

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON NATIONAL
MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE REPORT

At the November meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) tasked the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) to begin preparing materials to assist the Council in recommending appropriate biological reference points for determining the stock status of the HMS management unit species. The HMS Fishery Management Plan (FMP) identifies the Council's goal of managing fisheries to maintain optimum yield, using maximum sustainable yield (MSY) based benchmarks as outlined in National Standard 1. However, given the varying levels of data available for stock assessments of HMS species in the Pacific, MSY benchmarks are not always available. In those situations, the HMS FMP dictates that MSY proxies should be used. A list of proxies is identified in the FMP, but the Council and HMSMT have struggled with the question of which proxies are most appropriate for the Council managed HMS stocks. The HMSMT recommends that the Council's decision be ultimately made in consideration of, or cooperation with, the other Pacific HMS management organizations, particularly the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission and Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, given the international nature of the fisheries for most of the HMS management unit species in areas beyond the Council's jurisdiction.

The HMSMT discussed a work plan to provide guidance to the Council on Biological Reference Points. Recognizing that the Council would like to select preferred reference points at the June meeting, the HMSMT will, with the help of Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) staff, develop the following:

- 1) A list of reference points currently being used for management or stock status determination by other HMS fisheries management organizations in the Pacific.
- 2) A diagram demonstrating the relative risk of a suite of potential reference points with respect to status determination criteria adopted by the Council in the HMS FMP.
- 3) A decision tree to assist the Council in selecting the appropriate reference points given the level of data availability and the Council's management goals.

Timeline

The HMSMT and SWFSC staff will prepare the materials on biological reference points prior to and during the next HMSMT meeting planned for May. Draft materials will be made available to the Council and will undergo review by the Scientific and Statistical Committee at the June meeting.