

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON SWORDFISH FISHERY MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP - SCOPING

At the September 2022 Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting, the Council asked the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) to provide input on priority items identified by the Council for consideration during a swordfish workshop. At its May 1-2, 2023, webinar, the HMSMT discussed the Swordfish Management and Monitoring Plan (SMMP), Council deliberations to date, and the scope of such a workshop, and identified several topics which would be beneficial for the Council to consider when scoping the workshop in June.

Logistical Questions

Several logistical items were identified which the Council needs to address in workshop planning. These include:

- How will the workshop be funded?
- Who will lead/facilitate the workshop: Council staff, a third-party facilitator, a Council member?
- What is the meeting format: Virtual, hybrid, in-person?
- Does the Council wish to schedule the workshop in conjunction with a Council meeting?
- What is the expectation for Council member attendance?
- How will attendance be determined?
- How will workshop discussion and results be reported and implemented in future Council action?

Revision of SMMP or New Document

There has been discussion of whether some portions of the SMMP remain relevant given recent changes in the fishery, which brings to question whether revision to the existing draft SMMP or a new document would better meet the Council's needs. The HMSMT considered the tradeoffs between these approaches. The original intent of the SMMP was to bring together several related topics and actions that the Council was considering in regards to the swordfish fishery so as to organize, streamline, and coalesce these into a defined path forward.

Since the SMMP was last revisited, the Council has recommended or considered the majority of the actions identified in the SMMP (section 3). Therefore, the HMSMT recommends that it complete updates to the SMMP by categorizing the actions in section 3 as completed, no longer relevant, in need of more discussion, or still relevant, for Council review as an initial step to determining whether the draft SMMP should be revised or replaced.

Should the Council wish to replace the SMMP, those actions from the SMMP that remain relevant, as well as the foundational information and goals present in the updated draft, will be clearly stated in order to determine which components should be included in a new document to meet Council's intent. Throughout the remainder of this report, the HMSMT's reference to SMMP remains open

to this question of whether the Council elects to move forward with a revised SMMP or a replacement document.

Goals

There are two separate sets of goals for the Council to consider under the scope of a swordfish workshop. First, goals for the workshop itself need to be developed. These will help guide discussion and facilitate effective planning and execution of a workshop as well as reporting back to the Council on relevant topics. Second, the purpose and goals of the SMMP (section 2) as well as the actions to be taken to achieve these goals (section 3) should be reviewed during the workshop. Council discussion during the September 2022 meeting revealed differing opinions on the relevance of the existing goals and actions for the future fishery, as well the location in which they reside (SMMP versus the Fishery Management Plan). Goals of the SMMP should be the priority of the workshop, as that information will be useful to other workshop discussion topics. Alternatively, the Council could finalize the SMMP goals in advance of a workshop to allow more discussion time at a workshop on supporting actions for these goals.

Action Prioritization and Workload Planning

Priorities for swordfish management should be discussed during the workshop and recommendations provided for Council consideration. The HMSMT sees value in the SMMP as a workload planning tool, as stated by National Marine Fisheries Service in its September 2022 report. As a living document, the Council may revisit and revise it as necessary. During the workshop, participants could further discuss workload and prioritization of swordfish fishery actions as well as a transparent and continuous process for Council review in relation to other HMS priorities and actions. Workshop participants could also identify other action items to add to the list for Council consideration in meeting the goals of the SMMP.

Part of this discussion should include in-depth consideration of exempted fishing permits (EFPs), including identification of potential metrics for prioritizing EFP applications and renewals in relation to the goals of the SMMP, as well as developing objective standards to evaluate the results of EFPs for management decisions.

HMSMT Recommendations

Given the discussion above, the HMSMT offers the following for Council consideration:

- 1) Address the logistical questions identified above.
- 2) The HMSMT can update section 3 of the SMMP to document actions that have been completed (authorization of deep-set buoy gear), are new (Driftnet Act), or may be unnecessary, and summarize which actions are still active and awaiting Council prioritization as part of the SMMP revision.
- 3) Consider including the following items for the SMMP workshop agenda:
 - a) Summary of the current fishery,
 - b) Discussion of the goals of the SMMP,
 - c) Discussion of existing SMMP actions in section 3 to identify and designate as those completed and those that remain relevant,

- d) Brainstorming of additional actions and research needs to accomplish SMMP goals (could be economic, swordfish supply, recreational, commercial, or conservation needs),
- e) Consideration of an action item (or expanding the purpose of the plan) specific to EFPs to develop criteria that may encourage and support future EFPs for new gears to target and harvest swordfish, and
- f) Discussion of a process/format for regularly-scheduled Council consideration and prioritization of SMMP actions and related tasks.

PFMC
05/26/23