

## HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON EXPANSION OF VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEM (VMS)

The HMS Management Team (HMSMT) had a brief discussion regarding the vessel monitoring system (VMS) alternatives being considered by the Council as a management tool for groundfish fisheries, and offers the following comments:

The HMSMT has reviewed historical and recent landings data for HMS fisheries, and at-sea observer data for the drift gillnet and high seas longline fisheries, and concludes that the incidental catch of groundfish in these fisheries is fairly minimal. This is confirmed by Table 3.3.3.8. in the Draft Environmental Assessment on the Expanded Coverage of the Program to Monitor Time-Area Closures in the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery (Informational Report 8, September 2005). Table 3.3.3.8. indicates, over the past five years, an average of 0.1 mt of shelf groundfish, and 0.1 mt of slope groundfish species, have been landed by all HMS vessels (line and net gears) combined.

Table 4.3.3.6. identifies the number of incidental open access vessels by exvessel revenue group. For HMS line gears, the number of open access vessels with incidental groundfish has declined from 18 in the year 2000 to 6 in the year 2004. Of the five vessels in 2003, three were in the less than \$500 group, and two were in the \$501-\$1,000 group and, of the six vessels in 2004, five were in the less than \$500 group, and one was in the \$501-\$1,000 group. There were no data provided for the HMS net gears.

The HMSMT also notes that HMS vessels do not need to adhere to the groundfish Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) closures while fishing for HMS. Therefore, based on the landings and observer data, and because HMS vessels are permitted to fish within the groundfish RCAs, the HMSMT recommends that the Council not require VMS for vessels that only target HMS for the purposes of groundfish conservation. The HMSMT notes that some vessels participating in the albacore troll fishery, for example, may also participate in the directed groundfish open access fishery and may be required to have VMS as a result of their groundfish fishing activity; our recommendation is not intended to exclude these vessels from VMS.

For the purposes of HMS management, however, the HMS high seas longline fishery currently has VMS. There are also area closures for the drift gillnet fishery, but VMS is currently not required for that sector. The HMSMT notes that, in the future, we may recommend requiring VMS for one or more HMS fisheries as an enforcement tool to monitor the locations of fishing activity. VMS requirements for the HMS fishery are provided for through the framework procedures and would not require an amendment to the HMS fishery management plan.

PFMC  
10/14/05