

## HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES FISHERIES INNOVATION WORKGROUP REPORT ON HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ROADMAP DEVELOPMENT

The Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) Ad Hoc Fisheries Innovation Workgroup (FIW) met on May 28, 2025 in a virtual [meeting](#). The FIW discussed elements of a proposed work plan to execute the tasks within its charge including objectives, deliverables, timing/sequencing, prioritization, and expected outcomes. The FIW also discussed potential near-term revisions to [Council Operating Procedure \(COP\) 20](#) and updates on the development of performance goals and metrics (including those related to bycatch) for exempted fishing permit (EFP) fishing targeting highly migratory species (HMS). This report provides a summary of the discussions, including key recommendations and next steps.

### Summary and Recommendations

The FIW approved an outline of a work plan and discussed an approach to develop EFP performance goals and metrics (including for acceptable levels of bycatch). The FIW also reviewed existing COP 20 language on the process and timing of EFP review and discussed plans to provide edits for Council consideration at the September (or future) meeting.

Based on the discussions at the May 28 meeting, the FIW offers the following recommendations and requests for Council guidance:

1. Provide feedback on the proposed FIW work plan outline (Appendix A), including any guidance related to the objectives, deliverables, timing, and outcomes.
2. Provide any feedback on the overall proposed schedule for the FIW's work including related to holding an in-person meeting in early 2026 or other date as appropriate.
3. Provide any initial input on preferred categories (e.g., economic viability, fishing performance, safety) or specific performance goals or metrics for evaluating EFP fishing.

### FIW Workload Planning Milestones

The FIW reviewed components of a work plan for tasks within its charge (see the draft Terms of Reference in Appendix B of [F.4.a, FIW Report 1](#)) including categories/objectives, deliverables, tiers (prioritization/timing/sequencing), and outcomes. The work plan describes three tiers with corresponding work periods (June through October, November through February, and March through May) for the FIW to advance deliverables, with each work period having one Council meeting (or more) as opportunities to submit work products for review, comment, and guidance. The FIW approved a table with these components (see Appendix A), though additional Council guidance is requested for the final location of certain products and whether some products will be incorporated into the HMS Roadmap document itself. The work outlined in the table can be accelerated if the FIW can make progress earlier and is subject to change based on any feedback or direction from the Council, including related to the draft HMS Roadmap.

### Near-term Council Operating Procedure 20 Revisions - EFP Review Process and Timing

The FIW reviewed the current language in COP 20 on EFP review process and timing with the intention of identifying opportunities to better meet the needs of EFP applicants and streamline the

process where appropriate. The FIW discussed and agreed to make edits to COP 20 related regarding three specific aspects: 1) the timing when EFP proposals will be reviewed (proposed to be changed to November and March); 2) providing the opportunity for the Council to make recommendations on EFP applications in a single meeting, and 3) accepting EFP applications for Council review at either of the two proposed meetings. The FIW can provide recommended language to the Council under the “Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures” agenda item during the September or other future meeting.

#### Initial Review of Bycatch Levels in HMS Fisheries

Council staff presented an initial summary of bycatch levels in existing HMS fisheries and EFPs. Council staff reviewed summary datasets from the appendix of the “[Final Environmental Impact Statement \(FEIS\) for Consideration of Exempted Fishing Permits for Testing Fishing Practices to Target Swordfish and Other Marketable Highly Migratory Species in the United States West Coast Exclusive Economic Zone](#)” and presented that information to provide an overview of catch and protected species interactions in HMS fisheries, inclusive of EFPs. The datasets in the FEIS were from the following: the Hawaii shallow-set and deep-set longline fisheries (operating in the eastern Pacific Ocean), the West Coast drift gillnet fishery, the West Coast deep-set longline fishery operating outside the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and EFP fishing with shallow-set and deep-set longline-type gear and linked buoy gear.

Council staff also presented a high-level process for developing performance goals and metrics for acceptable bycatch. The first step (discussed during the May meeting) was intended to help create a common understanding amongst FIW members of current bycatch levels and issues. The second step would be to assess the tradeoffs of various methodologies for identifying performance goals and metrics and choose an approach. The next steps would be for the FIW to endorse the methodology to determine the goals and metrics and then to develop recommendations for the Council’s consideration.

