

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON DEEP-SET BUOY GEAR AND FEDERAL PERMIT UPDATE

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) would like to see the Council proceed with the authorization of buoy gear but realizes that more information gathering may be needed to fully understand the impacts of this new fishery. We suggest a range of alternatives for the Council to consider.

Deep-set buoy gear (DSBG) has the potential to be economically feasible as a supplemental fishery to the harpoon and other types of swordfish fishing gear. It may also be viable in other areas off the West Coast. The HMSAS suggests that additional DSBG EFPs will be necessary to obtain more data and test new gear configurations, such as linked and H buoy gear.

A range of alternatives may include:

1. Open access, limited access, or a combination of limited access in Southern CA, with open access north of Point Conception should be considered.
2. Limited entry (include list of concerns/suggestions to a limited entry program):
 - a. Issue a number of permits based on fishing history and then authorize more permits based on data collected with a biennial review of the permit process.
 - b. Due to potential gear conflicts and social impacts in southern California, initially issue a limited number of permits (25?) the first year, and in subsequent years issue additional new permits as the fishery develops for the area above and below Point Conception. Also, consider open access north of Point Conception to the Canadian border.
 - c. If the new buoy gear is successful, it could be added to the existing buoy gear permits.
3. Other factors to consider include:
 - a. The HMSAS recommendation to the Council is an improved and more appropriate term to replace “active tending” with tending of working gear will be conducted in a manner that allows for the “timely observations” of deployed gear based on drift, gear strikes, weather and sea conditions which allows for the timely release and survivorship of bycatch species. This definition more directly reflects our fishing practices.
 - b. Possible mandatory training workshop.
 - c. Season closure considerations.
 - d. Use of multiple gear types on a single fishing trip.

HMSAS feels that if observers are required by National Marine Fisheries Service, the fishermen should not pay for the observers, vessel monitoring systems, or cameras.

The HMSAS would like to thank the Council for drafting a letter at the April meeting concerning California Senate Bill 1114. This letter along with many others helped defeat the bill. This

legislation does bring up the need for the Council to federalize the DGN permit as soon as possible as to avoid future bills like this one which needlessly waste time and money. The state does not have the scientific means or manpower to manage this fishery. This fishery only takes place in Federal waters, and the state has minimal involvement. If the state retains the permit and raises the fee it would only add to the hardship on the DGN.

PFMC
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