

A15/ER/ALL/15

New equipment testing protocol

NMFS



INTERNATIONAL
WHALING COMMISSION

Atlantic Large Whale Disentanglement Network (ALWDN) New Equipment/Techniques Testing Protocols

Large whale entanglement events pose unique disentanglement issues that a responder must deal with in the field. Occasionally cases are so difficult due to the species, age, health, and the entangling gear that current protocols and techniques are not adequate to safely disentangle the whale. Due to the dangers involved, the NMFS Permits Office must approve any new tools or techniques prior to their use. To help expedite the approval process, please follow the steps below. These steps will aid the efficiency, liability, and safety of the parties involved.

1. Please contact the NMFS Large Whale Disentanglement Coordinator to discuss your concept before investing in the procedure. The ALWDN is constantly looking for new procedures to increase the success rate; however, many techniques have already been discussed or attempted.
2. The new tool/technique must take into consideration the impact on: the health of the entangled whale; the safety of the disentanglement crew; and the surrounding environment. Expect the worst case scenario and how to reverse your actions.
3. The proposal must contain a written description of the new tool/technique, as well as diagrams/drawings/photos. It must be clear how the operation will be conducted with the new procedure. Please discuss the worst case scenarios, including possible repercussions and exit strategies. The proposal must include a method of testing the new tool/technique that best simulates real world disentanglement conditions (*i.e.*, test on the water).
4. Please send the proposal to Jamison Smith, NMFS Large Whale Disentanglement Coordinator, for review. Proposals may be sent via email to Jamison.Smith@noaa.gov or by fax at (978) 281-9394. The proposal will also be provided to high level ALWDN members for their review. If the proposal is deemed a valid and safe option, it will be forwarded to the NMFS Permit Office for formal approval. The NMFS Permit Office must approve the new tool/technique before it can be used. The NMFS Permit Office may only authorize certain individuals to use this equipment or may require modification or additional testing before use. Please take this into consideration while developing your concept. Slight modifications to approved techniques/tools may be allowed in the field, based on the senior ALWDN participant's recommendation. However, every effort should be made to contact NMFS prior to use.