

Southeast Shrimp Fisheries Giant Manta Ray Release Guidance

This guidance describe the procedures for releasing a manta ray from a shrimp trawl. Under these procedures, the trawl is retrieved in a normal manner. **The manta ray is not brought onboard the vessel.** The objective is to bring portions of the net tail and body out of the water in order to maneuver the captured ray towards and out the mouth of the net.

Step 1: The haulback of all nets should proceed as usual. Bring doors to the block.

Step 2: Position the vessel so that the manta/trawl is on the windward/upwind side of the boat. Reduce speed or take the engine out of gear if possible. This will reduce drag on the animal, allowing it to move towards the mouth of the net in subsequent steps.

Step 3: Retrieve the bag and dump the catch as usual.

Step 4: Using a whip/lifting line positioned forward of the TED, raise sections of trawl netting out of the water as high as possible, causing the animal to slide toward the trawl mouth.

- It may require several lifts/whips, moving forward in the trawl body with each lift, to move the animal toward the trawl mouth.
- If the animal stops moving, try lowering the trawl doors to the water. This will increase the angle of the whip line lifting point relative to the trawl mouth and help move the animal toward the trawl mouth.

Step 5: If the animal does not move after repetitive lifts are attempted, it may be necessary to cut portions of the trawl net webbing that appear to be under tension near or around the animal. Bring those areas of the trawl as close to the vessel as possible and make necessary cuts to relieve tension. Take care to avoid cutting the animal.

Step 6: Once released from the trawl, monitor the animal's direction of movement. Take care to maneuver the vessel away from the animal while it is recovering.

Step 7: Report the incident to manta.ray@noaa.gov or call Calusa Horn, NMFS Southeast Giant Manta Ray Recovery Coordinator at 727-824-5312

