

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE REPORT ON THE U.S. WEST COAST SWORDFISH FISHERIES MEETING

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) hosted a meeting to discuss U.S. West Coast swordfish fisheries May 11-12, 2015, in La Jolla, California. Approximately 50 participants attended, including fishery managers and scientists, commercial fishermen, representatives of the industry supply chain, and conservation organizations. The meeting included information-sharing, presentations, and discussions focused on the following objectives:

- Exploring strategies to optimize fishing for highly migratory species that are complementary to existing U.S. West Coast swordfish fisheries, and
- Balancing sustainable fisheries with reducing bycatch and identifying potential ways to reach this goal.

Throughout the meeting, several recurring themes emerged regarding future needs for the swordfish fisheries. These included:

- Support for and promotion of local swordfish fisheries as suppliers of a sustainable resource;
- Improvements in informing and educating consumers on ecological and economic impacts of swordfish supply and purchase decisions;
- Improvements in data collection and analysis of the fisheries, and consistency in the dissemination of that information to stakeholders; and,
- Productive steps forward on areas of common agreement among fishery stakeholders.

Meeting participants offered specific ideas for moving forward. Some of these included:

- Diversifying the gear portfolios of swordfish fishermen by deploying buoy gear and testing more selective gear-types and fishing practices (e.g., use of deep-set buoy gear, shorter drift gillnet (DGN) sets, deep daytime DGN sets, actively tended longlines, predictive mapping, and deterrent devices (e.g., illuminated nets and pingers);
- Encouraging the advancement of bycatch avoidance research to increase fishing opportunities and minimize environmental impacts,
- Considering the use of modified or new gear-types as a potential avenue to expand access to areas otherwise closed to DGN gear, and
- Considering improvements to and expanded use of electronic monitoring to improve information on fishery bycatch and achieve 100 percent monitoring of the DGN fishery.

Background materials from the meeting are available on the West Coast Region website: http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/migratory_species/2015_swordfish_mtg.html. Additionally, the meeting facilitator is preparing a summary report and NMFS will make it available online, and to the Council, once completed.