

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT FOR
LIMITED ENTRY IN THE HIGH SEAS PELAGIC LONGLINE FISHERY

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) received information from National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) about research in the Atlantic longline fishery and recent implementation of management measures for the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WPFMC) Hawaii-based longline fishery. The HMSAS also received a report from the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) about fleet composition and participation in the West Coast-based high seas longline fishery.

Based on this information, the HMSAS recommends the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) direct the HMSMT to develop, in conjunction with NMFS -- Protected Resources Division, estimates of acceptable thresholds of species specific sea turtle takes under the HMS FMP. This information could be used to develop a regulatory package for re-structuring fisheries under the highly migratory species (HMS) fishery management plan (FMP).

The HMSAS also recommends adding information from the FMP-managed drift gillnet (DGN) fishery to the fleet profile database developed by the HMSMT. The HMSAS suggests adding information on current DGN permit holders and active fishery participants, and landings history for the period 1997 through the present. This additional information could provide a means to consider re-structuring the DGN fishery in concert with the high seas longline fishery. The rationale for this request is that both of these fisheries might need to be re-structured if the shallow set longline fishery were to be re-opened *and* sea turtle takes are to be kept within the bounds of the HMS FMP biological opinion.

The HMSAS concurs with the HMSMT recommendation that this information be presented to the Council for consideration at the September 2004 meeting.

The HMSAS was also presented information about testing of mercury levels in West Coast troll caught albacore. As reported to the HMSAS, the results of this testing showed low levels of mercury relative to tests done on albacore from other fisheries and well below the Food and Drug Administration levels of concern. It was reported that expanded testing will be conducted during 2004. In the future and as warranted, the HMSAS will report this information to the Council.

Finally, the HMSAS requests the Council encourage NMFS -- Southwest Regional Office to expedite work on the biological opinion for the south Pacific albacore fishery. Issuance of High Seas Fishing Compliance Act permits is currently delayed pending completion of the biological opinion, which is reported to be impacting fishery participants.

PFMC
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