

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ECOSYSTEM WORKGROUP REGARDING
INITIATIVE I: “PROTECTING UNFISHED AND UNMANAGED FORAGE FISH SPECIES”

We appreciate the work of the Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) in preparation of their report on Initiative I “Protecting unfished and unmanaged forage fish species.” The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) concurs with the EWG regarding the importance of forage species to the health and sustainability of fishery management unit species included in the Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (HMS FMP).

The HMSMT reviewed the pathways and the associated lists of forage species proposed for addition as Ecosystem Component (EC) Species to the HMS FMP, as described under Alternative 2. Forage species identified as connected to the HMS FMP through either gear or trophic interactions included round and thread herrings, *Myctophidae*, *Bathylagidae*, *Paralepididae*, *Gonosomatidae*, Pacific saury, Silversides, and pelagic squids, except Humboldt. All of these species are documented as prey for one or more species within the FMP. Pacific saury and pelagic squid are additionally identified as potentially harvestable by HMS FMP gear. However, bycatch interactions with non-HMS species, including forage species, were previously considered in the development of HMS FMP Amendment 2 (Agenda Item G.2.b, HMSMT Report, April 2010). Regarding Pacific saury and pelagic squid designated for the Bycatch and Gear pathway, historically observed bycatch or landings were negligible or nonexistent by any HMS fishery. Therefore, the HMSMT recommends the Council avoid the Bycatch and Gear Pathway.

The HMSMT sees value in having select EC species included in the HMS FMP to provide some certainty that new fisheries do not compromise food web interactions between these species which represent the prey base for management unit species in the HMS FMP. To accomplish this we support advancing the recommendations of the EWG identified in Alternative 2 pathways wherein these species are recognized for their importance within the ecosystem as a whole. We believe that either the Ecosystem Trophic Role or Predator Prey pathways provide an appropriate nexus for inclusion in the HMS FMP. To accomplish this, the HMSMT offers to collaborate with the EWG in the development of potential amendatory language for the HMS FMP, according to Council direction.

PFMC
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