

Meeting Summary
Highly Migratory Species Plan Development Team
Pacific Fishery Management Council
La Jolla, CA
September 26-28, 2000

Team members present:

David Au, NMFS, La Jolla, CA
Norm Bartoo, NMFS, La Jolla, CA
Steve Crooke, CDFG, Long Beach, CA
Sam Herrick, NMFS, La Jolla, CA
Jean McCrae, ODFW, Newport, OR
Michele Robinson, WDFW, Montesano, WA
Susan Smith, NMFS, La Jolla, CA
Dale Squires, NMFS, La Jolla, CA

Also attending:

Svein Fougner, NMFS, Long Beach, CA
Michelle Zetwo, NMFS Enforcement
LCDR Dave Hoover, Coast Guard, Seattle, WA
Ray Conser, NMFS, La Jolla, CA
Chris Boggs, NMFS, Honolulu, HI
Larry Six, NMFS consultant, Portland, OR
Al Coan, NMFS, La Jolla, CA
Donna Dealy, NMFS, La Jolla, CA
John Hunter, NMFS, La Jolla, CA

Members of the public attending one or more days:

Steve Joner, Makah Tribe, Neah Bay, WA
Charles Peterson, Makah Tribe, Neah Bay, WA
Bob Osborn, United Anglers of Southern California
Chuck Janisse, FISH
Liz Lauck, Wildlife Conservation Society
Andy Oliver, World Wildlife Fund
Russell Nelson, The Billfish Foundation, Ft. Lauderdale, FL
John La Grange, American Fisherman's Research Foundation
Scott Eckert, Hubbs Sea World Research Institute, San Diego, CA
Rich Hamilton, Marlin Club of San Diego, RFA, Billfish Foundation, United Anglers,
IGFA
Michael Domeier, PIER, Oceanside, CA
Peter Flournoy, HMSAS, AFRF
Wayne Heikkila, WFOA/AFRF
Heidi Dewar, PIER
Tim Athens, fisherman
Patricia Rojo Diaz, Mexican National Fishery Institute (INP)
Tom Raftican, United Anglers of Southern California

Approval of Agenda

The agenda for Wednesday was revised to allow the Team to spend most of that day compiling sections of

the FMP, and to identify issues and options. The agenda item on data issues was abbreviated, and discussion of the species list and regulations were deferred until the November Team meeting.

Review of Process to Date

Participants reported on the recent meetings of the Council, HMS Advisory Subpanel, IATTC and MHLG.

Progress Reports and Presentations

1. Stock Status and Management Control Rules

David Au distributed updated preliminary drafts of 2 documents for Team review: "Stock Status and Estimates of Biological Reference Points for Highly Migratory Species" and "Management Control Rules for Highly Migratory Species." (The first document will become FMP section 3.3, Status of Management Unit Stocks, and the second document will become section 3.2, Overfishing Criteria.). Control rules specify how a fishery will be managed when overfishing is occurring or when a stock is determined to be overfished. Overfishing occurs when fishing mortality (F) exceeds the maximum fishing mortality threshold (MFMT). A stock is overfished when the biomass falls below a specified threshold (minimum stock size threshold or MSST). The Team is proposing to use control rules consistent with those adopted by the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council.

There was considerable discussion about the applicability of overfishing rules to highly migratory species. In most cases, unilateral U.S. action to control harvest cannot prevent overfishing of the stocks, since a small fraction of the total harvest is taken by U.S. fishers. In the Atlantic FMP, for stocks that are managed by ICCAT, the overfishing rules take the form of policy recommendations from the U.S. to ICCAT. In the Western Pacific, similar language is being considered. The Team proposes that for tunas, billfishes, mako shark and blue shark, the control rules be in the form of a policy recommendation to international forums. For the thresher shark species, the control rules may call for Council/NMFS action, since these species have more "local" distributions. The Team will evaluate the need for conservation measures for domestic fisheries for thresher sharks. It was noted that the control rule for sharks as proposed would be more conservative because the MSST is based on the estimate of natural mortality. The Council could also set a conservative optimum yield level for thresher sharks as a precautionary measure. Other measures such as time/area closures may be appropriate. David Au and Susan Smith will report back to the Team on control rules for thresher sharks.

