

## HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT 2: ANNUAL CATCH LIMITS AND ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) discussed preliminary alternatives for consideration by the Council to address new Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) requirements under National Standard 1 (NS1) guidelines (Agenda Item F.3.b HMSMT Report). The HMSMT Report summarizes the following topics recommended for the Council to address:

- 1) Classification of stocks in the HMS FMP as **management unit species (MUS)** or **ecosystem components (EC)**
- 2) Potential application to MUS of the MSA international exception for annual catch limits (ACL) requirements
- 3) Determining the primary fishery management plan (FMP) for management unit species (MUS) covered by both the HMS FMP and the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council's (WPFMC) Pelagics FMP
- 4) Establishing biological reference points and accountability measures

### 1. Classification of stocks in the HMS FMP

Section 1 of the HMSMT Report addresses the need to classify species covered in the HMS FMP according to NS1 guidelines. The HMSMT recommends the following two options:

1. All current MUS are considered "in the fishery" and all monitored species are classified as ecosystem component species.
2. Conduct a vulnerability analysis on selected MUS, monitored species, and any new species found taken with HMS gear to determine reclassification.

Table 1 provides average commercial landings and average annual recreational dead catch for a list of MUS and monitored species in the original plan. Information in Table 1 will need to be supplemented with observer data on the amount and disposition of catch, recreational catch and release data, and indicators of annual variability in the catch levels such as the ranges or standard deviations before the impact of HMS FMP fisheries can be appropriately assessed.

### 2. Application of the international exception

Section 2 of the HMSMT Report considers applicability of the international exception. A summary of possible alternatives for applying the international exception are shown in Table 3, where X's in the column for each alternative denote species to which the international exception would apply. Alternative 1 is consistent with the WPFMC's decision to apply the international exception to all species in the Pelagics FMP.

Alternative 2 would apply the international exception to all species except certain sharks. Alternative 3 would only apply the exception to tunas and billfish assessed by the international Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs).

The HMSMT recommends conducting vulnerability analyses to determine whether setting an ACL may be appropriate even for stocks subject to the international exception. Candidate species include common thresher, shortfin mako and blue shark.

The HMSMT further noted during their discussion that applying the international exception from ACL requirements does not preclude using catch limits or other management measures that are necessary and appropriate for conservation and management of the fishery (MSA Section 303a).

### 3. Determining the Primary FMP

Section 3 of the HMSMT Report discusses considerations in determining which FMP is primary for MUS which are included in both the HMS and Pelagics FMPs. The HMSMT noted some corrections to Table 4 during their discussion. Bluefin tuna and blue shark are managed by both Councils. This fact should be taken into consideration in determining primary designation.

A conference call was held with the WPFMC Pelagics FMP liaison to begin a dialogue on coordinating NS1 actions across FMPs. The HMSMT notes that primary designation is required for all MUS which occur in more than one FMP, regardless of whether the international exception applies, due to the need to establish maximum sustainable yield (MSY), SDCs and optimum yield (OY).

### 4. Establishing Biological Reference Points and Accountability Measures

Section 4 of the HMSMT Report addresses requirements for establishing biological reference points and accountability measures. MUS which do not qualify for the international exception and for which the HMS FMP is considered primary would require establishment of ACLs and accountability measures (AMs).

The HMSMT discussed possible considerations in setting ACLs for data poor species which are not regularly assessed. These included the following:

- 1) Consider catch history, including evidence on whether catch per unit of effort or size of the fish caught have declined over time.
- 2) Utilize measures of uncertainty such as the range and variability of catch over time.
- 3) Look at the life history of the species, including its range, life span and productivity.
- 4) Review whether there were any changes to the status of the species and relevant HMS fisheries since the HMS FMP was implemented.
- 5) Utilize available data on HMS fisheries mortality from commercial fisheries landings, recreational catch and observer data sets.

The HMSMT discussed additional resources which may be needed to manage ACLs. If they are recommended for some MUS, the HMSMT will need access to stock assessment resources, coordination with other Councils and additional support from the SSC to carry out the requisite analytical tasks.

**Requested Tasks for Council:**

- 1) Provide the HMSMT with guidance for preparing a further refinement of the preliminary alternatives to be presented at the April 2010 Council meeting.
- 2) Consider requesting the HMSMT to perform a vulnerability analysis on FMP MUS and monitored species for potential reclassification decisions under NS1.
- 3) Consider writing a letter to the WPFMC requesting coordination with the PFMC in addressing the need for a consistent approach to addressing NS1 requirements.

PFMC  
11/01/09