

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATE AND  
COMMUNICATION OF RESEARCH AND DATA NEEDS

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) reviewed the preliminary draft of the Research and Data Needs document (Agenda Item C.3.a, Attachment 1) at its April and June meetings. The HMSMT found the chapter on the Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (“HMS chapter”) to be largely reflective of the Council’s HMS research priorities as identified in the Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) document. However, the team does see a need to update both documents and suggests that the updates be coordinated.

The first task of the Research and Data Needs HMS chapter should be to identify the Council’s priority HMS stocks, i.e., those most important to and most affected by Council-managed fishing activities. Priority should then be given to maintaining and improving our ability to measure the impact of fishing on those stocks and to monitor status and trends in their distribution and abundance. The second task of the Research and Data Needs document should then be to identify and prioritize the fishery independent and dependent data collection activities and biological research needed to do so for each stock.

The HMSMT recommends prioritizing, and organizing the HMS chapter of the Research and Data Needs document into three tiers:

<b><u>Priority Level 1</u></b>	<b><u>Priority Level 2</u></b>	<b><u>Priority Level 3</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Albacore</li><li>• Swordfish</li><li>• Protected species interactions</li><li>• Shortfin mako</li><li>• Common thresher</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Blue shark</li><li>• Striped marlin</li><li>• Bluefin tuna</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bigeye thresher</li><li>• Pelagic thresher</li><li>• Dorado</li><li>• Tropical tunas</li></ul>

The team recommends highest priority for albacore tuna and swordfish, because of their commercial importance, and for shortfin mako and common thresher sharks, because of their recreational importance. The stocks listed above in Priority Level 2 and Priority Level 3 are either encountered less in the Council’s HMS fisheries, are taken primarily incidentally, and/or have research and monitoring priorities set primarily in the international arena. However, the team also briefly discussed the new Annual Catch Limits rule and how it might require increased priority for some of these lower priority stocks, especially for sharks that are not actively monitored or managed in the international arena.

Lastly, the HMSMT recommends that highest priority be given to research on interactions of HMS fisheries with protected species, including economic and conservation engineering research, because of the Council’s responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act and Marine

Mammal Protection Act and because of current constraints placed on U.S. west coast fisheries as a consequence of protected species interactions.

The HMSMT will be coordinating the update of the Research and Data Needs section of the HMS SAFE document this summer for review by the Council at the September Council meeting. If the Council accepts the team's recommendation, the HMSMT has identified a subgroup that will work with the authors of the Research and Data Needs document to ensure that both reports are consistent in their characterization of the Council's HMS research and monitoring priorities. The team is also working with Council staff to have some stock-specific updates and edits included in the public review draft of the Research and Data Needs document.

PFMC  
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