

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
COUNCIL OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR MAKING HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES
RECOMMENDATIONS TO REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

The purpose of the Council Operating Procedure (COP) is to facilitate coordination and communication of highly migratory species (HMS) management advice between U.S. fishery management councils, the appropriate U.S. delegation and regional fishery management organizations (RFMOs). The COP should be consistent with any Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among relevant U.S. parties, authorized by the MSA reauthorization.

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) recommends the Council approve the draft COP for public review. Although the HMSMT has no specific comments on the MOU, the HMSMT highlights that interagency coordination and information exchange is key to effective HMS management and conservation.

The HMSMT recommends that the Council take full advantage of opportunities to nominate west coast stakeholders in HMS management fora. The HMSMT also appreciates that the Council member nominated as a Commissioner to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) has considerable HMS expertise and encourages the Council to consider similar expertise critical for future appointments.

To foster communication and coordination, the HMSMT would like to designate a team member as a liaison to U.S. management fora for HMS, including participating in the U.S. delegation to the IATTC and the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council's (WPFMCs) Pacific Pelagics Team (PPT) annual meeting. It should be noted that the HMSMT will meet via teleconference with the PPT in mid-April to discuss longline fisheries, tuna conservation measures, and other HMS issues.

The HMSMT notes that the timing of the Council and IATTC meetings can make it difficult for the Council to develop effective recommendations and communicate them in a timely way to the IATTC. The Council meets in April and June, just prior to the June IATTC meeting. However, stock assessment results are typically available in May each year. Given the very short time to prepare and submit a letter to the IATTC, the HMSMT encourages dialogue between members of the U.S. delegation and the Council at its June meeting to account for assessment results and any other new information. The COP specifies that the HMSMT report to the Council in April, although it is likely that the team will be considering assessment results and developing recommended management measures throughout the year.

HMSMT recommends that the Council:

- 1) Approve the COPs as drafted for public review.
- 2) Maximize opportunities for west coast stakeholder participation on RFMO Advisory Committees, through available nomination processes to foster broader and timely communication and coordination on HMS issues with other national and international fishery management bodies.
- 3) Support designation of a HMSMT member to serve as a liaison on HMS issues to other bodies, including the WPFMC and tuna RFMOs.
- 4) Invite members of the U.S. IATTC delegation to the June Council meeting to discuss Council conservation recommendations.