

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT ON HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ROADMAP WORKSHOP PLANNING

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) would like to thank the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) and Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) for their work to modify components of the Swordfish Monitoring and Management Plan (SMMP) for use in the new HMS Roadmap document during their joint session in September, and for the report submitted by the HMSMT ([Agenda Item F.3.a](#)). CDFW looks forward to reviewing the additional information and recommendations on meeting logistics that the HMSMT intends to provide in a supplemental report. The work completed to date provides a solid foundation for Council discussion, planning of a workshop, and further development of an HMS Roadmap document. While CDFW agrees with much of the advisory bodies' (ABs') work and suggestions, there are a few points for which we would like to provide input for consideration.

HMS Roadmap Goals

Written guidance provided by the Council at the June 2023 meeting outlined some initial steps for the development of a new document to replace the SMMP, including revision to the SMMP's goals. The ABs' draft goals provided in the HMSMT report make substantial progress on this task but could benefit from modification to accurately capture Council discussion to date. CDFW believes the following edits will streamline and add clarity to the AB's draft:

- a. Support innovation and development of a wide range of multi-species fishing practices methods which catch swordfish ~~along with a suite of~~ and other commercially valuable HMS species (e.g., those in the DGN fishery) to meet the demand for a fresh high-quality product-seafood with locally caught (within the West Coast Exclusive Economic Zone) domestic production.
- b. Explore economically viable fishing methods that limit ~~Limit~~ unmarketable, prohibited, and protected species bycatch in HMS fisheries to a predefined acceptable level relative to marketable species production through spatial and temporal constraints, mitigation, gear innovation, and other mitigation or ~~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. Support climate resilient fishing communities ~~Promote climate ready HMS fisheries by supporting resilience in fishery operations and fishing communities, by considering~~ flexibility in management approaches, accessibility for new participation, responses to climate variability, and ~~consideration of~~ climate impacts ~~of on~~ fishing operations.

CDFW recommends excluding goal c as it is unclear as written and the intent of this goal has been addressed through the edits to the remaining three goals. The action items for goal c can be shifted to the other three goals as they fit within the edited versions.

Updating SMMP Action Items

Table 1 in the HMSMT report reviews the actions and sub-actions in the SMMP. CDFW agrees with the action classifications as well as the items the HMSMT identified for potential incorporation in the HMS Roadmap document. These remaining items may require additional modification to make them applicable for use in a broader range of future HMS fisheries.

CDFW would like to restate California's position that the State does not support the establishment of a shallow-set longline permit under the HMS Fishery Management Plan, nor development of any pelagic longline fishery within the Exclusive Economic Zone off California. However, there are aspects of the gear type, the associated fishing practices, and mitigation requirements that could provide insight for development of new gears to target swordfish and other HMS off the West Coast. CDFW continues to support gear innovation, along with Exempted Fishery Permits (EFPs) which examine the effectiveness and potential impacts of new gear types.

Other Considerations

The June 2023 written Council guidance spoke to several components of a workshop which could benefit from additional discussion. The first is the recommendation to hold a meeting or workshop "if warranted." The intent of this language was to allow the Council flexibility as work and discussions progressed and was not meant as a question for ABs or the public to answer. After additional discussions and reviewing the HMSMT's report, CDFW feels that the task of developing the HMS Roadmap document would benefit from a meeting/workshop in which Council members, ABs, the HMS fishing industry, and other members of the public could have structured and open discussion of the topics, outside of the Council floor.

Advisory body meetings and Council floor discussions will not provide enough time to allow detailed consideration of issues, nor effectively facilitate brainstorming and open communication between all parties. A meeting dedicated to this topic provides an opportunity for focused discussion and development of ideas. A facilitator could be beneficial in the context of adherence to the agenda, management of speaking times and interpersonal interactions, and similar logistical functions, but not as someone who sets the agenda, develops and/or implements "activities" to facilitate brainstorming or discussion, or produces a final report.

CDFW sees the main purpose of the HMS Roadmap document as a way for the Council to outline an HMS EFP program. The second aspect of the Council guidance was to expand the SMMP's scope to include other HMS historically landed in the swordfish fishery, particularly by large-mesh drift gill net (DGN). The SMMP was very narrow in scope and only addressed actions pertaining to swordfish caught with gears either actively fished or that were being considered by the Council at the time. Since then, the landscape of the swordfish fishery has changed dramatically. With the phase out of the DGN fishery, the Council needs to consider how to facilitate development of commercial HMS fishing methods through EFPs. These methods should have low bycatch and target, and/or be capable of effectively catching, more species than just swordfish. The HMS Roadmap will help provide clear guidance on how to develop, review, and evaluate these new EFPs prior to the final NMFS issuance process and CDFW looks forward to its continued development.