During discussion, the FIW clarified that its task related to bycatch would be focused on the development of performance goals and metrics for evaluating EFPs. The goals/metrics would include protected species but will need to be thoughtfully designed to reflect NMFS’s authorities and processes. The FIW expressed general support for the process outlined above and for Council staff to move forward with analyzing different approaches and methodologies and presenting the FIW with options for ways to determine performance goals/metrics.

#### Exempted Fishing Permit Performance Goals and Metrics

Council staff reiterated the importance of creating performance goals and metrics for EFP evaluation that will help to advance the goals of the draft HMS roadmap (see Appendix A of [F.4.a, FIW Report 1](#)). The FIW expressed general support for staff to move forward with laying out a process for developing performance goals and metrics and soliciting input from the HMS-related advisory bodies.

#### Future Meeting Planning

The FIW agreed to continue progress during the summer and fall via virtual meetings (exact timing and number of meetings to be determined soon). The FIW will also schedule an in-person meeting in early 2026 (or another date as appropriate) to facilitate progress and decision making related to

key deliverables. Staff will initiate planning for FIW meetings for the rest of 2025, considering Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) meetings and other scheduling conflicts.

PFMC  
06/06/25

## APPENDIX A: AD HOC FISHERIES INNOVATION WORKGROUP DRAFT WORK PLAN OUTLINE

This draft table of major tasks and deliverables is designed to help the Fisheries Innovation Workgroup (FIW) and staff clarify major milestones, identify potential PFMC (Council) meetings to consider and endorse FIW work products, and facilitate workload planning. While the table outlines an overall timeline, the FIW could accelerate the work if the deliverables are achieved earlier. The outline and any objectives, deliverables, tiers, and timing are also subject to change or evolve depending on any guidance received from the Council, including related to the draft HMS Roadmap.

<i>Tier</i>	<i>Work Period</i>	<i>Council Meeting Target for Deliverable</i>
1 = 0-5 months	June through October	September or November
2 = 6-9 months	November through February	March
3 = 10-12 months	March through May	April or June

<b>Categories/Objectives</b>		<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Tier/Deliverable Timing/Notes</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
EFP process and timing (limited to a few key topics)		Surgical, high priority COP 20 proposed revisions.	T1 (September 2025)	Revised/updated COP 20 language; implementation of an improved EFP review process.
EFP process and timing (for issues not addressed in the first round of proposed revisions)		Proposed revisions to COP 20.	T1/T2/T3 (March/April 2026)	Revised COP 20 language.
EFP applications (required/desired contents and review criteria)		Proposed revisions to COP 20.	T1/T2/T3 (March/April 2026)	Revised COP 20 language.
EFP guidance		Proposed revisions to COP 20; identification of new materials (e.g., webpage, video, etc.), development of enhanced practices (e.g., technical support and pre-submittal review).	T3 (June 2026) – Suggest tackling after development of proposed revisions to COP 20.	Revised COP 20 language; identification of proposed guidance type/format; implementation of new support practices.
EFP evaluation	Reporting	Proposed revisions to COP 20.	T2/T3 (March/April 2026)	Revised COP 20 language.

	Performance goals/metrics	Recommended performance goals/metrics (as proposed revisions to COP 20).	T1 (check-in with the Council in November 2025) T2/T3 (deliverable submitted in March/April 2026)	Revised COP 20 language.
	Acceptable levels of bycatch	Recommended performance goals related to acceptable bycatch (as proposed revisions to COP 20).	T1 (check-in with the Council in November 2025) T2/T3 (deliverable submitted in March/April 2026)	Revised COP 20 language.
Other (non-COP 20 related) ideas to support facilitate EFPs		Additional recommendations to the Council.	Ongoing/as needed	Additional ideas to support EFPs are heard and implemented by the Council as appropriate.
Review the draft HMS Roadmap		Underline/strikethrough version (in F.4.a FIW Report 1); awaiting further guidance from the Council on next steps.	Awaiting further guidance from the Council on next steps.	Revised and adopted HMS Roadmap.
National Seafood Strategy alignment		Crosswalk between the NSS and Roadmap (F.4.a FIW Report 1).	Ongoing collaboration between NMFS and the Council	Synergies are identified and leveraged.
Discuss relevant innovative fishery tools or measures to support a robust HMS fishery		TBD. SMART goals, other Council recommendations, workshop reports (e.g., from the Dynamic Ocean Management workshop), etc.	T3 (June 2026) – To be tackled once the other elements above have been advanced.	TBD