

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON COUNCIL RESPONSE TO EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND ADMINISTRATION UPDATES

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) supports the inclusion of HMS fisheries in the list of current Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) actions that are consistent with Executive Order 14276 and would like to restate that moving ahead on the HMS Roadmap, including development of Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) guidance (through the Fisheries Innovation Workgroup (FIW)), is critical to creating expanded HMS fishing opportunities. The HMSAS notes there are a number of other activities that align directly with this Executive Order but were not included in the matrix. We offer the following suggestions for possible inclusion in the matrix.

The HMSAS supports the Council Member Addendum letter (H.2.a Council Member Report 1) noting that there are a number of other activities beyond deregulation that would significantly improve U.S. seafood competitiveness and we strongly support the Council in submitting this additional letter. There are a number of issues noted in the letter that are particularly important for HMS fisheries and should be highlighted:

- Modify the regulations related to reporting to allow electronic logbooks for HMS fisheries, We acknowledge this could be done by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) or through secretarial action as an administrative action, but Council support would be appreciated.
- Strong U.S. participation in international negotiations. For HMS fisheries, many of the most significant decisions are made at the international level. If the U.S. is not at the table, we will be left behind. It is critical that the Administration fully staffs U.S. delegations to international fisheries treaty negotiations, including NOAA, State, Commissioners and representatives from industry, recreational fishing and conservation. This is the forum to actually level the playing field. Key examples of this are North Pacific Albacore (NPA) and Pacific Bluefin Tuna (PBF), both of which will be further negotiated for critical decisions in 2026.
- HMS fisheries should be given the same resources for science as domestic fisheries. International management relies on sound science, just like domestic fisheries. The Administration should provide science support and research capacity for HMS fisheries commensurate with other domestic fisheries or the U.S. will be at a competitive disadvantage and it will result in more adverse conditions for U.S. fishermen vs. foreign fishermen that have limited governance and oversight.
- Continued work on the HMS Roadmap and supporting gear innovation that result in fishing practices that are economically viable and minimize bycatch. Current EFP holders have expressed appreciation for NMFS' ability to work with them on the gear configurations; but have also expressed the need for additional flexibility. For example, testing whether the use of light sticks will result in additional catch.

- Consider scoping a shallow-set longline fishery outside the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and a longline fishery within the EEZ while using EFPs to evaluate longline-type gear configurations and guide future EFP opportunities. This parallel process should include science-based offramps should the EFPs perform extremely poorly from a catch and bycatch mortality perspective. Deep Set Buoy Gear was authorized in 2023, nearly 10 years after the first EFPs were recommended for issuance. Scoping a potential longline fishery while fishing EFPs should reduce the time to authorize the fishery, should that be warranted.

The HMSAS also appreciates [Attachment H.2.a Council Member Report 1: Addendum to Pacific Fishery Management Council Response to E.O. 14276](#) and fully supports it being included in the Council’s response to the EO. We offer the following comments/edits to that document:

- In 2024, the U.S. imported 3,231.7 mt of PBF from Mexico.¹ In 2024, U.S. commercial harvesters landed 130 mt of PBF.² The vast majority of PBF harvested by Mexico is caught alive and transferred to feeding pens located in the Baja California Peninsula. There is obviously an opportunity to fill the demand from domestic sources provided the quality of the product we offer is comparable. The HMSAS recommends the Council seek additional information from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on how, under the current regulatory regime, it could consider a U.S. fishery that included feeding pens.
- Page 2 – Expand fisheries data collection
 - Novel and innovative data collection. Where possible utilize commercial and charter fishing vessels.
- Page 2 – Support domestic infrastructure
 - Programs to bring young fishermen to the fishing industry: In addition to the Marine Resource Education Program, [California Farm Link](#) has a loan program dedicated to the fishing industry to fund fishermen for vessel purchases, permit purchases, etc.
 - Expand and update port infrastructure: add deregulation for fuel docks & other port infrastructure to the list of examples, and note potential financial support through the [Port Infrastructure Development Program](#) and the [Water Resources Development Act](#).
 - Design coastal and marine spatial planning that supports U.S. fishermen: the HMSAS recommends adding “*and includes*” after “*supports*.”
 - In addition, the letter should note the importance of the NOAA’s [National Sea Grant College Program](#) and recommend supporting it as a way to support domestic fishing, ports, and coastal communities.
- Page 2 – Design market/industry support mechanisms
 - Develop and support U.S. seafood labeling. The HMSAS supports this. Presently, a large number of U.S. fisheries are expending significant funds on obtaining third-party certifications from groups like the Marine Stewardship Council. As domestic opportunities are capitalized upon by the fishing industry, consumers should be able to easily differentiate seafood products harvested by U.S. seafood providers and those that are not. Additional information on the specific fishery that harvested the product could

¹ [Mexico statement on PBF catches and regulations | WCPFC Meetings](#). Mexico caught a total of 3,558 mt in 2024.

² [Pacific Bluefin Tuna Commercial Harvest Status | NOAA Fisheries](#)

be included as well. The U.S. Department of Agriculture grades beef products, and programs like Seafood Watch could provide additional information as well. Such a system could reduce the need for third-party certifications when serving the domestic market.

- Page 2 – Include fishery representatives from industry, government, Tribes, and conservation as part of all offshore energy development
 - The HMSAS recommends replacing “*from*” with “*along with*” We also recommend expanding this suggestion to include deep sea mining, oil and gas, and aquaculture.

PFMC
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