

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON SWORDFISH MANAGEMENT PROJECT PLANNING AND OBSERVER COVERAGE

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) briefly discussed the relevance of the draft 2015 Swordfish Management and Monitoring Plan (SMMP) given National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS') accounting of progress made on the various Actions and Measures in Section 4. In general, the HMSMT discussed the necessity of the Council to prioritize actions identified in the 2015 draft, as well as any future actions included in further development of the SMMP. This would allow the HMSMT to better focus its efforts on providing relevant input to the Council moving forward.

The HMSMT mostly focused discussion on future projects to address concerns associated with drift gillnet (DGN) monitoring as articulated in the SMMP. The SMMP identifies an action for the DGN fishery to "Work with NMFS to increase fishery monitoring and/or develop statistical methods to better estimate rare event bycatch in the absence of 100 percent monitoring." The Council also has before it the range of alternatives it adopted in 2015 for increasing monitoring in the DGN fishery. The HMSMT notes a number of ongoing and planned activities relevant to better understand the effectiveness of observer and electronic monitoring in the fishery. Activities include:

- Adoption of the regression tree methodology which allows for the estimation of bycatch events, even when catch of that species is not observed within a given fishing year ([Agenda Item G.3.a, Supplemental HMSMT Report 2](#)).
- A comparative study of vessel monitoring system (VMS) data across observed and unobserved vessels to better determine if vessels change fishing location according to the presence or absence of an observer ([Agenda Item G.7.a, Supplemental NMFS Report 1, page 5](#)).
- Experimentation of electronic monitoring (EM) systems on observable vessels to determine their suitability as a monitoring method in the DGN fishery ([Supplemental NMFS Report I, page 5](#)).

Once these efforts come to fruition the Council will be in a better position to consider appropriate actions to enhance DGN fishery monitoring.