

2025-26 HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES—
PRELIMINARY

The Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) lays out a biennial process that affords Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) input on identifying key management reference points for HMS stocks. Related to this process section 4.6 in the HMS FMP states that the Council receives a draft stock assessment and fishery evaluation (SAFE) report (Attachment 1) at its September meeting with the final SAFE provided in November. (A regularly-updated version of the SAFE may be found on the [Council website](#) with additional information in the [HMS SAFE Portal](#) on the PacFIN website).

Chapter 6 in the SAFE contains information related to status determination criteria (SDC) for HMS stocks including a listing of the most recent stock assessments upon which status determinations are based.¹ National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) will use this updated information to determine whether a stock is subject to overfishing (current fishing mortality exceeds the maximum fishing mortality threshold [MFMT]) or overfished (current stock spawning biomass is less than the minimum stock size threshold [MSST]). The Council then has an opportunity to provide input on identifying these management reference points.

HMS are subject to Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Section 304(i) when the overfishing or overfished status of the stock is primarily a result of “excessive international fishing pressure.” While the Council may propose measures to address the “relative impact of fishing vessels of the United States on the stock,” the broader charge is for the Council to develop recommendations for “international actions.” This differs from stocks fully subject to domestic management, where determinations lead to remedial action by the Council.

As part of the process of estimating SDC and making stock status determinations, NMFS considers whether these stock assessments constitute “the best scientific information available” or BSIA. This occurs once the regional fishery management organizations (RFMOs) have adopted the assessments for management. NMFS provides revised SDC estimates in the attached Joint NMFS-SWFSC Report. When the SAFE is finalized Chapter 6 will be revised accordingly.

Through two subsequent meetings (November 2024 and March of 2025), the Council may make recommendations to NMFS about any revised SDC estimates. It also may formulate recommendations on domestic management measures and measures that should be addressed through relevant RFMOs to address stock status.

¹ Stock assessments for species listed in the HMS FMP are conducted by Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission scientific staff, the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific (ISC), and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community Oceanic Fisheries Program (SPC-OFP). The ISC conducts stock assessments and provides conservation advice formally through an agreement with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee. The SPC-OFP conducts assessments for other stocks on behalf of the WCPFC.

For HMS, the Council is not obligated to set annual catch limits. In those cases where catch limits have been set for U.S. West Coast domestic fisheries (Pacific bluefin and bigeye tuna), these derive from agreements reached internationally through the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission. While the Council is not prohibited from establishing catch control measures through this biennial process, NMFS implements internationally-agreed catch limits under Tuna Conventions Act authority, not the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Any measures proposed by the Council would have to be consistent with catch limits implemented by NMFS.

At this meeting, the Council has the opportunity to scope such new management measures. However, at this time no management measures that could be implemented through the biennial process have been identified. The HMS Advisory Subpanel and HMS Management Team have the opportunity to bring forward management proposals in supplemental reports.

Council Action:

Review Preliminary Reference Point Values and Make Recommendations on Their Use in Determining Stock Status; Consider the Need to Develop Annual Catch Limits or Other Harvest Objectives and/or Management Measures.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item J.3, Attachment 1: Draft status of the U.S. West Coast Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species Through 2023, Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (***Electronic Only***).
2. Agenda Item J.3.a, Joint National Marine Fisheries Service-Southwest Fisheries Science Center Report 1.
3. If received, Public Comments are electronic only ([see e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order

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| J.3 | 2025-26 Harvest Specifications and Management Measures—Preliminary | Kit Dahl |
| a. | Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies | |
| b. | Public Comment | |
| c. | Council Action: Review Preliminary Reference Point Values and Make Recommendations on Their Use in Determining Stock Status; Consider the Need to Develop Annual Catch Limits or Other Harvest Objectives and/or Management Measures | |

PFMC
08/28/24