HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS – PRELIMINARY OR FINAL

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) reviewed and discussed the three new HMS Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) applications. The applicants personally attended a joint meeting of the HMSAS and the HMS Management Team. The applicants answered questions from both the HMSAS and the HMSMT and provided firsthand feedback from their experiences on the ocean fishing for Swordfish and Bluefin. These discussions were highly productive and highlighted that real time adaptability and flexibility in gear configuration can lead to a greater harvest success rate and increased effort levels. The HMSAS supports the EFPs and recommends the Council forward them to NMFS for approval during this meeting. Additionally, HMSAS advises the Council recommend that NMFS consider allowing for flexibility in gear configurations in finalized EFPs. Specific examples of flexibility that the Council could recommend for NMFS consideration, include finalizing these EFPS in a manner that allows for a greater range of depth the gear may be fished, a wider range of times that the gear is permitted to be deployed and allowing for variations or minor modifications to gear including mono configurations, bait type or light placements. Any of the recommendations made by the Council to NMFS for consideration should be within the scope of the previously approved environmental documents. The HMSAS believes that building these types of small variations into the final terms of the EFPs will improve data collection, encourage utilization of the EFPs issued, have a di minimis impact on unintended interactions, and provide a greater opportunity for economic viability.

PFMC
11/17/2025