

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA PLANNING AND WORKLOAD PRIORITIES

At the September meeting, the Council tasked the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) and the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) with developing alternatives for a West Coast-based shallow set-longline fishery to target swordfish on the high seas. The HMSMT understands that the Council has tentatively considered reviewing those alternatives at the March Council meeting. The HMSMT recommends that the Council include this item on their March meeting agenda in order to coincide with actions of the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WPFMC).

The WPFMC is planning to adopt a preferred alternative at their March meeting which may allow for greater effort for Hawaii-permitted vessels in their shallow-set swordfish longline fishery. Once the WPFMC adopts a preferred alternative, a supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) will be prepared to identify the effects of the fishery on target and non-target species. The WPFMC has indicated through their October 18 letter to Dr. McIsaac that the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Pacific Council) proposed action could be included in the cumulative impacts section of the SEIS in order to determine effects on target and non-target species, if applicable.

The West Coast-based shallow-set longline fishery has been closed since approval of the Pacific Council Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan, whereas the Hawaii-based fishery was reopened in 2004 with regulations which minimize impacts on protected species (e.g., the requirement to use circle hooks and mackerel bait, and imposing incidental take caps on sea turtles). The opportunities for Hawaii-based fishers and West Coast-based fishers are incongruous and are having a negative effect on the fishers and seafood processing industry on the West Coast.

Since it is expected that the Hawaii-based and West Coast-based fisheries may be operating in overlapping areas and interacting with the same resources, the HMSMT feels it is important to expedite selecting alternatives for further analysis.

PFMC
11/08/07