

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL (HMSAS) REPORT ON THE HMS ROADMAP

The HMSAS met virtually on February 18, 2025. Because there were no materials submitted for the Advanced Briefing Book, we were unable to review any documents. The HMSAS is not scheduled to meet again before the March Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting so we, as a group, will be unable to review any materials submitted as supplemental reports. Despite that, we do offer the following overarching comments on the Roadmap.

The HMSAS recommends rewording Goal D to read: “Promote fisheries that are adaptive and resilient to changing environmental conditions, regardless of cause, by developing flexibility in management and other tools to account for changes in HMS distributions, ecosystem structure and function, and the communities dependent on HMS fisheries.”

The HMSAS has provided detailed comments and has spent considerable time working with the HMS Management Team to advance the HMS Roadmap. Our most recent comments from November 2024 highlight the importance of aligning the HMS Roadmap with the goal of maintaining or increasing sustainable U.S. wild capture production and several other goals in line with the National Seafood Strategy.

In considering goals related to potential increases in sustainable West Coast fisheries production, the HMSAS encourages the Council to consider setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) goals related to key fisheries, including:

1. Ensuring fishing communities can take advantage of new opportunities to harvest Pacific bluefin tuna, in alignment with the international quotas set by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Convention.
2. Increasing the landings of swordfish such that they may reach levels achieved by the drift gillnet (DGN) fleet from the 1990-2000 by 2027 to reduce the seafood trade deficit and transfer effect and minimize bycatch to levels that are justifiable according to the best available science.
3. Setting clear goals to establish bycatch levels that are justifiable according to the best available science.

Or: 3b. we advise the Council and National Marine Fisheries Service to reduce bycatch to a level practicable, focusing on the species listed under the Endangered Species Act, considering the Biological Opinion for each species, and to the level practicable for other species using the Potential Biological Removal as the guiding science. As an alternative the bycatch should be reduced compared to the bycatch from the DGN fishery or compared to USA pelagic longline or international pelagic longline bycatch.

4. Streamlining the exempted fishing permit process, including setting clear timelines for permit review and approval.
5. Considering how to implement the HMS Roadmap into the HMS Fishery Management Plan as appropriate.

PFMC
2/27/25