



Potential Deterrence Methods for
Pacific Harbor Seals, California Sea Lions &
Eastern U.S. Stock Steller Sea Lions
Updated November 2015

The following list of “potential methods” and “deterrents to avoid” is not an exhaustive list of non-lethal methods or techniques. If you have questions about protecting your property and/or fishing gear and catch from nuisance Pacific harbor seals, California sea lions, and eastern U.S. stock steller sea lions, please contact our marine mammal specialists: (Seattle, WA) Lynne Barre, 206-526-4745; (Long Beach, CA) Monica DeAngelis, 562-980-3232; Penny Ruvelas, 562-980-4197.

Note: Some of the methods listed (such as loud noise or pyrotechnics) may not be appropriate for use in some areas, or are subject to prohibition under federal, state or local ordinances. The presence of ESA listed species (marine mammals or fish) in some areas may advise against the use of certain methods. Please consult with appropriate authorities to determine if such prohibitions exist in your area, or if ESA-listed species may be encountered.

Potential methods for use by private property owners to deter Pacific harbor seals, California sea lions, and eastern U.S. stock Steller sea lions from damaging property (developed waterfront, decks, docks, floats, piers, bait receivers, vessels at anchor, etc.).

Barriers & Exclusion Devices:

- fencing (e.g., plastic construction/snow fence, chain link)
- closely spaced posts
- bull rails
- electric livestock fencing
- netting
- swim step protector

Visual Repellents:

- flags, pinwheels, or streamers
- flashing lights or strobes
- balloons
- human attendants/monitors

Noise Makers:

- horns, whistles, bells
- electronic acoustic devices (Acoustic Harassment Devices)
- clapping, banging on pots, pans, drums; empty aluminum cans on a string banging together
- music
- starter pistols
- pyrotechnics (e.g., bird screamers, bangers, firecrackers, propane canons)

Physical Contact:

- high or low pressure water hoses
- sprinklers, sprayers
- crowder boards
- bull poles (blunt tip), brooms
- cattle prod (these products produce only a mild electric shock designed for handling livestock and are in no way related to “stun guns” designed for self-defense)
- toy water guns (e.g., “Super Soaker®”)
- non-toxic and water soluble paint ball or air soft guns
- slingshot
- chemical irritants (e.g., non-toxic pepper spray, mace) used for animal control (there are many municipal and state ordinances controlling the use and possession of these irritants)

Note: Guard dogs are not included on the list of suggested measures because of risks to both dogs and marine mammals, including the potential risk of disease transmission between them.



NOAA FISHERIES West Coast Region

Potential methods for use by fishers to deter Pacific harbor seals, California sea lions, and eastern U.S. stock Steller sea lions from damaging gear or catch (anglers must be actively fishing with gear deployed).

Visual Repellents/Noise Makers:

- boat hazing, circling
- pounding on hull
- pyrotechnics (e.g., bird screamers, bangers, underwater firecrackers, cracker shells)
- starter pistols
- horns, bells, whistles

Physical Contact:

- slingshots
- non-toxic and water soluble paint ball guns
- non-lethal ammunition (e.g., rubber bullets, sabot rounds, game stingers)

Methods to Avoid – The following methods and techniques have an increased likelihood of causing injury or death and should be avoided.

- No Firearms with “live” (lethal) ammunition
- No Devices with Injurious Projectiles (e.g., archery gear, crossbows, spear guns, bangsticks)
- No Sharp/Pointed Objects (e.g., harpoons, spears, gaffs, nail studded bats/poles/clubs)
- No Entangling Devices (e.g., loose webbing, snares, concertina wire)
- No Aggressive Tactile Methods (e.g., striking animals with bats, hammers etc., impact with vehicles or boats)
- No Tainted Baits or Poisons

Act responsibly & use common sense

Regardless of method or intent, the property owner or fisher may be subject to prosecution should a marine mammal be seriously injured or killed as a result of deterrence efforts for the protection of property, gear or catch.

Remember personal safety

Attempts by property owners and/or fishers to deter nuisance animals from engaging in unwanted behaviors using non-lethal means is a personal choice and not without risk (to the person doing the deterring and anyone around them). Sea lions and seals are wild animals that may react unpredictably to non-lethal deterrence measures, resulting in personal injury or additional damage to property. Sea lions are large and powerful animals that can move as quickly as a person on land.

Be aware of people around you and be courteous

The safe use of some of the above-listed potential methods (e.g., cracker shells, non-lethal ammunition) requires considerable skill and experience. The use of some of these methods may precipitate undesirable social interactions. *If you are in possession of a firearm, law enforcement officers approaching your property or vessel will assume that your firearm is loaded with lethal ammunition.*

Individuals attempting to deter nuisance sea lions and seals, using the above the listed potential methods are similar techniques, do so at their own risk.