessel size, but the revenue from a small vessel is less than that from a large vessel.

2. SUMMARY OF INFORMATION ON DOLPHIN SETS BY VESSELS OF LESS THAN 363 T CAPACITY

2.1. Before the AIDCP

During 1995-1997, two vessels of less than 363 T capacity had DMLs and fished on dolphins. One vessel made 28 trips during that period, carrying 2 or 3 speedboats, and the other 27, carrying between 1 and 3 speedboats; in total the two vessels made 2 sets on dolphins in 1995, 11 in 1996, and 18 in 1997.

Both vessels were equipped with dolphin safety panels during all these trips, but other required gear items were frequently not present. One vessel had 1 or more of these items missing during 12 of its 28 trips, and the other during 25 of 27 trips.

2.2. Under the AIDCP

The AIDCP prohibits fishing on dolphins by vessels of less than 363 T capacity and does not require those vessels to carry observers. Following is information available to the Secretariat concerning apparent intentional contraventions of this prohibition.

In addition to the cases listed below, one vessel which was previously required to carry observers and made sets on dolphins had its carrying capacity reduced to less than 363 T by sealing some of its wells. As far as the Secretariat is aware, this vessel is still capable of setting on dolphins.

Vessel 'A' - Carrying capacity 329 T; well volume 382 m³

This foreign-flag vessel was apprehended in Ecuadorian waters near the Galapagos Islands with dolphins in its net. This case was first brought to the attention of the IRP at its 30th meeting in June 2002. Under

the La Jolla Agreement, this vessel was allocated a second-semester DML in 1995 and a full-year DML in 1996 and 1997.

Information collected by the IATTC in October 2001 indicates that the vessel at that time was equipped with 3 speedboats and a dolphin safety panel of unknown dimensions constructed of 1-1/4 inch mesh webbing.

Vessel ‘B’- Carrying capacity 350 T; well volume 410 m³

This vessel was sighted chasing dolphins with speedboats by an IDCP observer assigned to a vessel of the same flag. The Party was notified of the incident by the Secretariat in October 2001, and the case was first brought to the attention of the IRP later that month at its 28th meeting. In March 2002 the Secretariat asked the Party if there was any progress on the case; to date, the Party has not responded.

Information collected by the IATTC in July 2001 indicates that at that time the vessel was equipped with 3 speedboats and a dolphin safety panel 120 fathoms long, 2 net strips deep, and constructed of 1-1/4 inch mesh webbing.

Vessel ‘D’- Carrying capacity 150 T; well volume 180 m³

This vessel was sighted “chasing and setting on dolphins” by an observer on a vessel of the same flag in March 2002. The government of the sighted vessel received a copy of the IRP form documenting the sighting shortly after the trip ended; the Secretariat did not send a letter to the government regarding the case until September 23, after it was presented to the IRP at its meeting in June.. No response has yet been received.

3. OPTIONS FOR MONITORING SMALLER VESSELS

There are several options for checking whether smaller vessels are setting on dolphins. Some, like observers and video cameras, would provide definitive evidence of a vessel’s activities, while others, such as VMS and catch sampling, provide only an indication of such activities.

a. Allow vessels of 363 T or less to have DMLs, and require those that do to carry an observer

Advantages: Provides opportunity for small vessels to set on dolphins legitimately and to be monitored.

Disadvantages: Adverse effects on the present AIDCP financing scheme, since small vessels would contribute less than they cost to monitor; difficulty in providing accommodation for observers on small vessels; additional vessels receiving DMLs would reduce individual DMLs.

b. Full observer program: 100% observer coverage of all vessels larger than 213 T.

Advantages: Complete coverage, standardized data collection, complete fisheries data.

Disadvantages: High cost, difficulty in providing accommodation for observers on small vessels.

c. Partial observer program: 33-50% observer coverage of vessels larger than 213 T.

Advantages: Lower cost, could target vessels that intend to set on dolphins.

Disadvantages: Provides no assurance that vessels without observers are not setting on dolphins.

d. Video monitoring: Automated video systems on vessels to monitor their activities.

Advantages: Lower costs in the long term; simple to operate, requiring only that the videotape be obtained from the vessel after each trip; could be extended to record bycatches.

Disadvantages: Requires analysis of recordings at the end of a trip, with extra demands on staff; initial logistics complicated; difficulty distinguishing tampering from malfunctions; provides virtually none of the other data that observers collect.

- e. **Vessel monitoring system (VMS):** Require all vessels of 363 T or less to install VMS equipment, and provide full access to the IRP to review fishing areas. Many small vessels fish close to the coast, in areas where fishing on dolphins is not common. However, vessels fishing in the same areas as larger seiners may have the opportunity to set on dolphins, and could be required to carry an observer.

Advantages: Established technology; functioning quite simple; costs less than observer program.

Disadvantages: Fishing location may not be a sufficient indication that vessels are setting on dolphins, and occasional sets on dolphins may not be noticed.

- f. **Monitoring of catches:** Require all vessels of 363 T or less to have their unloadings sampled at the end of each trip, and compare the species and size compositions with those of other vessels. The size and species composition of tuna taken in sets on dolphins is normally distinct from that taken with other methods.

Advantages: Lowest cost and logistic simplicity.

Disadvantages: Statistical studies are needed to analyze and interpret data, with extra staff costs. Results may not provide conclusive evidence of vessel activities.