HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS FOR 2007

It is the understanding of the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) that all of the requirements necessary to issue the drift gillnet exempted fishing permit (EFP) have been met except for final approval by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Headquarters of the permit required under §101(a)(5)(E) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The HMSAS requests that the Council send a letter to NMFS Headquarters with the following message:

Understanding that many segments of the West Coast commercial fisheries are significantly depressed, as validated by the disaster designation for the commercial salmon and groundfish fisheries, the drift gillnet EFP is an opportunity to show areas of the ocean where additional harvest opportunity for West Coast commercial fishermen exist. This potential opportunity, which is based in scientific principals, may lead to increased harvest that will help support the West Coast commercial fishery infrastructure and family businesses that represent the majority of the industry participants. It is our understanding that the delay in approval of this EFP, which has already caused a lost opportunity for the 2006 season, is based on a slow response from NMFS Headquarters in Washington, DC. Because of the importance of the approval of this EFP to the West Coast fisheries, the Council encourages NMFS to expedite the completion of this EFP. Without approval in a timely manner, the industry will lose another year of opportunity.

Mr. Bob Fletcher abstained from this HMSAS recommendation.

The HMSAS also asks the Council to send out the longline EFP alternatives as proposed by Highly Migratory Species Management Team for public review in order to potentially improve fishing opportunity for West Coast fishermen.

PFMC
11/08/06