

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON AMENDMENT 4 TO THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR WEST COAST FISHERIES FOR HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) heard a briefing by Dr. Kit Dahl during a joint session with the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) in March 2017 regarding proposed changes to the HMS Fishery Management Plan (FMP) under Amendment 4, which are summarized in [Agenda Item J.4, Attachment 1](#). This session included a briefing by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) staff on [Agenda Item J.4.a, Supplemental NMFS Report](#).

The HMSMT reviewed the revisions to the HMS FMP in the draft version of Amendment 4. The HMSMT supports the revisions that removed outdated numeric information from the HMS FMP. The HMSMT believes that putting data that are subject to frequent updates into HMS Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) reports would avoid the need to frequently revise numeric information in the HMS FMP that become out of date as new stock assessments are completed. An example of how frequently updated numeric status determination criteria (SDC) might be presented in the HMS SAFE is provided in the Supplemental NMFS report (pp. 5-8). The HMSMT notes that the formulas for determining SDC remain unrevised by the “housekeeping” changes included in Amendment 4.

In June 2016, the Council tasked the HMSMT with identifying maximum sustainable yield (MSY), optimum yield (OY), and SDCs in the HMS FMP, which are clarified in Amendment 4. In addition, the Council asked the HMSMT to include up-to-date values for reference points in the SAFE report, as described in [Agenda Item J.4.a, Supplemental NMFS Report](#). NMFS and the HMSMT will coordinate to include values from stock status determinations in future SAFE report updates. The HMSMT notes that the NMFS report includes MSY proxies for some species in the FMP that have been assessed in the last two years (e.g., for Pacific bluefin tuna). Procedures for selecting MSY proxies for different categories of stocks are discussed in p. 91 of Attachment 1 (Amendment 4). The Council could consider tasking the Scientific and Statistical Committee with a review of procedures for selecting MSY proxies for HMS stocks. The HMSMT endorsed an approach of revising SDCs and selecting MSY proxies on a case-by-case basis in its September 2016 report ([Agenda Item J.3.a, HMSMT Report](#)). The HMSMT felt this was the most realistic way of dealing with the considerable workload of addressing and potentially revising SDCs.

Aligning the biennial process and NMFS status determination process is consistent with the case-by-case approach. NMFS status determinations of overfished and overfishing have come at irregular points in time, creating a scheduling issue with respect to the Council’s biennial management cycle. The Council could align its biennial cycle with the NMFS status determination process, as described on pages 2-5 of [Agenda Item J.4.a, Supplemental NMFS Report](#). Doing so would help streamline the process for specifying reference point values and incorporating them in the SAFE report in future years. According to the FMP (and Council Operating Procedure 9 and regulations) “should there be need to change the management

schedule, e.g., because of marked changes in fishery practices, the Council can do so by vote and without a plan amendment, provided the Council gives six-month notice.” However, the Council should consider whether the description of the management cycle in the FMP should be modified accordingly as part of Amendment 4. The HMSMT endorses this approach, including revision of the HMS FMP to incorporate the revised schedule.

The HMSMT could identify species for which the Council might be an “appropriate council” to advise NMFS on status determinations and recommending management measures in the event of overfishing or overfished stock status. This guidance could be used to inform coordination with the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council on shared management unit species listed in both FMPs.

The HMSMT notes that NMFS has an internal National Standard 1 (NS1) policy group, which may be able to provide a courtesy review of any revisions to language required under NS1. The Council could consider whether to request a review before final action on this Agenda Item at its June 2017 meeting.

HMSMT recommendations to the Council:

1. Incorporate numeric estimates or proxies for SDCs into the SAFE. The HMSMT could provide a list of what exactly would be included for the June 2017 Council meeting.
2. Consider the extent to which the Council and the SSC intends to be involved in selection of MSY proxies for status determinations, or whether it wishes to defer this to NMFS.
3. Align the biennial specifications process in the HMS FMP from the current meeting schedule to more closely correspond with the international stock assessment cycle as recommended in the Supplemental NMFS Report.
4. Task HMSMT and HMSAS with developing a list of species for which the Council might consider itself the “appropriate Council” (per MSA section 304(i)) for making management recommendations in response to a stock status determination. This would require taking the boundaries of assessments into consideration with respect to landings from the U.S. West Coast.
5. Provide guidance on any additional revisions needed to complete Amendment 4 for public review.
6. Proceed as scheduled to take final action on the amendment in June.

PFMC
03/11/17