

## 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 Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council's) Preliminary Year-at-a-Glance Summary (Agenda Item C.10, [Attachment 1](#)) and offers the following recommendations.

- Add Standardized Bycatch Report Methodology agenda item to September 2021 and November 2021 meetings in an effort to meet the Standardized Bycatch Report Methodology requirements by the February 21, 2022, deadline.
  - The September meeting is needed for the Council to consider draft fishery management plan (FMP) amendment language, and to adopt a preliminary preferred alternative or make recommendations for modifications or both.
  - The November meeting is needed for the Council to adopt final FMP Amendment language.
- Swordfish Monitoring and Management Plan should be scheduled for November (currently tentatively scheduled).
  - The Council tasked the HMSMT to come back with some information for this agenda item in November 2019.
  - Additionally, the HMSMT would appreciate the opportunity to seek Council clarification on measures pertaining to drift gillnet in that plan to discuss, for example, how the foreseeable workload related to hard caps relates to other actions in the broader swordfish fishery (e.g., authorization of deep-set buoy gear, performance metrics, etc).
- Add drift gillnet Hard Caps Final Range of Alternatives to March 2022 to balance workload and allow adequate time for informative analysis to guide future Council action on this item.
- Consider scheduling the Essential Fish Habitat Phase 2 review for a future Council meeting in 2022 based on resource availability and workload considerations.

The HMSMT also discussed the Council meeting format in a post-COVID era. With regards to future meetings, the HMSMT offers that the following be considered when determining the future format of Council meetings:

- 1) For virtual meetings, a pared-down agenda is necessary for advisory bodies (ABs) and the Council to properly address agenda items.
- 2) The virtual format is less effective for engaging discussion, resulting in additional coordination challenges for Management Team members in accomplishing their tasks and preparing reports, especially when agenda workload seems to be increasing.
- 3) Heightened demands on Council IT resources and disruptions to IT connectivity have made the virtual format challenging for meeting hosts and participants.
- 4) Some ABs, [as defined by the Council](#), are meeting more days outside of regular Council meeting time to accomplish the prescribed workload when using a virtual format.
- 5) Side-bar and relationship-building discussions are lost given the remote platform.

- 6) It is challenging to promote cooperation, mutual respect, and trust online; this also makes joint fact-finding and problem-solving inherently more challenging.
- 7) The virtual platform allows for more public comment from those stakeholders and members of the public who do not normally participate in the in-person Council process. The HMSMT sees this as a benefit provided by the virtual format, and believes providing a way to include virtual public comment at all future meetings could accommodate the benefits of both meeting formats.

Given the above-mentioned considerations, the HMSMT recommends that Council move forward with transitioning back to in-person meetings. The HMSMT also requests that the Council staff continue to make efforts to reduce AB meeting overlap to allow for member engagement and responses to other ABs, as well as reduce conflicts for the several HMSMT members that are members of multiple ABs.

PFMC  
06/29/21