Table 2 of the draft control rules document includes estimates of sustainable catch levels for the Pacific Council area., which are based on the regional catch fraction for each stock multiplied by the MSY estimate or the maximum recent annual total catch level. Concerns were raised about establishing local area harvest limits. The stocks are generally thought to be healthy at this time. Setting regional limits goes beyond the requirements and may unnecessarily restrict U.S. fishing opportunity. The Western Pacific Council is opposed to setting limits, and there is no evidence that the local fisheries in the Western Pacific have an impact on the stocks or catches.

Commenters also recommended that Table 2 include estimates of sport catch and that landings data be expanded to include catches (including transshipments).

2. Monitoring Index for Species Not in the Management Unit

Susan Smith presented a draft proposal for a system for periodically monitoring non-management unit fish species taken in HMS fisheries. Each species would be rated according to 12 factors divided into 4 categories: 1) biological/ecological characteristics, 2) abundance and distributional characteristics, 3) fisheries characteristics, and 4) economic characteristics. In general, a low rating represents the lowest fishing impact/economic value and the highest stock resiliency; a high rating indicates the highest fishery impact and lowest resiliency. A significant shift in the index triggers a closer examination of the possible

causes of the change. Each year the index would be recalculated and reported in the annual SAFE report.

There was mixed sentiment regarding this proposal. Both supportive and critical comments were offered. Supporters liked the idea of a simple, inexpensive way of monitoring the status of associated species which also could serve as a tool to set research priorities. Criticisms included:

- the summing of individual category ratings to get a total index is misleading and inappropriate. It may be best to leave the information disaggregated. (Response: the intent is to retain the disaggregated information; agree to not use the term "index.")
- this could create a substantial work load each year for the Team. (Response: will not be difficult to update the matrix.)
- the use of somewhat subjective ratings, instead of using actual information when it is available (e.g., age at maturity, price) degrades the information provided. (Response: requiring exact information means that there will be no information at all in many instances.)
- if this index were used to trigger a management action, then each number would have to be justified. The ratings would need to be less subjective or qualitative. (Response: it's easier to defend broad categories than exact numbers; there is no intent to trigger management actions but rather a more in-depth review of any species which exhibits substantial change in one or more factors.)

The Team decided to proceed with completion of the monitoring matrix, but the term "index" would not be used. The FMP will contain a brief, generic reference to the monitoring matrix in section 3.4.

3. Workshop on MSY and Overfishing Definitions

Chris Boggs reported on the recent workshop in Florida. There was no clarification or consensus on any MSY estimation method that might be useful in this process. The workshop did not address HMS fisheries specifically.

4. CPUE Indices for Swordfish and Shark

Chuck Janisse stated that there needs to be a way of separating swordfish trips from shark trips in the CPUE analysis for thresher shark. David Au explained that separation is not possible with the existing data.

5. Shared Stocks

The Team reviewed a document prepared by Dave Holts briefly describing the distribution of stocks in the management unit. It was agreed that this summary would be a useful addition to section 3.1.1. Michele Robinson and Susan Smith will review this document to make sure it is consistent with descriptions included in the EFH sections.

6. Performance Standards

Andy Oliver recommended that the Team include an option in the FMP that would establish performance standards to reduce and minimize bycatch.

7. Sea Turtle Stamps

Representatives of the driftnet fishery have raised the idea of establishing a stamp program to raise funds

for sea turtle programs. There is some concern about the legality of such a program under federal law. Svein Fougner agreed to ask NOAA General Counsel about it. The industry will also pursue the option of a state program.

Bycatch

There was little progress to report on this issue.

Data Issues

Brief status reports were provided on economic data collection surveys, PacFIN and RecFIN. Dale Squires reported that additional programming help is available to help assemble recreational data for the FMP. Al Coan distributed a document describing the Interim Scientific Committee, a multi-lateral scientific group in the north Pacific. This document will be used for FMP section 1.5.9.

Species (Data Collection)

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

Regulations

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

Compilation of FMP Sections

Copies of all FMP sections drafted to date were distributed and assembled. Team members are to review each section and provide comments to the authors by October 16. Authors are to revise their sections and provide updated electronic copies to Larry Six by October 27. Larry Six will compile the sections and have copies made for the November 14-16 Team meeting. All descriptive sections should be completed for the November meeting, to the extent possible.

