

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA AND WORKLOAD PLANNING

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) reviewed the proposed scheduling of HMS agenda items on the Council's Preliminary Year-at-a-Glance (YAG) Summary ([Agenda Item C.5, Attachment 1](#), June 2020), as well as related attachments ([C.5, Attachment 2](#), [C.5, Attachment 3](#), June 2020).

The HMSMT discussed the implications of future workload items classified as tentatively essential or candidate items for postponement. The HMSMT suggests prioritizing time-critical agenda items for near-term Council meetings. The Council may also wish to consider expiration dates of no-cost contract extensions related to work on some HMS agenda items during workload and agenda planning.

Swordfish Management and Monitoring Plan (SMMP)

The HMSMT discussed tasks related to the Council's SMMP analyses request ([November 2019](#)), to identify additional work and staff needed to complete the assignment. This assignment is noted as "nonessential" in the Council's classification of agenda items postponed from 2020 Council meetings (see [Agenda Item C.5, Attachment 3](#)). The HMSMT notes that the Council is scheduled to meet in Garden Grove, CA, in November 2020, which could increase participation for this agenda item by swordfish fishery constituents who reside in Southern California. The HMSMT recommends that the Council consider the no-cost contract extension related to work on this agenda item in deciding when to reschedule it.

International Activities

The schedule of meetings of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and Western and Central Pacific Fishery Commission (WCPFC) remain uncertain. If the IATTC annual meeting and Northern Committee meet as scheduled in August and early September, respectively, the September Council meeting provides an opportunity to comment on domestic implementation of measures. If these meetings are delayed, the September Council meeting provides an opportunity to provide recommendations to the IATTC, Northern Committee, and WCPFC, noting the WCPFC is typically scheduled after the November meeting.

Biennial Specifications

September 2020 begins the biennial specifications cycle, as revised by Amendment 4, when the Council will receive updates on the 2019 stock assessments. Additionally, several 2020 assessments will be finalized prior to the September Council meeting, offering an opportunity to begin Council discussion of assessment results.

Essential Fish Habitat

The HMSMT received an update on the status of Phase 1 of the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) review from Council staff. Currently, the EFH review – Phase 1 report is scheduled for the September 2020 Council meeting. Given the current status of the EFH review, the HMSMT could bring the Council an update during the September 2020 Council meeting, with a full Phase 1 report to be presented at the March 2021 Council meeting.

Exempted Fishing Permits

The HMSMT agrees that consideration of exempted fishing permits (EFPs) is essential for the September Council meeting. The HMSMT suggests the Council schedule preliminary EFP approval in September and final approval in November, keeping in mind that any EFP applications submitted consistent with the previously approved gear configurations can be reviewed and approved in a single meeting in September.

In addition, many of the deep-set buoy gear (DSBG) EFP annual reports submitted in [Informational Report 12](#) mention participants' desire to use more than 10 pieces of either standard or linked buoy gear (SBG, LBG) simultaneously. The gear definition for all DSBG EFPs to date, as well as Council action for authorization of DSBG, specify that no more than 10 pieces can be used at any one time. The HMSMT recommends that the Council specify that if any individuals wish to begin using more than 10 pieces of either SBG or LBG, they must submit a new EFP application. As these applications would be considered a “new” type of gear for EFP evaluation, they would require a two-meeting process for approval.

Drift Gillnet (DGN) Performance Metrics

The DGN performance metrics review is included in the list of tentative “nonessential” HMS agenda items. The HMSMT recommends the Council revisit DGN performance metrics at its June 2021 meeting. The team notes that relatively low fishing effort, combined with the [most-recent estimates of marine mammal and sea turtle bycatch](#), result in negligible changes in estimated bycatch compared with previous years. The HMSMT could benefit from additional time allotted for the development and application of regression tree methods to finfish and shark bycatch and thus, the development of performance metrics. The HMSMT notes that 2019-2020 DGN observer data summaries are available on the NMFS WCR [website](#).

DGN Hard Caps

Currently, the DGN hard caps item is a candidate for discussion at the September 2020 Council meeting. The team does not view this agenda item as essential for September; however, this agenda item should be scheduled during a future Council meeting as soon as possible, given NMFS-identified issues with the final rule as published, and the potential need to revise the regulations.

Vessel Data and Analysis Request

As a result of discussions during the joint HMSMT and HMSAS webinar, the HMSMT understood that the HMSAS requested data analyses related to the issues of Pacific bluefin tuna and swordfish raised in their report under B.1.a Open Comment ([Supplemental HMSAS Report 1](#)), similar to the main data request in this report concerning the albacore fishery. The Eastern Pacific Professional Specialty Group (EP PSG) is already addressing this request with regards to the albacore fishery. If the EP PSG is able to provide the albacore analysis, the Council’s HMS advisory bodies could review it during the September or November meeting.

The HMSMT finds the data analysis related to Pacific bluefin tuna and swordfish to be of lower priority than the existing tasks identified in the Council YAG. In light of limitations due to telework arrangements, workload, and other considerations, the HMSMT requests that the Council postpone work on these two tasks until a later date, possibly in a future biennial cycle.

In summary, the HMSMT recommends Council consider the following schedule of HMS related topics for future workload planning:

September 2020	November 2020	March 2021	June 2021	September 2021
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. International 2. EFH Update 3. EFPs prelim 4. BiSpex 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. International 2. BiSpex 3. DGN Hardcaps 4. EFPs final 5. SMMP 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. International 2. EFH Phase 1 report 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. International 2. EFPs prelim 3. DGN Perf. Metrics 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. International 2. EFPs final

PFMC
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