

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT
ON OPAH STOCK CONSIDERATIONS

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) received an overview from the Matt Craig (NMFS/SWFSC) regarding current opah landings and management. The HMSAS notes that the majority of recent landings have been made by the Hawaii longline fleet that is managed by the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WPFMC) as an Ecosystem Component (EC) species. Opah continues to be a valuable species for West Coast fishermen when they are caught, but there has been a recent decline in landings. As the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) considers opportunities for HMS fisheries, the HMSAS would like to better understand the distribution of opah stocks and potential fishing opportunities.

The latest research summary provided by the SWFSC indicates that there are several species of opah, with the smalleye opah as the predominant catch along the West Coast. The HMSAS is interested in any further information on possible opah stock movements in response to climate change that may provide opportunities for West Coast HMS fisheries.

The HMSAS recommends that the Council continue to gather scientific and management information regarding opah before taking further action. Specifically, the HMSAS recommends the Council request that:

- **SWFSC continue to collect and analyze all relevant life history or environmental information that could inform future Council action on opah.**
- **WPRFMC provide their rationale and expectations for current or anticipated management measures for opah stocks beyond the designation of opah as an EC species.**

PFMC
09/12/23