

## LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) engaged in a joint discussion on April 8 with the Highly Migratory Species Management Team regarding [Executive Order \(EO\) 14008](#), section 216(a) which establishes a “goal of conserving at least 30 percent of our lands and waters by 2030”. We are concerned with what this means to fishery stakeholders, dependent communities, the national seafood economy, seafood consumers, and the nation’s food security. There are concerns surrounding the definition of “conserving” with the possibility of this being interpreted to mean “no take” zones. With the newly changed definition of “Marine Protected Area” (MPA) by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s MPA Center (based on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature’s definition) it becomes even more problematic.

HMS fisheries range over most of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone off the West Coast. There are no areas we can point to as inessential to the needs of these fisheries. Thus, any definition of “conserve” which requires the designation of no-take MPAs would have serious consequences. The likely severe economic impacts associated with baseless, “feel-good” closures would lead to several options / consequences for fishermen, communities, and our food security. For migratory species like albacore tuna, the harvest opportunity may end up in a closed area. Obviously, this will require fishermen to lose income and travel farther in trying to make a survivable income. When area restrictions are established, especially in surface fisheries, the effort on the species will shift into the open areas creating overcrowding, and inefficiency. This management has seldom been effective reducing individual vessel’s catches and creates more danger of interactions.

One result would be the loss of revenues for part, or all, of a fishing season. We can likely estimate the loss of ex-vessel revenues, but the down-stream impacts, which are more difficult to quantify, would amplify the effect. For example, buyers and processors, marine mechanics, fuel docks, local fishmongers, consumers, etc. – will all be negatively impacted to some degree.

A second potential result would be an unintended increase in greenhouse gas emissions, to the detriment of the global climate. The premise of the E.O. is “the United States and the world face a profound climate crisis.” We need to be cognizant that restricting access could exacerbate the crisis; and lead to activities resulting in a net increase of greenhouse gas emissions, in direct conflict with the stated goal(s)/premise of the E.O. Avoiding no-take areas could require traveling further to access the fish we are trying to catch. This would require burning more fuel – with a resulting increase in emissions. We must also be cognizant of the climate impact differences between a pound of seafood harvested domestically, compared to that harvested on the high seas, or in the waters of a willing importer. Many of those nations have far fewer stringent concerns about the environment or its living marine resources. For example, many engines in foreign vessels are far from low emission.

Another thing to consider is the proposed new uses of the marine fishing space; for example, offshore renewable energy and aquaculture are being fast-tracked with little regard for impacts to the environment, ecological function of the California Current Large Marine Ecosystem, fishery participants, dependent communities, and stakeholders. Would these new uses be allowed in the

30 percent made off-limits to fishing, or would additional elimination of fishing areas be required to accommodate them?

For these reasons, we ask the Council to amend its letter to address the concerns raised above, in particular the negative economic impacts which would result. We appreciate the Council's draft letter pointing out how much of Federal waters under the Council's charge are already subject to protections, with special focus on essential fish habitat. We submit the Pacific Leatherback Conservation and Pacific Loggerhead Conservation Areas are examples of time-and-area based closures which are designed to protect biodiversity; and thus, should be considered as conserved for purposes of the E.O.

PFMC  
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