

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON  
INITIAL SCOPING OF BIENNIAL SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Potential Domestic Action on Pacific Bluefin Recreational Bag Limits

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) opposes restrictions on recreational catch of bluefin tuna at this time for the following reasons:

1. Any restrictions would be premature in the absence of future international agreements aimed at managing the stock. The US recreational catch historically has been less than 1 percent of the catch of northern Pacific bluefin tuna. The history of international action on tuna has exempted such catches as inconsequential and unnecessary to the management of these fish. We advise that the Council recommend that this approach be continued. Domestic management is highly preferred for recreational catch.
2. Inseason management would be very difficult due to slow reporting of recreational catches by the Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel (CPFV) fleet and questionable accuracy of the private vessel survey for offshore fish.
3. The economic effects would be far-reaching beyond the actual value of the fish caught including tax revenues, tourism, jobs, and contributions to local infrastructure.
4. The CPFV fleet would be disproportionately impacted by any regulatory action on Bluefin tuna. This fleet effectively supplies the only affordable access for most US citizens to participate in this fishery.
5. Unilateral or separate action by the Council should not be taken on recreational catch of bluefin tuna. Any action taken should be a necessary element of implementing an international agreement. Only in this way can the economic impacts on recreational fishing be assured of being both fair and minimized.
6. Based on a recommendation by the Sportfishing Association of California (SAC) regarding the reported decline of the North Pacific bluefin tuna stock, the HMSAS recommends that, if necessary, the daily catch limit of North Pacific bluefin tuna by recreational fishermen be limited to five fish per day. This is a 50 percent reduction from the current limit of ten fish per day per angler.
7. Due to the difficulty of safely handling bluefin tuna for the purpose of measuring the fish, the HMSAS recommends that size limits not be considered.

Shallow Set Longline Permit Request for Mr. Pete Dupuy

The HMSAS kindly reminds the Council that in 2006 the Council approved an exempted fishing permit for Mr. Pete Dupuy to test shallow-set longline (SSLL) inside the west coast Exclusive Economic Zone. That approved permit had many restrictions including the following:

Alternative 3 incorporates all of the terms and conditions imposed in alternative 2 including, among other things:

- No fishing within 30 miles of the coastline
- No fishing within the Southern California Bight
- Compliance with existing highly migratory species fishery management plan protected species conservation measures
- Mandatory 100 percent observer coverage
- A cap on total fishing effort
- Fishing conducted between September and December
- Use of 18/0 circle hooks with 10° offset
- Use of mackerel bait and light sticks.”

*Source: Agenda Item J.2.c, Supplemental HMST Report, April 2006*

Similar conditions are proposed for the fishery that Mr. Dupuy is requesting his permit. These conditions reflect or exceed regulatory requirements of the current Hawaiian longline fishery.

The proposed fishing based on the 2006 permit was thoroughly analyzed by the HMS Management Team for potential encounters on species of concern as well as potential bycatch. The HMSAS suggests that issuing a similar permit for the 2015 fishing season is an opportunity to create equality for West Coast fishermen that the Atlantic and Hawaiian longline fishermen are currently experiencing. Currently Hawaiian longline swordfish vessels are delivering into west coast ports while west coast fishermen are unfairly denied this opportunity. Also, allowing this west coast fishery will reduce the quantity of imported swordfish that is currently supplying the market by unregulated foreign fisheries.

Please allow this described permit request to go forward under this agenda item, *Initial Scoping of Biannual Specifications and Management Measures*.

#### Drift Gillnet VMS Ping Rate

It was brought to the attention of the HMSAS that the Enforcement Consultants are proposing increasing the ping rate on the vessel monitoring system from one hour to 15 minutes for drift gillnet (DGN) vessels. The HMSAS wants to bring to Council's attention that it takes 45 minutes to set a large mesh drift gillnet and it takes a minimum of three hours to recover a drift gillnet, regardless of the soak time.

The HMSAS sees no advantage of increasing the required ping rate from one hour to 15 minutes from an enforcement standpoint, because there is no way that the fishermen can move in and out of a closed area in less than one hour. This proposed ping rate change has no practical use and will be another increase in expense for the DGN fishermen.

The HMSAS highly encourages Council to retain the ping rate at its current rate of one hour and not proceed under this agenda item, *Initial Scoping of Biannual Specifications and Management Measures*.