

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
HIGH SEAS SWORDFISH LONGLINE FISHERY ON THE WEST COAST

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) reviewed a letter transmitted to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) from Mr. John Gibbs about harmonizing the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) management measures with the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council measures for shallow set longline gear used to target swordfish. Mr. Gibbs is a West Coast longline fisherman with a Hawaii longline permit but would like to see the West Coast market infrastructure revitalized with deliveries of fresh product. Fishing operations would be conducted on the high seas east of 150° W longitude and west of the West Coast Exclusive Economic Zone.

Management Background

In June of 2003, the Council requested the HMSMT provide an initial review of elements needed to develop a limited entry program for the high seas longline fishery. The HMSMT met October 1-2, 2003 to review analytical approaches and discuss data requirements for a limited entry program. Their reports are archived in the June and November 2003 Council meeting minutes. However in 2004, the final rule implementing the Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan prohibited shallow set longline fishing for swordfish in the West Coast Exclusive Economic Zone (3 to 200 nm offshore) and west of 150° W longitude. Additionally, NMFS published a final rule under the Endangered Species Act prohibiting shallow water sets east of 150° W longitude to protect endangered sea turtle in 2004. Thus, no work has been conducted on this activity since then 2004.

HMSMT Recommendation:

1. Provide guidance to the Team on whether or not to revisit development on a program for a high seas longline fishery.

PFMC
04/05/07