

NMFS REPORT
ON BIENNIAL HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Related to the Council's workload under Agenda Item J.3, the Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) and West Coast Region (WCR) have been discussing issues pertaining to stock status determinations for highly migratory species. As part of NMFS' stock status determination process, the SWFSC determines that the results of recent assessments constitute the "best scientific information available" (BSIA), and as such have been subject to peer review. The WCR subsequently uses the BSIA and recent stock assessment results to recommend a stock status determination be approved by the Secretary of Commerce. In doing so, the SWFSC and WCR would employ the status determination criteria (SDCs) specified in the Fishery Management Plan for U.S. West Coast Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species (HMS FMP). However, because most of the stock assessments for management unit species in the HMS FMP are conducted by science providers to Pacific tuna Regional Fishery Management Organizations (t-RFMOs), there are often inconsistencies between the biological reference points (BRPs) produced in the international assessments and those needed to determine status according to domestic SDCs. Recognizing the potential for inconsistencies between BRPs produced in international assessments and required SDCs in the domestic arena, the SWFSC and WCR have been meeting and conferring with the HMS Team to develop and present procedures to the Council for reporting domestic reference points. Progress on this topic will be presented at future meetings of the PFMC.

Regarding the most recent assessment for common thresher shark, the SWFSC has plans for a peer review process to determine whether the assessment constitutes BSIA for making a status determination for the stock. The SWFSC will have the common thresher shark assessment as well as the common thresher survey reviewed through the Center for Independent Experts (CIE). This will take place after July 2017, staff time permitting. The SWFSC will draft the Terms of Reference (TOR) using the Council's STAR TORs as a model, as well as seek input from the HMSMT and SSC on the TOR. The SWFSC recommends that the Council consider this peer review process and schedule for common thresher shark as an alternative approach to the Council's STAR panel process.