

Southwest Region NMFS Report HMS

FISHERY RELATED ACTIONS

Draft Deep-set Longline Environmental Assessment: The Federal Register notice announcing the availability of the draft deep-set longline EA for public comment was published on September 29, 2008 and closed on October 29, 2008. The draft EA is available on the SWR's website: <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/>.

Sea Turtles: NMFS continues its review of two petitions for action related to sea turtles: 1) separate the North Pacific population of loggerhead sea turtles and list them as endangered; and 2) designate leatherback sea turtle critical habitat in the U.S. west coast EEZ. Final decisions on these actions are expected in late 2008 or early 2009.

Marine Mammal Authorization Program Permits: NMFS is integrating issuance of Marine Mammal Authorization Permits with other State and federal permit systems. Beginning in 2009, fishermen will no longer be required to submit an application and \$25 fee to receive their permit. Permits will be automatically issued by NMFS to fishermen participating in Category I and II fisheries under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Fishermen who haven't received their Marine Mammal Authorization Permit by January 1, 2009, should call their respective NMFS Regional Office to request a permit.

List of Fisheries: The final 2009 List of Fisheries will be effective on January 1, 2009. High seas fisheries have been added to the 2009 list for the first time. This is not going to affect HMS fisheries since fisheries that occur on the high seas also occur within the EEZ and participants already receive the necessary Marine Mammal Protection Act authorization, so no additional registration or certificates will be required. The Southwest Region is working with the California Department of Fish and Game to ensure that all necessary state fishery participants are registered and have authorization permits. (Contact: Elizabeth.Petras@noaa.gov or 562-980-3238).

Skipper Workshops: NMFS- SWR recently conducted skipper workshops for participants in the federal drift gillnet fishery, as required under the Take Reduction Plan. Skippers who have not taken a workshop since 2005 or are new to the DGN fishery are required to complete the training (Contact: Christina.Fahy@noaa.gov or 562-980-4023).

Green Sturgeon Proposed Critical Habitat: NMFS hosted a public workshop on October 16 in Sacramento on the proposed listing of green sturgeon critical habitat along the U.S. West Coast. Public comments on the proposed critical habitat are due by Friday, November 7, 2008.

MEETINGS

General Advisory Committee (GAC): On October 16, 2008, the GAC to the U.S. Section to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) met to receive and discuss information regarding: (1) 2008 IATTC activities, (2) conservation and management measures for yellowfin and bigeye tuna for 2009 and future years and management of fishing capacity, and other issues, (3) IATTC cooperation with other regional fishery management organizations, (4) implementing legislation for the Antigua Convention, including provisions for a GAC, and (5) administrative matters.

IATTC: The 79th IATTC meeting will be held 6-7 November, 2008, in La Jolla, California, to resolve tuna conservation measures for 2009 and future years. Also, at this meeting, the nations Party to the Convention will attempt to complete the IATTC meeting agenda left on the table from the June 2008 annual meeting held in Panama.

Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Advisory Committee Meeting: The first WCPFC Advisory Committee (AC) meeting with the U.S. delegation met in Honolulu, HI on September 17th and 18th, 2008. A primary obstacle to meeting outcomes was that AC members were not allowed to discuss any substantive matters during the meeting due to Federal conflict of interest laws. Only procedural questions were allowed during the proceedings. There was no legislative remedy before Congress closed down for the election; however, there will be a “lame duck” session after the election and the possibility that the legislation could be amended before the December 2008 WCPFC Commission meeting is plausible.