

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT
FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA AND WORKLOAD PLANNING

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) offers the following comments on the workload associated with Council decisions under HMS Agenda Items at the June meeting.

No workload for the HMSMT is associated with Agenda Item E.1, Update on Regulatory Matters and International Activities. The work to accomplish Council actions falls on Council and NMFS staffs. This includes drafting letters to the U.S. Section/delegations to the Inter American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee and completing rulemaking for the drift gillnet (DGN) fishery.

No workload before the September Council meeting falls on the HMSMT with respect to Agenda Item E.2, Drift Gillnet Fishery Transition Issues. The Council established a set of policy objectives that will likely engender additional work for the HMSMT over the medium and long term.

For Agenda Item E.3, Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) Process, Council staff will draft and circulate a solicitation letter. The deadline for receipt of applications will be the September Briefing Book deadline (August 15). The HMSMT, Highly Migratory Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) and Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will be tasked with reviewing applications included in the Briefing Book. This is likely to occur leading up to and at the September Council meeting. Additional analysis from the HMSMT may be required for any proposals the Council adopts for final consideration at the November meeting.

The Council identified seven issues for further consideration under Agenda Item E.4, Initial Scoping of Biennial Specifications and Management Measures. Under the biennial process, the Council would adopt a range of alternatives for each identified issue at the September meeting. Developing ranges of alternatives and associated preliminary analysis for all these issue would involve substantial workload for the HMSMT. What the HMSMT could potentially accomplish for each of these issues is summarized below.

Issue 1: Reduce domestic recreational catch of Pacific bluefin tuna

The HMSMT will be able to complete preliminary analysis of methods to reduce the domestic recreational catch of bluefin tuna including assessing bag and possession limit alternatives based on Council direction.

Issue 2: Increase the transmission (ping) rate for Vessel Monitoring System units on vessels in the California swordfish drift gillnet fishery

With the help of the EC, the HMSMT will be able to describe alternatives that accomplish the enforcement goal. The HMSMT could also complete a very preliminary analytical comparison of the action alternative(s) to status quo.

Issue 3a: Management of the pelagic longline fishery: Achieve fishing opportunity comparable to the Hawaii shallow-set longline fishery for HMS permit holders using longline gear outside the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

The HMSMT may be able to provide a description of considerations needed to develop a regulatory amendment to address this issue. Moving to final Council action on this issue would involve substantial additional work that is unlikely to be completed within the time constraints of the biennial process.

Issue 3b: Management of the pelagic longline fishery: Authorize a pelagic longline fishery inside the EEZ, which is currently prohibited by the HMS FMP

The HMSMT may be able to provide a description of considerations needed to develop an FMP amendment to address this issue. Moving to final Council action on this issue would involve substantial additional work that is unlikely to be completed within the time constraints of the biennial process.

Issue 4: For the California drift gillnet (DGN) fishery, establish hard caps for high priority protected species (marine mammals and sea turtles) and measures to reduce discard of other species

The HMSMT could provide a summary of the practical and process issues associated with developing a range of alternatives for this issue, based on the policy direction motion under Agenda Item E.2. Moving to final Council action on this issue would involve substantial additional work that is unlikely to be completed within the time constraints of the biennial process.

Issue 5: Transition the current California limited entry permit program for DGN vessels to a Federal limited entry permit program under the HMS FMP

The HMSMT could provide a summary of the practical and process issues associated with developing a range of alternatives for this issue, based on the policy direction motion under Agenda Item E.2. Moving to final Council action on this issue would involve substantial additional work that is unlikely to be completed within the time constraints of the biennial process.

Issue 6: Establish a requirement for all DGN vessels to carry an observer or electronic monitoring system

The HMSMT could describe a range of alternatives for this issue and preliminary analysis of impacts of the alternatives.

Summary Workload Assessment

In the short term (between now and the remaining September – November Council meeting portion of biennial process) the HMSMT cannot complete all tasks associated with Council action under Agenda Items E.3 and E.4 at the June meeting. The HMSMT can review any EFP proposals submitted for the September meeting, provide information that would allow for future work planning on Issues 3-6, and focus work on Issues 1 and 2 sufficient for them to be completed in this biennial management cycle.

PFMC
06/25/14