

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON HMS ROADMAP WORKSHOP PLANNING

At the September 2022 Council meeting, the Council considered the continued utility of the [Swordfish Monitoring and Management Plan \(SMMP\)](#) to guide Council action, as well as how to best guide swordfish (and other marketable highly migratory species) management into the future. For that meeting, Council staff provided a detailed summary of the SMMP's history and considerations for next steps ([Agenda Item I.5, Attachment 2](#)), and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) provided its perspective on the utility of the plan and updates on the activities therein ([Agenda Item I.5.a, NMFS Report](#)). This information facilitated further Council scoping in June 2023, at which point the Council provided the guidance outlined in the situation summary.

In response to this guidance, the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) and HMS Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) held a joint session at the beginning of the September 2023 Council meeting to plan a potential workshop to develop a new guidance document, currently referred to as “the HMS Roadmap”, that will replace the SMMP. Prior to the September joint meeting, the HMSMT held a webinar (August 8-9, 2023) to complete some initial work on goals and action items within the SMMP to help facilitate in-person discussion and brainstorming between the advisory bodies (ABs).

HMS Roadmap Goals

The HMSMT and HMSAS initially discussed the goals in the SMMP and how these could be modified to reflect the Council's guidance (e.g., broadening the scope to include additional marketable species usually caught in the large-mesh drift gillnet (DGN) fishery along with swordfish). Below are the proposed HMS Roadmap goals for Council consideration, drafted by the HMSMT and revised with input from the HMSAS and members of the public during the September joint session. This task was addressed at the beginning of the joint session in order to provide a foundation for further discussion and development of a potential workshop. The order of the goals listed below is not indicative of priority or importance, with letters provided for reference, only.

- a. Support innovation and development of multi-species fishing practices which catch swordfish along with a suite of other commercially valuable species (e.g., those in the DGN fishery) to meet the demand for a fresh high-quality product with locally-caught (within the West Coast Exclusive Economic Zone) domestic production.
- b. Limit unmarketable, prohibited, and protected species bycatch in HMS fisheries to a predefined acceptable level relative to market species production through mitigation, gear innovation, and accountability measures, where necessary.
- c. Support the economic viability of domestic West Coast fisheries that harvest swordfish and other HMS by promoting a wide range of harvest methods, giving due consideration to traditional participants and increasing future participation.

- d. Promote climate-ready HMS fisheries by supporting resilience in fishery operations and fishing communities, flexibility in management approaches, and consideration of climate impacts of fishing operations.

Updating SMMP Action Items

In addition to goals, the SMMP contained action and sub-action items by which the Council aimed to meet the specified goals. As a step to support development of a new document, the HMSMT reviewed these actions and sub-actions and categorized them as those that have been completed, those no longer relevant, and those that are still relevant and could be incorporated (with or without some revision) into the new HMS Roadmap document. The HMSMT completed this task during their August webinar and reviewed Table 1 with the HMSAS during the September joint meeting. Table 1 is a summary of the main actions and sub-actions, and the status categories into which the HMSMT felt they best fit.

Table 1. Status of actions and sub-actions in the draft Swordfish Monitoring and Management Plan.

Action	Sub-action	Description	Status
A.		Reduce bycatch in the DGN fishery through hard caps and performance standards	MIXED
	1.	Hard Caps	No longer relevant
	2.	Bycatch estimates for marine mammals, turtles, finfish	Relevant, needs revision*
	3.	Increase fishery monitoring	Needs Council discussion
	4.	Estimate rare event bycatch if not 100% monitoring	Relevant*
	5.	Exploration of modeling tools such as EcoCast	Relevant, expand
B.		Develop deep-set buoy gear	COMPLETE
	1.	Evaluate exempted fishing permit (EFP) fishing, including LBG	Complete
	2.	HMS FMP amendment and regulatory authorization	Complete
	3.	Consider LE program	Complete
C.		Limit fishing effort in the DGN fishery	NO LONGER RELEVANT
	1.	Determine appropriate number of Fed LE permits	No longer relevant
	2.	Use LE permit to encourage utilization of other HMS gears	No longer relevant
D.		Allow DGN vessels to access the PLCA	NO LONGER RELEVANT
	1.	Access to Pacific Leatherback Conservation Area (PLCA) under hard caps and individual accountability	No longer relevant
	2.	Use modeling tools to allow DGN fishing in PLCA	No longer relevant
E.		Develop longline fisheries	MIXED
	1.	Revisit 2009 proposed action to authorize SSSL outside the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)	Needs Council discussion
	2.	Revisit FMP prohibition on PLL inside EEZ	Needs Council discussion
	3.	Consider qualification criteria for Fed LE SSSL permit	Needs Council discussion
	4.	Explore new PLL gear designs or management through EFPs	Relevant, needs revision

