

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON COUNCIL OPERATIONS AND PRIORITIES

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) appreciates the hard work, and difficult considerations, that went into the preparation of the meeting materials for this Agenda item. The HMSAS reviewed the Directors and Staff report on potential ways to lower budget cost for the annual Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) budget. We acknowledge that expenses associated with the PFMC Advisory Panels are an area where significant cost reductions can be achieved. The HMSAS prefers to meet in person but realizes that financial cutbacks preventing all in person meetings are a reality. These comments are written under the assumption that cuts will be necessary. If they are proven to be unnecessary, we support maintaining the status quo.

Overarching concern:

- **When considering options, be mindful of ensuring fishing community members do not perceive this as excluding them from the process.**

Recommendations:

As more fully explained below, the HMSAS generally supports the recommendations intended to minimize impacts to Council operations and priorities with a few exceptions:

Recommendation A.1 – Reduce Council meeting size

- Understanding that Highly Migratory Species (HMS) will continue to be on the Council’s Agenda at least three times each year, the HMSAS agrees that our June and September meeting time is critically important to the meeting schedule for the Regional Fishery Management Organization (RFMO) processes. The HMSAS recommends leaving HMS on the March meeting. Flexibility must be embedded into the Council scheduling process to allow for an additional meeting if and/or when circumstances dictate. While we prefer and recognize the value of in-person meetings, virtual meeting opportunities are preferred to no meetings at all.
- Reconsider scheduling of Advisory Body (AB) meetings between Advanced Briefing Book (ABB) publication and the deadline established for the Supplemental Briefing Book
- Consider inviting a smaller subset of the ABs to attend the Council Meeting
- No changes to the HMSAS composition are necessary at this time

Recommendation A.2. – Host Council meetings outside of large and expensive metro areas

- When considering locations of meetings, consider those locations and meeting times which foster participation by fishing community members.

Recommendation A.3.1 – Reduce Council meeting duration: Roles and responsibilities

- More information is needed regarding an Ad-Hoc Cross-Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Advisory Panel

Recommendation A.3.2 - Reduce Council meeting duration: Operational Practice

- Describe factors that would support extending time for public comment
- Do not limit AB statements to a specific number of pages

- A portion of the HMSAS believes there is benefit to members being in the Council room during HMS items
- Ten-hour Council days

Recommendation A.3.3 - Reduce Council meeting duration: Administrative matters

- Informational Reports linked to an FMP should remain in the Briefing Book under that FMP and could be kept off the Council floor.
- Reduce role of the Council in EFP processes as noted by several at the HMS Workshop

Recommendation A.4 - Reduce Council participation in international forums

- Continue to participate in the RFMO process that inform domestic management of HMS stocks.

If a specific recommendation is not listed below, we agree with the statements included in Table 1 – Menu of recommendations for reducing meeting and travel expenses of [C.2 Attachment A](#). The HMSAS believes implementing the following would result in savings of around twenty percent to HMSAS costs.

Recommendation A.1 – Reduce Council meeting size

- If considering staggering HMS items throughout the year, the June and September meetings are integral to the RFMO processes. If we are required to be limited to three meetings per year, the November and March meetings are good candidates for consolidation and we recommend leaving HMS on the agenda for March. We would also support making one of our meetings virtual, as determined by the ABs and Council staff. The HMSAS also sees benefit in having all members attend at least one meeting per year to foster relationship building within the AB, Councilmembers, stakeholders, and the public.
- To the extent practicable, hold virtual AB meetings after publication of the ABB and before a redefined Supplemental Briefing Book deadline. This will need to account for instances where new and/or improved information is made available after the ABB deadline. For example, the executive summary of international stock assessments for important HMS stocks is typically not available until the end of May/beginning of June.
- Before a meeting, each AB could nominate a smaller subset to physically attend the meeting to give the AB Report and be available for in-person discussions that are integral to the Council process. The exact number and who those AB members are can be determined by the AB and approved by Council staff and should be informed by the FMP items that are on the Agenda for that meeting.
- With specific regard to HMSAS membership, and mindful that as ocean conditions continue to change we will see catch compositions change, we are hesitant to suggest elimination of membership.

Recommendation A.2. – Host Council meetings outside of large and expensive metro areas

- When considering locations of meetings, consider those locations and meeting times which foster participation by fishing community members.

Recommendation A.3.1 – Reduce Council meeting duration: Roles and responsibilities

- An Ad-Hoc Cross-FMP Advisory Panel could be appropriate; but more information is needed. We recommend Council Staff meet with AB Chairs/Vice Chairs to gather

perspectives of the form and function of such an AB. Task Council staff with defining and describing the Cross-FMP AB during your November meeting.

Recommendation A.3.2 - Reduce Council meeting duration: Operational Practice

- Factors the Chair would consider in allowing exceptions to modify time for public comments should be described and should include the decisional nature of an Agenda item and/or the complexity of the topic.
- We are not supportive of a definitive rule limiting the length of an AB statement to a specific number of pages. Our statements on International items often exceed two or three pages because of the number of subitems and the lack of familiarity with the nuances of International management.
- A portion of the HMSAS believes the timing of HMSAS meetings and Council discussion of HMS issues needs to be coordinated so the HMSAS members can be in the Council Room while the issues are before the Council. Sometimes during the Council presentation and discussion HMSAS members need to talk to their representatives during the breaks or may need to put in for public testimony to clarify misunderstandings
- Another option which is not listed is extending the floor time during a given day. Rather than 8 hours, consider 10. This would allow a current five-day meeting to be completed in four.

Recommendation A.3.3 - Reduce Council meeting duration: Administrative matters

- Informational Reports that are linked to an FMP should remain in the Briefing Book under that FMP and could be kept off the Council floor. Another option would be to hold a pre-Council meeting webinar where all informational items are presented and upon which comments could be given.
- With regard to Exempted Fishing Permits (EFP)s, one suggestion would be to require applicants to forward EFPs directly to NMFS and if NMFS determines a specific EFP application would benefit from Council comments, it could come to the Council with that specific request. This would have been a much more efficient way to have handled the multitude of EFPs submitted to test Deep-Set Bouy Gear. This would also be in alignment with many of the comments and insights heard during the recently completed HMS workshop.

Recommendation A.4 - Reduce Council participation in international forums

- The HMSAS appreciates the Council's interest and participation in the RFMO processes which inform domestic management of HMS stocks. Having a physical presence at these meetings provides a critical opportunity to report on conversations that happen in the margins and provides the intangible benefit of showing foreign delegations that our domestic managers are engaged. At a minimum, participation via virtual options for participation could result in additional cost savings.

PFMC
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