

# THE EFFECTS OF GHOST FISHING



THE LENGTH OF A DRIFT NET CAN BE UP TO **1.7 MILES** LONG, WHICH COULD COVER THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF THE **GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE**

SOURCE: DRIFTNET IMPACT MONITORING ASSESSMENT AND CONTROL ACT (1987)



**ONE ABANDONED NET CAN KILL \$20,000 WORTH OF DUNGENESS CRABS. REMOVING THE NET COSTS \$1,358.**

SOURCE: THE SEADOG SOCIETY

UP TO **30%** 

**OF ALL FISH CAUGHT ARE BY GHOST FISHING NETS**

SOURCE: LAIST DW (1995) MARINE DEBRIS ENTANGLEMENT AND GHOST FISHING: A CRYPTIC AND SIGNIFICANT TYPE OF BYCATCH

100 ft  
90 ft  
80 ft  
70 ft  
60 ft  
50 ft  
40 ft  
30 ft  
20 ft  
10 ft  
0 ft



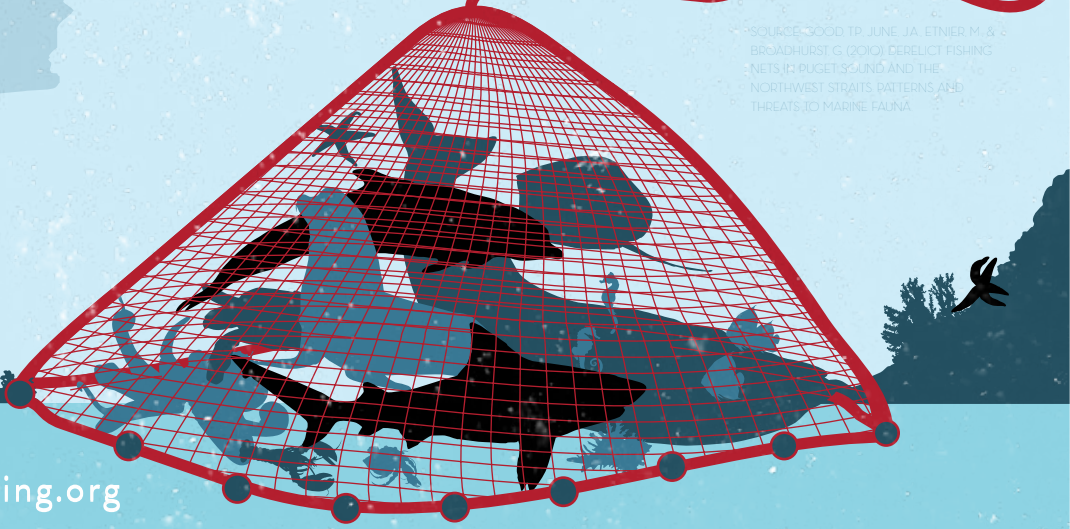
AN ABANDONED **4,000-FOOT** GILL NET WAS LOCATED FOUR MILES OFF THE COAST OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. THE **FIRST 100 FEET** OF THAT GILL NET CONTAINED THE CARCASSES AND SKELETONS OF **21 DEAD SEA LIONS, A DOZEN CORMORANTS, AND SEVERAL CRABS.**

SOURCE: OCEAN DEFENSE ALLIANCE

**870 RECOVERED NETS**

IN WASHINGTON STATE CONTAINED MORE THAN **32,000** MARINE ANIMALS.

SOURCE: GOOD TP, JUNE JA, ETNER M, & BRADHURST G (2010) DERELICT FISHING NETS IN PUGET SOUND AND THE NORTH-WEST STRAITS: PATTERNS AND THREATS TO MARINE FAUNA



[www.ghostfishing.org](http://www.ghostfishing.org)

# GHOST FISHING:

## THE OCEANS' FORGOTTEN KILLER



### WHAT IS GHOST FISHING

Ghost fishing is a term that describes what happens when derelict fishing gear "continues to fish." Derelict fishing gear is any discarded, lost or abandoned fishing gear in the environment. This gear continues to fish and trap animals, entangle and potentially kill marine life, smother habitat and act as a hazard to navigation. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimate that 640,000 tons of fishing gear are left in the world's oceans each year.

### ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

Case studies and scientific research have found that ghost fishing can have severe economic consequences on the commercial fishing and tourism industries, as well as costs incurred to restore damaged marine environments.

#### ACCORDING TO UNEP, GHOST FISHING CAN:

- interfere with fishing and damage fishing boats and gear
- block cooling water intakes in power stations
- interfere with ships, causing accidents at sea
- damage local economies by contaminating fish catches and driving away tourists
- cost a significant amount to clean up.

**CASE STUDY:** The SeaDoc Society calculated that one abandoned net could kill almost \$20,000 (USD) worth of Dungeness crab over 10 years. However, the cost to remove the net is only \$1,358 (USD).

### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Ghost fishing is harmful to marine life directly – through entanglement and ingestion – and indirectly, through habitat destruction and disruption of their ecosystem.

World Animal Protection estimates that entanglement in ghost fishing gear kills at least 136,000 seals, sea lions and large whales each year, in addition to countless birds, turtles, fish and other species. In California, more than 10% of pelican, gull and pinniped species treated at marine wildlife rehabilitation centers are admitted due to fishing gear entanglement or ingestion injuries, according to the Wildlife Disease Association.

### IMPORTANCE OF EARLY REPORTING

Early reporting of gear losses make cleanups easier and reduce the costs to remove. Modern nets and fishing lines are made from synthetic materials, such as monofilament or nylon, which take decades, even hundreds of years, to decompose in water. Abandoned nets that remain anchored become weighted down with sea life, making them more difficult to remove.

According to a predictive catch model created by the Northwest Straits Foundation, derelict nets in Washington State were entangling 3.2 million animals annually every year they remained in the water.

### WHAT CAN THE GOVERNMENT DO

#### PASS LEGISLATION TO MANDATE THE REPORTING OF LOST FISHING NETS:

Replicate Action by Washington State Legislature in 2002: Enacted SB 6313, which encourages the removal of derelict fishing gear and created a foundation for a retrieval program. Washington State also requires commercial and sport crabbers to adopt biodegradable cotton "rot cord" on their crab pots. If a crab pot is lost or abandoned, these cotton cords are designed to degrade and prevent the trap from continuing to capture crabs indefinitely.

#### ESTABLISH FUNDING IN ANNUAL BUDGET FOR THE REMOVAL OF DERELICT FISHING GEAR:

Funding could be offset by fees collected from: fishing licenses; those who don't report lost fishing nets; and/or those who are caught leaving fishing gear behind.

**CASE STUDY:** Within the FY 2014 Washington State annual budget, \$3.5 million was directed to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to complete net-removal efforts in partnership with the Northwest Straits Foundation, since 2002.

#### SUPPORT AND PASS LEGISLATION TO MANDATE THE REPORTING OF LOST FISHING NETS:

**CASE STUDY:** In 2009, a \$4.5 million NOAA grant funded the Northwest Straits Foundation to remove more than 200 metric tons of marine debris including 3,000 nets, and restore 600 acres of habitat in Puget Sound.