HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGY PLAN

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS), recognizing the attributes of moving toward more electronic technology in gathering data and fisheries information throughout the HMS fleet, generally supports the concept. This could include both commercial and recreational segments.

The HMSAS recognizes that a higher percentage of HMS vessels have or are acquiring computer technology and satellite connections to the internet, making reporting closer to real time and more efficient than previous methods. With electronic methods, not only could fishermen report catch data but also receive management and regulatory information from agencies in a timely and efficient manner.

For the HMS albacore fisheries, currently there are no closed areas in the ocean and there are no sustainability issues. The HMSAS advises that requiring real time location reporting would be an unnecessary burden on the fishermen.

A great starting point would be to expedite the availability of electronic logbooks replacing paper logbooks. A segment of the U.S. albacore troll and baitboat fleet has been requesting these for about 10 years, as reporting by paper logbooks has become very inefficient and costly. Some time ago Southwest Fisheries Science Center produced a test version that has been used by 10 U.S. albacore trollers for the past few seasons. All these vessels like how it works. This version is available on CD as well as downloadable online. However, it is old and the program is not supported in operating systems newer than Windows XP and maybe Win 7 in some cases. It does not operate at all on Mac operating systems. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA/NMFS) does not endorse this program as "official" because they want to produce an e-log that is uniform nationwide. So far this has not happened.

The HMSAS recommends that developing e-logbooks that are user-friendly be a first priority with later emphasis on e-fish tickets and other data requirements. Such as a user-friendly system (specifically, an open architecture system that allows multiple data sources). Given the costs of printing and distribution and slow processing of paper logbooks, NOAA/NMFS could explore supplying willing HMS vessels with iPads or similar equipment with e-log capabilities. Not all HMS vessels have Internet communications available, therefore e-logs should not be mandatory for all vessels. This technology could create potential expansion into fish ticket and other data collection and informational capabilities.

The HMSAS urges Council support on moving forward with this technology for vessels in efficient ways that will not infringe on fishermen's time and privacy.

PFMC
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