

FIRST DRAFT OF THE HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

Situation: At this meeting, the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Plan Development Team (HMSPDT) will present the first draft of the HMS fishery management plan (FMP), and the HMS Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) will provide their comments on the draft FMP. The Council is scheduled to provide guidance to the HMSPDT for finalizing the draft FMP in preparation for preliminary adoption for the formal public review process. The current schedule calls for preliminary adoption of the draft at the April 2001 meeting, and after public review, final adoption in September 2001.

Mr. Svein Fougner (National Marine Fisheries Service, Southwest Regional Office) will speak to recent developments in the domestic legal context germane to West Coast HMS fisheries. Based on these recent developments, the Council should anticipate a recommendation for revising the FMP development schedule (e.g., delay adoption of the public review draft of the FMP until the June 2001 meeting).

The draft FMP was developed during the last 14 months over the course of 10 HMSPDT meetings, 4 HMSAS meetings, and 4 Council meetings. During development of the draft FMP, public input has been highly encouraged. Generally, public involvement in the process (both in attendance at meetings and written correspondence) has been substantial.

The Council continues to receive numerous public comment letters (Exhibit E.2.d). As in the past, form-letters made up the bulk of this correspondence. When multiple copies of the same letter were received, a single copy of the letter is included with a notation describing the total number received. The majority of the comments are in opposition to the use of pelagic longline gear inside the West Coast EEZ. As of February 19, 2001, the Council received approximately 1,120 letters in opposition to the use of pelagic longline gear; this is in addition to the 1,083 and approximately 3,000 opposition letters (the bulk of which were also form-letters) received prior to the November and September 2000 Council meetings, respectively.

Council Action:

1. Council Guidance in Finalizing Public Review Draft.

1. Council Guidance on FMP Development Schedule.

Reference Materials:

1. Exhibit E.2.b, Supplemental NMFS Report.
2. Exhibit E.2.c, Supplemental HMSPDT Report.
3. Exhibit E.2.d, Supplemental HMSAS Report.
4. Exhibit E.2.e, Public Comment.