

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON DEEP-SET BUOY
GEAR AUTHORIZATION — FINAL RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES AND PRELIMINARY
PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR NUMBER OF LIMITED ENTRY PERMITS

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) appreciates the Council's desire to add another gear type to those currently used to harvest swordfish off the U.S. West Coast. The promise of deep-set buoy gear (DSBG) to supplement fishing activities currently available to harvesters of swordfish appears worthwhile.

Permitting:

In March, the Council provided two options for deep-set buoy gear (DSBG) permitting. The HMSAS supports considering both of these options. We are open to the idea that there may be additional options which warrant consideration and analysis. For example, the HMSAS supports adding an option for a phased-in open access program where initial permits are issued by a lottery with the addition of non-limiting qualifiers for participation in the initial lottery. We believe a phased-in approach could allow the Council to receive more information regarding the fishery's area(s) of operations and economic viability.

The HMSAS has discussed options at length and provides the following suggestions for initiating an Open Access fishery with non-transferable permits and with the following procedures and non-limiting qualifiers.

1. Phased-in approach with the Council reevaluating information obtained from fishing operations once every 2 years.
2. A lottery for the issuance of a limited number of permits in the first 2-year period. (HMSAS recommends 25 permits in the first round).
3. A qualification requirement for participation in the first lottery of being able to document having sufficient skill and experience of handling a commercial harvested swordfish (an extremely dangerous fish) at boat side. This requirement would be non-limiting as any person could qualify by obtaining the necessary experience either by demonstrating a history of landing swordfish or participating in the catching of swordfish as a crew member with documentation from the skipper of that vessel.
4. The issuance of some number of additional lottery chances for current holders of valid commercial HMS and exempted fishing permits (EFPs) with swordfish landings in recent years.

Capacity/Qualification Criteria:

The HMSAS continues to urge the Council to collect more information before it makes a final determination on a precise permitting and capacity regime. If entry is to be limited, we suggest the Council prioritize applicants who have demonstrated participation in the west coast swordfish fishery. This grouping should include current EFP participants, active drift gillnet permit holders, and active harpoon fishermen.

Considering the range of capacity alternatives provided in [Agenda Item G.5.a, Highly Migratory Species Management Team \(HMSMT\) Report 1](#), our analysis is as follows:

1. The lowest value of <10 permits could be too low to support a viable fishery that could significantly contribute to local production.
2. The largest option of <250 could be excessive given the relatively small area of the Southern California Bight, distribution of the resource and the economic issues that surround overcrowding.

Private Recreational Vessels:

As part of the concern for overcrowding in the Southern California Bight, HMSMT Report 1 (p. 1) acknowledges a data gap with marina-based private recreational fishing vessels. However, the report does not discuss the significance of this gap in the data. Marina-based private recreational vessels include all of the largest, most seaworthy of recreational fishing vessels that are too large for regular launching at public boat ramps. The range capabilities of these vessels are similar to the range of commercial passenger fishing vessel (CPFV) fleet as depicted in Figure 2 in the HMSMT report. However, the CPFV fleet generally does not fish for billfish and seldom fishes for HMS sharks so the effort pattern for the CPFV fleet or private recreational trailer boats are likely not accurate depictions of the effort footprint for marina-based private recreational fishing vessels.

PFMC
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