Issues and Options (FMP Chapters 6 and 7)

The Team compiled a list of issues for which options have been identified to date:

- Species in the management unit
 - 5 options (with a preferred option)
- Gear authorized
 - 1. Status quo
 - 2. Longline (various options; see longline section below)
- Shark finning
 - 1. Fins only (WP FMP)
 - 2. Fins with carcass
 - a. Team option (bag fins and attach to carcass)
 - b. Subpanel option (max. 4 fins x #carcasses)
 - 3. Status quo (no finning)

- Consistency of state regulations
 1. Subpanel recommendations
- Logbooks
 1. Status quo
 2. Uniform federal logbooks for each gear (including charter)
 3. Electronic logs
- Licenses/permits (including vessel registry)
 1. Gear-specific permits (not limited entry)
- Limited Entry
 1. Status quo
 2. Open access
 3. Limited entry by gear (address after FMP implementation)
- Bag limits
 1. Status quo
 2. Request states adopt new limits
 3. Federal bag limits
- Prohibited species
 1. Status quo
 2. White shark, basking shark, megamouth shark prohibited coastwide (Pacific salmon, Pacific halibut and Dungeness crab continue to be prohibited)

Additional issues were identified as follows. Team and Subpanel members and other interested persons should bring lists of issues and options to the November Team meeting.

- Bycatch (and observers)
- Vessel monitoring system
- Striped marlin
- Fishing opportunities for recreational and commercial
- EFH protection
- Shark conservation
- Recreational catch and release
- Protected species conservation
- Alternatives when MSYs and data are unavailable

The Team also developed a preliminary list of research and data needs:

1. Recreational economic data
2. Recreational catch and effort data
3. U.S./Canada albacore data sharing
4. U.S./Mexico data sharing and collaborative research on HMS and straddling stocks

5. Biological data
6. Stock assessment data
7. Marlin migration information

Longline Analysis

The Team discussed the Dupuy/Janisse longline proposal presented at the July Team meeting, as modified by the addendum presented at the September Subpanel meeting. The proposal as modified would limit boat size, limit participation to 20 boats the first year and establish eligibility criteria. The proposal would require inclusion of a federal limited entry program in the FMP. Eligibility for permits is limited to owners of California and Oregon driftnet permits; the legality or propriety of limiting participation to this group was questioned. Other groups may be interested in participating, including longliners currently fishing outside the EEZ and landing on the west coast and former participants in the experimental shark fishery. Chuck Janisse explained that the idea is to convert some driftnet effort to a longline fishery, without increasing effort, and to reduce impacts on protected species.

The Team discussed an alternative approach which would use the exempted (experimental) fishing permit process to collect needed information on a longline fishery in the EEZ, prior to a decision to authorize (or not authorize) the fishery.

Commercial fisherman Tim Athens presented a proposal for a longline fishery targeting mako and thresher sharks using heavy stainless steel gear and large hooks. The gear would fish near the surface in the daytime inside 50 miles. This would be a limited entry fishery with time/area closures. This is a completely different longline fishery than the one targeting swordfish and tuna, and is not intended to replace that fishery.

Longline fishery options include the following:

1. Status quo (different regulations in each state) (could consider setting regulations consistent with the Western Pacific under this option)
2. Dupuy/Janisse proposal for a swordfish/tuna longline fishery in the EEZ
3. Hamilton proposal for a limited swordfish/tuna longline fishery outside the EEZ with restrictions
4. Athens proposal for a directed shark longline fishery inside 50 miles (distinct from other options)
5. Experimental fishery for swordfish/tuna in the EEZ (without impacting the fishery outside the EEZ)

The Team developed the following list of sub-options which could be applied to any longline fishery in the EEZ:

- observer requirements
- logbooks
- VMS
- limited entry (# participants, eligibility requirements, transferability, etc.)
- duration
- fishing capacity
- outside EEZ issues
- time/area closures

The Team concluded that there is insufficient information available to evaluate a swordfish/tuna longline fishery in the EEZ and that an experimental fishery offers a way to collect the desired information. There may be sufficient information to evaluate a directed shark longline fishery, but the Team has not assessed the quantity and quality of this information. The shark fishery proposal needs to be evaluated and considered separately from the other proposals. There is no intent to impact the existing longline fishery

outside the EEZ. The consistency of west coast longline measures with Western Pacific measures is a separate issue which will be addressed. The Team will present longline options to the Council in a general way. Michele Robinson will draft a Team statement on the longline issue for the November Council meeting and send it to the Team for review.

Schedule

The Team meeting schedule is revised as follows:

November 14-16, 2000	La Jolla
February 5-9, 2001	La Jolla
March 12-16	La Jolla