

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE (NMFS) REPORT ON  
FUTURE PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL (COUNCIL)  
MEETING AGENDA AND WORKLOAD PLANNING

During the November 2016 Council meeting, Council members requested information regarding the priorities and workload for Highly Migratory Species (HMS) activities of the NMFS West Coast Region's (WCR) Sustainable Fisheries Division (SFD) to inform decision-making about future Council meeting agendas. NMFS offers the following information to serve that purpose.

**Priority-setting for NMFS WCR:** To implement the [WCR Strategic Plan for 2016-2020](#), the WCR identifies actions it will carry out each fiscal year. The WCR then identifies a subset of these actions as regional priorities. Some of these actions are also included in NMFS' national priorities.

**HMS Priorities:** SFD identified the HMS actions listed below as its priorities for progress and/or completion in fiscal year 2017. Those actions that are also priorities for the WCR and/or at the national NMFS level are noted with an asterisk (i.e., \* WCR, \*\* WCR and national).

International Activities:

- Negotiate and implement emergency measures for tropical tunas
- Rebuild Pacific bluefin tuna
  - Implement Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) Resolution C-16-08 (*Measures for the Conservation and Management of Pacific Bluefin Tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean*) (2017-2018 measures)
  - Make progress towards a rebuilding plan jointly supported by the IATTC and Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)
- \*\*Support the IATTC Bycatch Working Group meeting<sup>1</sup>

Domestic Activities:

- \*Issue Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs) for targeting swordfish,<sup>2</sup> specifically for:
  - Deep-set buoy gear (DSBG)
  - Deep-set and shallow-set longline
  - Drift gillnet (DGN) gear with use of dynamic ocean modeling tools
- Complete Amendment 4 to the Fishery Management Plan for U.S. West Coast Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species (HMS FMP)

**Other HMS Activities in 2017:** In addition to the priority actions above, SFD will work on the following:

International Activities:

---

<sup>1</sup> This action supports NMFS' and the WCR's priorities for recovering species identified as NMFS' Species in the Spotlight.

<sup>2</sup> This action supports the WCR's priority for considering additional gear types for harvesting swordfish.

- Support the U.S. Delegations to the IATTC and Northern Committee to the WCPFC, including General Advisory Committee and Scientific Advisory Subcommittee meetings
- Publish Compliance Guides for regulations based on international resolutions
- Register purse seine vessels on the IATTC's regional vessel register
- Provide support to the U.S. Delegation in negotiating fishing regimes that are beneficial to the U.S. fleet under the U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty
- Implement requirements for the safe release of sharks by purse seiners (IATTC Resolution C-16-05, *Resolution on the Management of Shark Species*) by Jan 1, 2018
- Implement a program to monitoring transshipments by large-scale tuna fishing vessels (IATTC Resolution C-12-07, *Amendment to Resolution C-11-09 on Establishing a Program for Transshipments by Large-Scale Fishing Vessels*)
- Plan an electronic reporting workshop
- Administer the Tuna Tracking and Verification Program

#### Domestic Activities:

- Continue to process the Council's recommendation for hard caps for the DGN fishery
- Continue to process the Council's recommendation for 100 percent monitoring of the DGN fishery
- Host roundtable discussions with recreational fishing constituents and participate in recreational fishing shows along the U.S. West Coast
- Complete a snapshot of the WCR's implementation of its Saltwater Recreational Fishing Action Plan
- Complete HMS stock status determinations based on 2017 assessments
- Consider an EFP for linked DSBG
- Complete a proposed rule to implement Amendment 5 to the HMS FMP (Federal DGN Permit)
- Begin analyses for Amendment 6 to the HMS FMP (Authorize DSBG)

**Recommendations for 2017 YAG:** SFD appreciates the opportunity to work with the Council with respect to its future agenda for HMS fisheries actions. Generally, SFD submits its timeline projections for various HMS activities to the Council under a NMFS Report agenda item. SFD welcomes further discussion about other ways workload planning information can be provided to better meet the Council's needs.

Understanding the Council's need to plan future meeting agendas, NMFS offers the following suggestions related to HMS activities:

1. Spread out Council actions regarding DSBG authorization to allow documentation of National Environmental Policy Act and Magnuson-Stevens Act compliance to occur within the timeline of the Council selecting its final preferred alternative (FPA). NMFS is preparing for the Council to select a range of alternatives (ROA) for this action at the June 2017 meeting. Scheduling Council selection of a preliminary preferred alternative during the Council's November 2017 meeting would allow time to complete an analysis of the impacts and allow the Council flexibility in refining the ROA during the September 2017 meeting, if needed. Scheduling the Council's adoption of an FPA during the March 2018 meeting would provide sufficient time to complete a cumulative impacts analysis of the alternatives, as well

as a Regulatory Impact Review and assessment of compliance with National Standards and the Regulatory Flexibility Act.

2. Schedule scoping for the shallow-set longline action during the November 2017 meeting, when it may be possible to glean some preliminary data from the Council recommended EFP if issued.
3. Shift the regularly scheduled 3-meeting biennial management cycle from the June, September, and November meetings to the September, November, March meetings. As described in the NMFS Report under Agenda Item J.3, this shift in the schedule of the biennial management cycle for HMS would better align with international assessments and NMFS stock status determinations and enable batching of stock status-related Council recommendations consistent with statutory timelines.