**Actions that are relevant until the DGN fishery is terminated through the Driftnet Act.*

Those actions which the HMSMT felt needed revision are listed below with proposed edits to the text, and incorporated into the HMS Roadmap Action Items section further below. Here, the original numbering is used for ease of reference to the SMMP and Table 1, but does not necessarily reflect where these items would be included in the HMS Roadmap document.

- A.2. Continue to review bycatch estimates against performance standards for specified marine mammals and; sea turtles; ~~monitor, and~~ annual finfish retention rate and observed take of specified species. The Council may periodically review the efficacy of bycatch estimation methods used to judge performance, and the species for which performance standards are set. Based on trends of bycatch compared to specified performance standards, the Council may recommend additional management measures, as appropriate.
- A.5. Support development and evaluation of ~~Explore the use of~~ dynamic ocean modeling tools, such as EcoCast, where appropriate, for use in HMS fisheries and their management as part of an individual accountability-based management strategy and in testing of fishing practices under EFPs.
- E.4 ~~Explore the feasibility of, through~~ Utilize exempted fishing permits to explore the feasibility of fishing practices and/or management strategies which utilize relevant components of new pelagic longline gears for increased HMS production while limiting bycatch designs or management strategies.

As indicated in Table 1, the HMSMT also characterized several actions within the SMMP as needing Council discussion, such as observer coverage levels in the DGN fishery and consideration of a West Coast shallow-set longline permit. While there has been much discussion and interest (or disinterest) in these topics in the past, it is unclear where the Council currently stands and how these should (or should not) be considered in the context of the HMS Roadmap document.

HMS Roadmap Action Items

After discussing the actions in the SMMP, the HMSMT and HMSAS spent time brainstorming new items that could be used both as agenda topics for the potential workshop and as action or sub-action items in the draft HMS Roadmap document. The HMSMT and HMSAS then grouped all of these items under the proposed HMS Roadmap goals as a way to check that the goals covered the scope of the items that may fall under the purview of this new document, and that sufficient items were identified to support the proposed goals. Future effort should be made to identify which of the listed items under each goal should be classified as action items or more specific sub-actions. Below, listed under their respective goal, are the items developed by the HMSMT and HMSAS, as well as the items from the SMMP which were still relevant. Again, the order does not reflect any priority or level of importance. The items listed below are offered for Council consideration and discussion as a step towards preparing for a potential workshop.

- a. *Support innovation and development of multi-species fishing practices which catch swordfish along with a suite of other commercially valuable species (e.g., those in the DGN fishery) to meet the demand for a fresh high-quality product with locally-caught (within the West Coast Exclusive Economic Zone) domestic production.*
 - i. Develop criteria for “alternative fishing practices that minimize the incidental catch of living marine resources” in the context of the Federal DGN transition
 - ii. Investigate ways to identify and mitigate negative conservation and climate impacts by reducing the seafood trade deficit

