

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL SUPPLEMENT REPORT
DRIFT GILLNET FISHERY TRANSITION ISSUES

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) focused its discussions and will key its comments to the directions in the June 4 HMS Committee Memo, page 1, and Agenda Item E.2, Situation Summary.

1. Should California's Limited Entry Drift Gillnet (DGN) Permit be converted to a Federal Limited Entry Permit Program?
 - The HMSAS is supportive of converting only the existing California DGN permits to limited entry Federal Permits.
 - The majority of the management of the DGN fishery is already under Federal management with the exception of permitting, and permitting should be a Federal function.
 - The DGN fishery is a sustainable fishery which is not limited off the West Coast to just waters off the coast of California and should be federally managed.

2. As described in E.2 Situation Summary at page 3, the HMSAS is asked to provide advice so the Council can provide guidance on transitioning the DGN fishery to a different management approach, including alternate gear types or a complete closure. The Council should clarify its objectives and develop a general list and timeline.
 - A. Complete Closure – It makes no sense to close a sustainable fishery which fishes on a clearly healthy stock particularly when the demand for swordfish in the U.S. is high. Also, closure of the fishery would result in a great loss of American jobs and an economic loss of \$14.5 million. A closure would only result in Americans buying more foreign fish. Such action would not provide benefit to marine mammals, seabirds, or marine reptiles.

 - B. Alternate Gear Types -
 - **BUOY GEAR:** Use of this gear type is quite new and experimental. It initially appears suited only to artisanal or subsistence uses, not commercial.
 - **HARPOON:** This method is not economically viable. This is evidenced by the fact that it is an open access fishery accompanied by a continual strong demand for swordfish, and yet permit requests keep declining.
 - **LONGLINE:** Promising, but transition to this gear from the DGN is complicated.

CONS:

- Larger vessels are needed.
- Money is needed to invest in new gear.
- Continually higher costs for fuel, crew, and bait.
- Current restrictions on the DGN fishery, if maintained, may make any longline fishery economically infeasible.

PROS:

- Successfully operated in Hawaii for many years.
 - Fully sustainable Swordfish resource.
 - EFPs would provide much needed information on stock structure and life history.
 - EFPs will permit further improvements in gear and refinements of fishing procedures which can be shared with other countries.
3. Long-term Strategy – The HMSAS suggests the Council should give guidance to the Highly Migratory Species Management Team to develop a program of Exempted Fishing Permits to develop a West Coast sustainable swordfish fishery to provide local, fresh, or fresh frozen swordfish to Americans from U.S. flag vessels.

PFMC
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