

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

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) discussed several topics related to future agenda and workload planning.

Essential Fish Habitat (EFH):

The HMSMT recommends striking the EFH update tentatively scheduled for November 2022 in favor of scheduling an EFH Range of Alternatives (ROAs)/Preliminary Preferred Alternative for the September 2023 meeting and a Final Preferred Alternative for the November 2023 meeting.

Members of the HMSMT have been meeting with EFH experts from the National Marine Fisheries Service Southwest Fisheries Science Center and the West Coast Region to plan HMS EFH workload while taking into account EFH workload underway for the Coastal Pelagic Species Fisheries Management Plan. The full HMSMT will confer with EFH experts at their October meeting to make progress on Phase 2 of the EFH review.

Drift Gillnet Hard Caps:

Dr. Stephen Stohs updated the rest of the HMSMT on progress in developing the analysis of the ROAs for drift gillnet hardcaps needed for National Environmental Policy Act documentation, and intends to present a draft version of the revised analysis at the October 12-14, 2022 HMSMT meeting, to be held in La Jolla, CA. Following HMSMT review, it will be submitted to the Scientific and Statistical Committee for review by October 18, 2022.

The HMSMT also discussed additional workload needed to complete analyses and documentation to support final action in November. Issues with implementation of the 2015 hard caps action were largely due to economic considerations under the Regulatory Flexibility Act; however, the HMSMT may not have sufficient time before the November meeting to address these additional considerations.

Analysis for Deep-set Buoy Gear (DSBG) Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs):

After Council discussion of the DSBG EFPs submitted in June and September, including for Night-set and Extended Linked Buoy Gear, the HMSMT requests that an EFP analysis update be scheduled for the March meeting, in order for the Council to set guidelines for EFP applications submitted for the June 2023 meeting and allow for spacing of HMSMT workload.

Analysis of Opah:

The HMSMT requests that an update on analysis to inform the discussion of inclusion of opah into the HMS Fishery Management Plan be scheduled no sooner than March 2023.