

POTENTIAL MODIFICATION OF FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN  
PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR HIGH SEAS LONGLINE FISHING  
IN RESPONSE TO SEA TURTLE IMPACT ANALYSIS

**Situation:** At the November 2002 meeting, the Council adopted a fishery management plan (FMP) to manage West Coast-based highly migratory species (HMS) fisheries. The Council directed the HMS Plan Development Team (HMSPDT) and staff to finalize the FMP and transmit it to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for their review.

However, prior to the March 2003 meeting, NMFS expressed concern about one of the Council's proposed actions (i.e., a preferred alternative). The proposed action for longline fishing outside of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) requires several restrictions similar to those of the Hawaii-based fishery, but would provide opportunity for West Coast-based longline fishing vessels to target swordfish when operating east of 150° W longitude. In November 2002, one basis for the Council's decision was lack of information on bycatch and protected species impacts from longline vessels fishing east of 150° W longitude. At the time of the Council's decision, the NMFS representative on the Council noted the proposed Council action (which differed from the original preferred alternative) could potentially affect approvability of the HMS FMP.

At the March meeting, NMFS presented preliminary information from recent observer data that showed longline fishing operations east of 150° W longitude could have interactions with sea turtles similar to those in waters west of 150° W longitude. Based on this information, the Council delayed submission of the HMS FMP in order to provide time for NMFS to conduct a thorough scientific review of the new data and present the results to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), HMSPDT, and HMS Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS). The Council also indicated that at the June 2003 meeting, they would review the NMFS analysis and consider modifying the previously adopted preferred alternative for the high seas longline fishery.

At meetings on April 29-30, NMFS presented their analysis to the HMSPDT, HMSAS, and HMS subcommittee of the SSC. Each of the advisory bodies has prepared recommendations and will report to the Council.

In summary, at this meeting NMFS will provide the Council with a final analysis of new information about impacts on sea turtles from high seas longline fishing east and west of 150° W longitude. Based on this information, advisory recommendations, and public comment, the Council might act to modify the previously adopted preferred alternative for the high seas longline fishery.

**Council Action:**

**1. Adopt a Modified Alternative for High Seas Longline Fishing, If Necessary.**

**Reference Materials:**

1. Exhibit F.2.b, NMFS Report
2. Exhibit F.2.c, Supplemental SSC Report
3. Exhibit F.2.c, HMSPDT Report
4. Exhibit F.2.c, HMSAS Report
5. Exhibit F.2.d, Public Comment

**Agenda Order:**

- a. Agendum Overview
- b. NMFS Report
- c. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- d. Public Comment
- e. **Council Action:** Adopt a Modified Alternative for High Seas Longline Fishing, If Necessary

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