

**HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM
REPORT ON STOCK STATUS DETERMINATIONS**

At the March 2017 meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council), the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) and Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel were tasked with developing a list of stocks from the West Coast Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (HMS FMP) management unit species (MUS) for which the Council could consider itself appropriate for notifications of stock status determinations by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) (per Magnuson-Stevens Act section 304(i)). [Agenda Item J.4.a, Supplemental HMSMT Report March 2017](#) also proposed an effort to align the HMS biennial specification cycle more closely with the international stock assessment cycle. At the public meeting in La Jolla, California from April 18-20, 2017, the HMSMT considered both of these topics, as addressed in this report.

The HMSMT used the presence of landings by U.S. West coast vessels over a ten-year period from 2006-2015 as the primary criterion for recommending whether a stock should be considered by the Council for notifications of status determinations from NMFS. [Agenda Item J.4.a, Supplemental NMFS Report March 2017](#) reported stocks from the HMS FMP list of MUS for which catches had been made by U.S. West coast vessels, and the stock boundaries used for the most recent international stock assessments. While vessels fishing under the HMS FMP do not catch swordfish within the Eastern Pacific Swordfish stock boundary, the HMSMT included this stock since the current boundary is close to the U.S. west coast and could be revised in the future. Table 1 specifies which stocks the HMSMT identified using these criteria.

Table 1. Stocks from which U.S. West coast vessels made catches during 2006-2015.

Species	Stock Unit	Most recent assessment
Albacore tuna	North Pacific Ocean	2014 - ISC
Albacore tuna	South Pacific Ocean	2015 - SPC
Pacific bluefin tuna	Pacific Ocean	2016 - ISC
Bigeye tuna	Eastern Pacific Ocean	2016 - IATTC
Yellowfin tuna	Eastern Pacific Ocean	2016 - IATTC
Skipjack tuna	Eastern Pacific Ocean	2016 - IATTC
Swordfish	Eastern Pacific Ocean	2014 - ISC
Swordfish	Western and Central North Pacific Ocean	2014 - ISC
Striped marlin	Eastern Pacific Ocean	2009 - IATTC
Blue shark	North Pacific Ocean	2014 - ISC
Shortfin mako shark	North Pacific Ocean	2015 - ISC
Common thresher shark	Eastern North Pacific Ocean	2016 - NMFS
Dorado	Southeast Pacific Ocean	2016 - IATTC

Identifying the stocks for which it wishes to be notified at this point would not preclude the Council from changing this list in the future, if needed.

The biennial management cycle is currently scheduled for June, September, and November, as specified in Chapter 5 of the HMS FMP, [COP 9 \(Schedule 5\)](#), and in regulation (50CFR §660.709 Annual Specifications). However, most international assessments have not been considered for adoption by their relevant management bodies (Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission and Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission) and determined to be Best Scientific Information Available by NMFS in time for the June Council meeting in any given year. Thus, the HMS biennial process usually begins prior to having stock assessments available for consideration by the Council. To better align the Council's biennial management cycle with the timing of international assessments, the Council adopted the recommendation of the [Agenda Item J.4.a, Supplemental HMSMT Report, March 2017](#) to amend its biennial management cycle to a September, November, and March Council meeting timeline as outlined in Figure 1 (page 4) of the [Agenda Item J.4.a, Supplemental NMFS Report, March 2017](#).

The HMSMT recommends the Council take the following actions:

- Notify NMFS that it considers itself an appropriate Council for stock status updates for the stocks listed in Table 1 of this report.
- Adopt the proposed amendments to Chapter 5 of the HMS FMP provided at end of this report to reflect the new biennial schedule.

PFMC
05/11/17

5.0 BIENNIAL PROCESS FOR SPECIFYING MANAGEMENT REFERENCE POINTS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

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5.2 Management Cycle

The management cycle is a pre-determined regular schedule for council management actions with respect to HMS fisheries and review of status determination criteria. This cycle is intended to accommodate the schedule differences affect the time available for fishery assessments prepared by regional fishery management organizations, the timeliness of available data and of management responses, and the degree to which fishers can participate in the management process.

Future developments in the fisheries do not ordinarily bring need for change in the management cycle schedule, and the management cycle is thus a fixed element of the FMP. However, 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~~does so at its March meeting in even-numbered years.

The FMP establishes a *biennial* management cycle with regulatory/statistical year *April 1 to March 31*. The schedule would be as follows:

Even-Numbered Years-1

~~June~~September Provide update to the Council on status of the HMS fisheries and, as appropriate, proposed adjustments to the numerical estimates of MSY, OY, and SDC in a preliminary SAFE report. If necessary, Council directs HMSMT to prepare draft regulatory analysis to implement revised estimates of reference point values, ACLs or other harvest objectives and/or management measures.

~~September~~November Annual SAFE document presented to Council. If necessary, Council directs HMSMT to prepare a draft regulatory analysis to implement revised estimates of reference point values, ACLs or other harvest objectives, and/or management measures. Council adopts for public review proposed actions addressing concerns from current and previous SAFE reports.

~~November~~ Council adopts final action and submits to NMFS for approval.

Odd-Numbered Years-2

~~April~~March Council adopts final recommendations to NMFS, Department of State, and Congress for international measures to end overfishing and/or rebuild stocks and proposed regulations necessary for domestic fishery management.~~Measures become effective, and stay in effect for at least two years.~~

NMFS implements domestic fishery management regulations as soon as practicable after Council final action while fulfilling applicable statutory requirements related to rulemaking.

The SAFE document in ~~even-numbered~~years-2, after NMFS review and approval, publishes any revised estimates of reference point values, including ACLs or other harvest objectives (e.g., a harvest guideline) previously adopted by the Council.

~~This schedule allows at least minimally sufficient time for data analysis, provides for timely response to fishery problems, and allows most fishers adequate access to the management process, as scheduled.~~

~~The cycle is repeated biennially, with new actions considered in September and becoming effective in April every other year. The Council would schedule HMS for the June, September, and November Council meetings.~~

Under this biennial cycle (or any cycle), the HMS ~~management~~Management team~~Team~~ would still conduct ongoing reviews of the fisheries and status of stocks and prepare an annual SAFE document for the Council. The Council would still have to prepare a stock rebuilding plan within two years of notification by the Secretary of Commerce that a stock not subject to management under an international agreement to which the United States is party has been declared overfished, as called for under the Magnuson-Stevens Act (Section 2.3).