

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON INITIAL
SCOPING OF BIENNIAL SPECIFICATIONS INCLUDING MANAGEMENT REFERENCE
POINTS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

West Coast Bigeye Tuna/Opah Fishery

Deep-set longline fishing gear (DSLL) is one method for harvesting tunas in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (midway between California and Hawaii). The primary target is bigeye tuna and other marketable, highly migratory species (HMS) including yellowfin tuna, opah, mahi mahi, escolar, swordfish, and wahoo. This fishing operation has minimal bycatch as evidenced by the F/V Ventura II for over a decade as documented by 100% observer data. For years, the fishery extensively operated mostly out of Hawaii and was managed by the NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office's (PIRO) office under the Hawaii Longline Limited Access Permit (HLLP) Program as recommended by the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WPFMC) in its Fishery Ecosystem Plan for Pelagic Fisheries of the Western Pacific Region (Pelagic FEP). The HLLP program controls a maximum of 164 permits although currently about 141 are actively fished and that also applies to the shallow-set longline swordfish fishery. Permits are registered to the vessel in the name of the vessel owner. Because it is a limited entry fishery, no new permits can be issued, but permits are renewable and freely transferable. The fishery operates under regulations at 50 CFR Part 665.

The West Coast bigeye tuna/opah fishing industry (fishermen, buyers and the public) would like to be proactive. Interesting facts about opah:

- Opah have an elevated temperature
- Some parts of the opah taste like beef
- Opah is an underutilized species and the market is growing.

The HMSAS requests that the Council direct the HMSMT to include evaluating appropriate management measures for the West Coast bigeye tuna/opah fishery in the next year's cycle and review this document for appropriate future management measures.

Swordfish Description

The swordfish description in the HMS Fishery Management Plan (FMP) needs to be changed. The HMSAS recommends that the Council discuss and clarify the relationship between the specification of management unit species and the stocks that are actually vulnerable to fisheries managed under the HMS FMP.