

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES PLAN DEVELOPMENT TEAM COMMENTS ON
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE'S SUGGESTED CHANGES TO THE
DRAFT HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES PLAN AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A TIMELINE

The Highly Migratory Species Plan Development Team (HMSPDT) discussed the changes described in the March 8, 2002, letter from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Southwest Region. First of all, the HMSPDT would like to acknowledge its agreement with points raised in the letter and believes the changes would significantly improve the HMS fishery management plan (FMP). However, given the volume and nature of the changes being suggested, we think we can successfully address only some of these issues by the June Council meeting.

The HMSPDT and the Council has received compliments on its transparent and open public processes throughout the development of the FMP. Many of the changes being proposed by NMFS will require substantial HMSPDT discussion, drafting time, and public input in order for them to be adequately addressed. Specifically, the changes regarding maximum sustainable yield (MSY) proxies for three of the management unit species (item #1), the essential fish habitat updates (#2), the bycatch changes (#3), most of the monitoring and compliance changes (#5), and the incidental catch allowance amounts (#10) will take a considerable amount of time and effort.

Because the HMSPDT would like to address all of the changes being proposed by NMFS and address them in an open, satisfactory manner, the HMSPDT is proposing delaying the adoption of the final HMS FMP until the September 2002 Council meeting. If the Council decides the final FMP must be completed in time for its June meeting, then the HMSPDT will likely not be able to adequately address the proposed changes listed above.

Council Action:

1. Provide guidance to the HMSPDT on the suggested changes it would like the team to address, and the appropriate timeline.

PFMC
03/14/02