

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

Outcomes of Recent Meetings of International Regional Fishery Management Organizations

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) heard a briefing from Dr. Kit Dahl on the outcomes of recent Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee (NC) meetings. Of particular interest to the Council, the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species (ISC) Chair and ISC Albacore Working Group Chair are developing a questionnaire to elicit operational objectives and management strategies from NC members. NC member responses will be submitted to the WCPFC Secretariat by November 16, 2015. An NC session at the December 2015 WCPFC meeting will agree on inputs to submit to the ISC based on responses to the questionnaire. The Council could develop recommendations at the November meeting to contribute to the U.S. response.

Proposed Rule to Revise Regulations to Implement the Import Provisions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act

In reviewing the proposed rule, the HMSMT identified potential benefits for marine mammal species resulting from consultations and restrictions on import of finfish from fisheries with high levels of marine mammal interactions. The HMSMT also noted that there may be unintended consequences if nations which supply U.S. imports decide to discontinue marketing in the U.S. in response to the proposed rule. These consequences could include unrealized benefits for marine mammals and potential loss of economic benefits to U.S. consumers.

Determination that the Eastern Pacific Ocean stock of North Pacific Swordfish is Subject to Overfishing

As stated in the Situation Summary, the Council received notification from National Marine Fisheries Service (G.1.a, NMFS Report 2) that the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) stock of North Pacific swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) is subject to overfishing. The Situation Summary also noted that the Council is specifically required to develop recommendations for domestic regulations to address the relative impact of U.S. vessels on the stock (Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act [MSA] Section 304(i)) and to submit recommendations to the Secretary of Commerce and Congress for international actions to end overfishing. The deadline for providing such recommendations is July 14, 2016.

The HMSMT notes that the swordfish population in the North Pacific is comprised of two stocks, which are generally separated by a diagonal boundary extending from Baja, California to the Equator. The stocks are the Western and Central North Pacific Ocean (WCNPO) stock, distributed in the western and central Pacific Ocean, and the EPO stock, distributed as shown in Figure 1 below. Harvest location information for U.S. West Coast fisheries indicates that the vast majority of swordfish fishing activities and subsequent landings occur north and west of the line separating these two stocks. This indicates that the U.S. harvests very little of the EPO stock. Furthermore, the NMFS report (G.1.a NMFS Report 2) identified that of the 9,200 metric tons

(mt) of total EPO swordfish harvest in 2012, Federal logbook reports for catch by U.S. fishing vessels account for only 4 mt. In view of the limited impact of U.S. catch, the HMSMT recommends the Council focus on the need for conservation at the international level. The HMSMT could, at the Council's direction, provide more detailed recommendations on potential management measures.

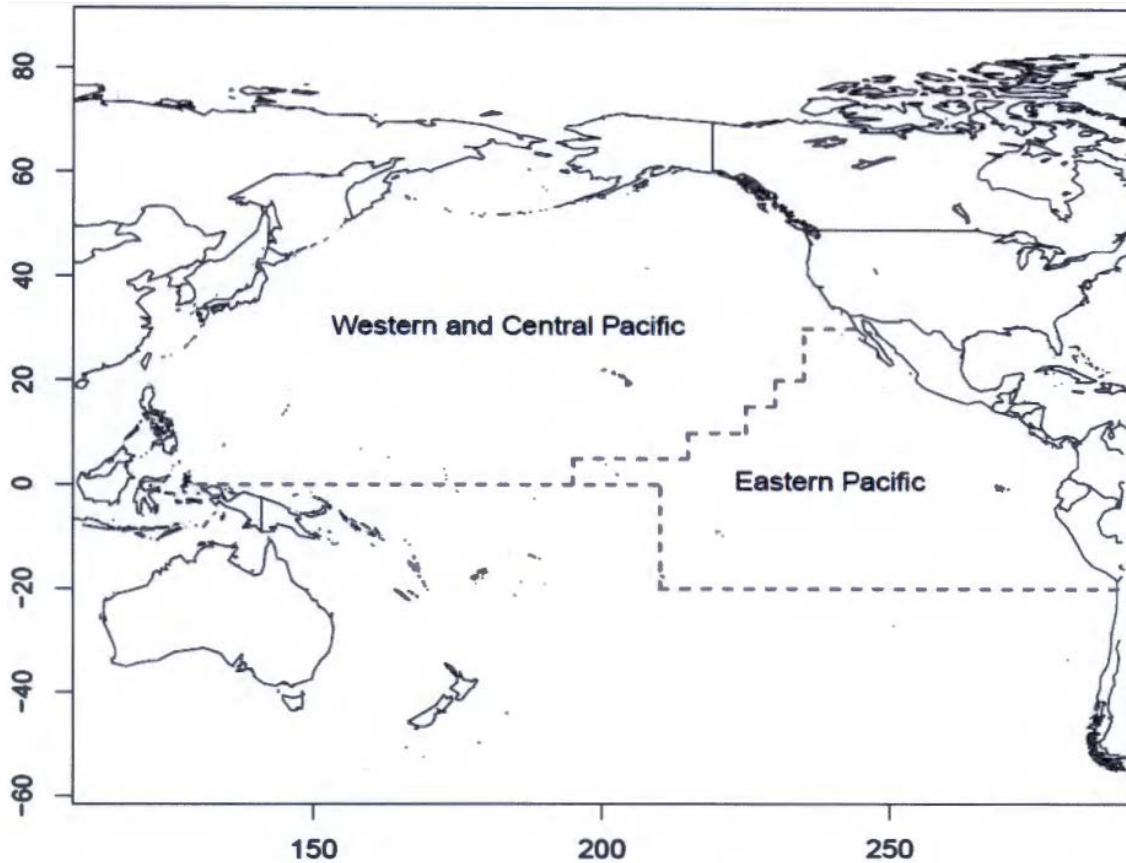


Figure 1. Stock structure for swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) in the North Pacific, indicating the Western and Central

Recommendations:

- Recommend the Council consider developing proposals for albacore MSEs in November 2015
- Task the HMSMT with developing a response to the swordfish overfishing declaration

PFMC
09/12/15