

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS FOR 2007-2008 SEASON

The Council has received two exempted fishing permit (EFP) applications for the 2007-2008 fishing year: 1) a continuation of the drift gillnet EFP, submitted by Mr. Chuck Janisse on behalf of the Federation of Independent Seafood Harvesters; and 2) a longline EFP, submitted by Mr. Pete Dupuy. In March, the Council approved the drift gillnet EFP for 2006, and the Team recommended that continuation of the drift gillnet EFP for 2007 be contingent upon a review of the results of the 2006 EFP. As this EFP is scheduled to begin in August, pending final approval by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the final results will not be available until the end of the year. Depending on the results of the drift gillnet EFP in 2006, the Council may wish to consider changing and/or adding provisions to the EFP; therefore, the Biological Opinion being prepared by NMFS is for the 2006 fishing year only. Continuation of the drift gillnet EFP in 2007 would require additional Council action, re-consultation, and a new Biological Opinion.

Also in March, the Council advanced the longline EFP for consideration. Similar to the drift gillnet EFP process for this year, the Team would develop a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) with alternatives for the Council's consideration.

The HMSMT proposes the following process and schedule for these EFPs:

- Nov 2006 NMFS and California Department of Fish and Game present draft report on 2006 drift gillnet EFP to Council; Council consider whether to proceed with drift gillnet EFP in 2007
- HMSMT present alternatives for longline EFP to Council; Council consider whether to proceed with longline EFP in 2007; if so, then approve the alternatives for public review and task the HMSMT with preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA)
- Mar 2007 NMFS and California Department of Fish and Game present final report on 2006 drift gillnet EFP to Council; HMSMT presents any proposed modifications to the 2007 drift gillnet EFP to Council; Council consider approving the modifications for public review
- HMSMT present draft EA for longline EFP to Council; Council select preferred alternative for longline EFP and transmit their recommendation to NMFS
- Apr 2007 If necessary, HMSMT present draft EA for drift gillnet EFP to Council; Council take final action on drift gillnet EFP and transmit their recommendation to NMFS

HMSMT Recommendation:

1. Provide guidance and/or approve HMSMT's proposed process and schedule for consideration of drift gillnet and longline EFPs for 2007