ECOSYSTEM ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON SPECIAL PROJECT 3: WORKSHOP TO DEVELOP NEW FISHING SYSTEMS

The Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel (EAS) received an update from Ms. Gilly Lyons on Special Project 3 (New Fishing Opportunities within Bycatch Allowances), the plans for a future workshop, and a tentative timeline, and offers the following comments on the two primary components of Special Project 3.

Further Development and Refinement of the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Roadmap

The EAS had a discussion about the roles and responsibilities of the Council, Ad Hoc HMS Fisheries Innovation Workgroup (FIW), and the HMS Management Team (HMSMT) and HMS Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) with regard to Special Project 3. In particular, we think it would be helpful for the Council to provide guidance – either as a full body or through guidance to the FIW – to identify the "ballpark" of bycatch tolerances for development of HMS fisheries and provide direction to the HMSMT and HMSAS to brainstorm ideas for fishing gears to effectively target HMS within those defined bycatch tolerances. We understand that bycatch discussions, particularly regarding interactions with protected species, can be controversial and challenging; however, absent that difficult discussion and subsequent guidance, it will be hard for fishermen and processors to develop markets, make investments, and develop innovative gears or modify fishing practices. To the extent that industry members would like to test gears through experimental fishing that may require an exempted fishing permit (EFP), the HMSMT and HMSAS could also provide suggestions for EFP provisions and, together with the FIW, continue to identify process improvements.

Exploration of Tools (e.g., Dynamic Ocean Management)

Some members of the EAS had an opportunity to join the Ecosystem Working Group (EWG) at their webinar on February 25, 2026, and see the presentation from Dr. Elliott Hazen of the Southwest Fisheries Science Center on Dynamic Ocean Management tools, such as EcoCast, and how that tool has been tailored for HMS fisheries in other regions. We think further development of these tools across all Council fishery management plans for fishery participants to voluntarily use to help them avoid protected species warrants exploration, and recommend the Council consider using the proposed workshop for this purpose.

PFMC
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