

## HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ROADMAP WORKSHOP PLANNING

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) participated in a joint meeting with the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) to discuss the HMS Roadmap document, a new guidance document to replace the Swordfish Management and Monitoring Plan (SMMP), along with a potential workshop in furtherance of this.

The HMSAS supports the need for an HMS Roadmap to support innovation and development of economically viable HMS fisheries that also meet conservation and bycatch objectives. The HMSAS notes that the HMS Roadmap could overlap with the HMS Fishery Management Plan (HMS FMP) and requests that the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) clarify the scope for the HMS Roadmap.

We remain concerned about the current status of commercial HMS fisheries off the west coast. For 2023, the domestic commercial Pacific bluefin tuna fishery has a catch limit of 720 mt, and as of September 29, [a total of 148 mt have been landed](#). West coast [swordfish production continues to fall from historic levels and the newly authorized deep-set buoy gear fishery has not yet proven that it can scale up as an economically viable alternative](#). HMSAS members report this year's fishery performance will be lower than 2022 reported landings. The North Pacific albacore fishery has total catches this year of slightly less than 3,000 mt. The average annual harvest over the last ten years is 8,400 mt. While many of the issues facing HMS fishery participants are unrelated to actions taken by the Council, we must make efforts to support our seafood harvesters to ensure a stable supply of domestically sourced protein. In addition, HMS fisheries are one of the few options available for younger fishermen and women to enter the industry. As such, the Roadmap document and proposed workshop should be framed to support expanding HMS fisheries that are economically-viable and can achieve conservation and bycatch objectives.

### HMS Roadmap document

The HMSAS supports the goals and action items for each as outlined in [HMSMT Report 1](#). While we appreciate California Department of Fish and Wildlife's effort to consolidate the goals, we are concerned that "economic viability" is limited to the exploration of fishing methods. Economic viability is an important principle that should be considered as part of each of the goals.

### Workshop

The HMSAS believes that the workshop should focus on the enabling conditions needed to encourage and accelerate new gear innovations and the development of additional HMS fishing opportunities in line with the goals and objectives of the HMS Roadmap. Additional guidance on HMS exempted fishing permits (EFPs) and performance criteria is likely to be an important component of the agenda. The HMSAS supports the Draft Agenda as outlined in the HMSMT Supplemental Report for this agenda item.

## Other Considerations

In 2027, the drift gillnet (DGN) fishery will be eliminated. Current DGN fishery participants do not have an option to transition into an economically viable new gear type without considerable financial implications. The HMSAS remains concerned about the lack of funding to support the transition program. The HMSAS believes that the HMS Roadmap should support accelerated opportunities for HMS fisheries, including the DGN fleet. In general, the HMSAS is concerned about the time required to prepare an EFP, get that EFP through the Council process, and then have National Marine Fisheries Service issue the EFP. A number of EFPs approved by the Council remain unissued years later. The HMS Roadmap should focus on outcomes that can address these timing concerns.

Exploring new fishing methods will require funds for both the preparation of EFP materials and gear configurations. Agenda Item C.4 includes the [Staff Report on Inflation Reduction Act Funding Proposals](#) which contains a section entitled Gear innovation for HMS fisheries. The Council should prioritize accessing such funds to explore fishing methods that are economically viable while meeting other Council goals related to bycatch and fishery performance.

PFMC  
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