

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON RESUBMITTED  
EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT APPLICATIONS

At the March 2015 meeting the Council accepted applications for Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs). The HMSMT met at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center from May 13-15, 2015, and reviewed a revised draft EFP application from the Alliance of Communities for Sustainable Fisheries (ACSF) to be submitted to the Council for reconsideration in June. The HMSMT believes the revisions make for a stronger proposal, because the revised proposal addresses the issues the HMSMT identified in March. The applicants have refocused their proposal in several ways. First, the objective of the EFP is to test shallow-set longline (SSLL) gear inside the west coast EEZ and drift gillnet gear (DGN) inside the PLCA. Fishing under the EFP in the areas closed to these gear types would be compared to currently authorized fisheries outside of these areas. The applicants also recognize that it will likely take several years of fishing, possibly with an increase in the number of participating vessels in future years, to gather enough data to make statistically valid comparisons. For that reason, the applicants do not propose rigorous statistical testing of the results in this initial phase, although the applicant does propose comparisons between the full fleet and EFP fishing results from comparable time/areas inside the PLCA. Instead, the application focuses on gathering information to advance development of an experimental design. The applicants also include an objective to test modifications to DGN gear to minimize impacts to protected species. The HMSMT notes that any gear modifications that are tested should be documented in detail in the report due to the Council at the conclusion of the first season of fishing.

COP 20, the protocol for consideration of EFPs for HMS fisheries, contains a provision allowing the HMSMT to forward to the SSC any data analysis methods that could benefit from a rigorous scientific review (Protocol E.2). At this stage the application does not have a scientific component that necessitates SSC review.

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