

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA AND WORKLOAD PLANNING

During our discussion on Agenda Item E.3 Biennial Harvest Specifications and Management Measures — Preliminary, the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) reviewed the Albacore Vessel Length Data Summaries prepared by the Eastern Pacific Professional Specialty Group and presented by Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) member Jessica Watson in a joint HMSAS/HMSMT meeting. This work identified the number and amounts of albacore landed by vessels less than 30 feet in length and those greater than or equal to 30 feet length. This analysis shows for vessels under 30 feet that there has been very little increase in number of participating vessels or landings across all three states.

Over the past few years some HMSAS members have reported a significant increase in the number of small vessels on the fishing grounds. Some of these vessels have been observed making two to three trips a week. Although there is no specific evidence of any illegal activity, the HMSAS remains concerned that a small problem exists and could grow. Having no daily bag limits, as in Washington, may promote selling of the catch without the necessary commercial license(s) and other state/Federal requirements. An illicit commercial fishery can have large negative impacts on local market prices for fresh albacore and therefore both current and future opportunities for legally licensed commercial fishermen.

The HMSAS would only like to keep this in the Council process and find ways to gather better data and understanding of the recreational albacore fishery in Washington, Oregon, and California. This could also include better tracking of albacore from the point of unloading onward to legal consumption or potential illegal sales. Another potential option would be to consider ways to clearly mark recreational versus commercial boats. This might also help with the perceived issue of illegal bluefin harvest from Mexico. We ask the Council to direct the Enforcement Consultants to address this issue in the future.

We note the Council's November meeting looks to be another full meeting. If the Council is looking for candidate items to move to a later date, the HMSAS suggests moving the Drift Gillnet (DGN) Hard Caps discussion to March. We make that suggestion given the current land/seascape for the DGN fishery – namely the impending buyout, pending legislation, and ongoing litigation. We do wish to see the Swordfish Management and Monitoring remain on the November Agenda.

You have heard from other advisory bodies that you should consider setting up an ad hoc workgroup focused on offshore development in response to activities taking place with regard to offshore wind and aquaculture. The HMSAS fully supports this and recommends that you take whatever necessary steps to create such a workgroup.