

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
SARDINE REBUILDING PLAN

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) wishes to thank the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) for a thorough and thoughtful overview of the background and alternatives for the Council to consider as it proceeds with the statutorily required rebuilding plan for Pacific Sardine.

At the time this Statement was prepared, we had generally been made aware that there may be additional alternatives to be proposed. We did not have the benefit of having seen any of those additional proposals and base our statement on the originally submitted CPSMT report.

Because of the importance of Pacific sardine as live bait for the Southern California commercial passenger fishing vessel (CPFV) fleet and recreational private boats, we request the Council select Alternative 1 as its preliminary preferred alternative. This would allow limited harvest - primarily for live bait, incidental catch in other fisheries, both CPS and non-CPS, as well as minor directed harvest. We want to call to your attention a few specific items from the CPSMT's Report:

- Both private vessel owners and CPFV owners and captains consider live bait to be a necessary input to their private recreational fishing and recreational fishing businesses, respectively. (p. 10)
- Pacific sardine live bait utilization is more prevalent on trips departing Southern California which target highly migratory species. (p. 11)
- Overall a decrease in the availability of Pacific sardine live bait is expected to reduce angler consumer surplus and decrease angler effort resulting in the reduction of positive economic impacts to the economy. (p. 15)

As the above theorize, a zero U.S. harvest approach (Alternative 2) would have dramatic economic and social costs across many fisheries, and specifically to CPFV operations and Southern California recreational fishing businesses. The CPFV fleet, which has suffered significant economic hardship because of COVID-19, would be further disadvantaged without access to sardine for live bait purposes. The public comment submitted by the Sportfishing Association of California clearly identifies what is at stake, “[t]he inability to land sardines (Alternative 2) would jeopardize almost 5,000 jobs, \$602 million in sales impacts, \$222 million in income and \$309 million in gross domestic product.”