- iii. Document sources of swordfish supply, including domestic and foreign-caught
 - iv. Support EFPs that seek new approaches to achieve economic viability with minimal negative conservation impacts
 - v. Develop an economic index for multi-species fishery production, as a metric for comparing multi-species swordfish harvest methods
 - vi. Evaluate producer and consumer surplus in the fishery
 - vii. List priority species for development of alternative fishing practices
- b. *Limit unmarketable, prohibited, and protected species bycatch in HMS fisheries to a predefined acceptable level relative to market species production through mitigation, gear innovation, and accountability measures.*
- i. Consider mechanisms for and appropriate use of individual accountability
 - ii. Support ongoing efforts to develop and improve bycatch monitoring
 - iii. Evaluate bycatch levels relative to a multi-species index of harvest in the context of population levels, economic impacts to fleets, and fishing effort levels including comparisons with importing HMS caught by foreign fleets
 - iv. Continue to review bycatch estimates against performance standards for specified marine mammals and sea turtles; monitor annual finfish retention rate and observed take of specified species. The Council may periodically review the efficacy of bycatch estimation methods used to judge performance, and the species for which performance standards are set. Based on trends of bycatch compared to specified performance standards, the Council may recommend additional management measures, as appropriate (Formerly A.2 in the SMMP)
 - v. Support development and evaluation of dynamic ocean modeling tools, such as EcoCast, where appropriate, for use in HMS fisheries and their management and in testing of fishing practices under EFPs (Formerly A.5 in the SMMP)
 - vi. Utilize exempted fishing permits to explore the feasibility of fishing practices and/or management strategies which utilize relevant components of pelagic longline gears for increased HMS production while limiting bycatch (Formerly E.4 in the SMMP)
- c. *Support the economic viability of domestic West Coast fisheries that harvest swordfish and other HMS by promoting a wide range of harvest methods, giving due consideration to traditional participants and increasing future participation.*
- i. Evaluate currently authorized DSBG, and consider whether these configurations could be scaled-up (additional pieces of gear, larger gear footprints, use of satellite buoys, etc.) under EFPs
 - ii. Increase future participation in underutilized HMS fisheries
 - iii. Define harvest goals for target species
 - iv. Understand impacts of potential competing current and future marine uses (i.e., offshore wind, aquaculture, etc.) (or overall) to HMS fisheries
- d. *Promote climate-ready HMS fisheries by supporting resilience in fishery operations and fishing communities, flexibility in management approaches, and consideration of climate impacts of fishing operations.*
- i. Evaluate climate impacts (including to habitat) of various fishing practices (e.g., carbon footprint), taking into account a comparison to imported sources

- ii. Identify fleets, fishing practices or gears that may be more flexible and/or adaptable given climate change
- iii. Promote resilience in community-level benefits from HMS fisheries (certain HMS fisheries are still some of the only open access fisheries)
- iv. Identify characteristics or resources that would position communities to support HMS fisheries given climate change.

Additionally, there was agreement on the need to create an appendix of definitions specific to the HMS Roadmap document to clarify the meaning of terms used therein. Many terms that are used in management do not have firm definitions, which makes interpretation and implementation open to debate. By defining these terms in the context of HMS management, or specifying which definition of a term is applicable to HMS management, the Council provides the public and Council participants a set standard and expectation. Terms such as, but not limited to, “climate-ready HMS fishery”, “bycatch”, “discards”, “economic waste”, “economic viability”, “minimize” as it relates to bycatch, “high quality”, and “supporting resilience in fishery operations” were identified as being ambiguous and would benefit from set definitions.

Potential Workshop Objectives, Logistics and Agenda

The work described above is intended to support the development of objectives for a potential workshop. It also provides the opportunity for the Council to discuss and provide feedback on the draft HMS Roadmap goals in advance of a potential workshop. During the joint session, the ABs had considerable discussion regarding the logistics of a potential workshop, such as timing, format, and agenda topics, including those outlined in the HMSMT’s June 2023 report ([Agenda Item J.5.a](#)). Since some of these items have already been completed or drafted for Council consideration, and additional topics arose as important for inclusion in the potential workshop, the HMSMT and HMSAS plan to have a joint session at the November 2023 meeting for further discussion and to draft a supplemental report providing input on potential workshop logistics, objectives, and a revised proposed agenda for Council consideration.

Recommendations

The HMSMT requests that the Council:

1. Discuss and provide input and guidance on the draft HMS Roadmap goals provided in this report, as these goals are fundamental to a focused and successful potential workshop.
2. Review the SMMP Action Item categorization table (Table 1) and provide guidance on those items grouped as “Needs Council Discussion.”
3. Consider retitling the document from “HMS Roadmap” to something less ambiguous which better captures the purpose and need for the document.

PFMC
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