

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL STATEMENT  
ON MANAGEMENT OF THE HIGH SEAS LONGLINE FISHERY

After considering the analysis of longline interactions with turtles presented at the April 29, 2003 meeting in San Diego, the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) reached a consensus to support the current preferred alternative (Alt. 2) with one modification. The HMSAS recommends deleting all references to restrictions on swordfish targeting and the 150\_ W longitude line. The data presented by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) indicate the 150\_ W longitude division was not meaningful in terms of avoiding turtle interactions. The HMSAS did not want the Biological Opinion that will be prepared by NMFS under the Endangered Species Act to be constrained by this artificial line.

The HMSAS proposes the following language for Longlining Outside the Exclusive Economic Zone, Alternative 2, in chapters 8 and 9:

Alternative 2 (Proposed): Adopts selected seabird and sea turtle measures currently required for the Hawaii-based longline fishery. These are measures Nos. 1, 4, and 8 in Chapter 8, section 8.5.2, and would also include measures for proper handling and release of seabirds and turtles, Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), and the requirement for vessel operators to attend a protected species workshop each year, as offered on the West Coast or in Hawaii (as described at the end of that subsection).

The HMSAS recommends the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) adopt the fishery management plan (FMP) at their June meeting with these modifications and submit it to NMFS as soon as possible for approval.

In a related matter, the HMSAS recommends the Council rapidly proceed with an FMP amendment to institute a limited entry program for the high seas longline fishery. This would prevent significant increases in effort and the accompanying impacts on listed species. The HMSAS recommends the Council consider ways to implement an immediate cap on effort, to be in place during the amendment development process. NMFS may be able to advise the Council on how this was accomplished for the pelagic fisheries in the western Pacific.

PFMC  
05/30/03