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## **Washington Sea Grant's Ed Melvin Wins Presidential Award for Seabird-Saving Streamer Lines**

Washington Sea Grant staff scientist shares top honors for developing gear that nearly eliminates seabird bycatch in longline fisheries from the West Coast to South Africa.

Twenty years of work on sea and land to save threatened seabirds from becoming fishing bycatch have won national recognition for Washington Sea Grant's senior fisheries scientist, Ed Melvin. This week it was announced that the research project he leads, which develops, tests, and promotes bird-scaring streamer lines for longline fishing vessels, has received the [2015 Presidential Migratory Bird Federal Stewardship Award](#). Eight federal agencies, including the EPA and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, nominated projects for the award. It went to the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's Fisheries Seabird Program, which funds some of Melvin's research.

Melvin, research scientist Troy Guy, and his collaborators began by adapting the *tori* lines developed by Japanese fishermen in the 1980s to the conditions facing Pacific Coast longline fleets. In 1999 they took this strategy to Alaska and proved that paired streamer lines can dramatically reduce, even eliminate, seabird bycatch.

In 2009 Melvin and team traveled farther afield to work with the Japanese tuna fleet off South Africa. After testing multiple streamer and weighted longline combinations, they found a configuration that, together with setting baited lines at night, eliminated seabird bycatch with virtually no impact on crew labor or fish catches. In 2012, the committee overseeing the international Agreement for the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels endorsed these measures for all longline tuna fisheries that encounter these birds. Three of four international tuna commissions adopted parts of them.

The branchline design used was developed by fishing master Kazuhiro Yamazaki and won the World Wildlife Fund's 2011 Smart Gear Award.

Melvin and Guy returned home to adapt what they'd learned in Alaska to the West Coast's groundfish fleets, starting with tribal fisheries. Through exacting analysis of fishing and habitat ranges, they and their colleagues determined that the sablefish fishery overlapped most with, and thus presented the greatest threat to, the magnificent but endangered short-tailed albatross. Working closely with fishermen partners, they tested and refined their streamer lines for the complex range of boat sizes and gear configurations used on the West Coast.

Their findings led NOAA Fisheries to begin the process of requiring longline boats 55 feet or longer to deploy streamer lines when they pursue West Coast groundfish. NOAA provides the lines free through select West Coast marine-supply dealers.

Washington Sea Grant shares the presidential award with NOAA's West Coast Region and Northwest Fisheries Science Center, Oregon State University, California Sea Grant, Oregon Sea Grant, the Makah, Quinault, and Quileute tribes, and other agencies and industry groups. For more information on this and other WSG fishery programs visit the [WSG website](#).

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*Washington Sea Grant, based at the University of Washington, provides statewide marine research, outreach, and education services - helping people to understand and address the challenges facing Washington's oceans and coasts. The National Sea Grant College Program is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce. [www.wsg.washington.edu](http://www.wsg.washington.edu). Join the conversation [@WASeaGrant](#) and [Facebook.com/WaSeaGrant](https://www.facebook.com/WaSeaGrant).*