

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON HMS ROADMAP EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS GOALS AND METRICS

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) reviewed the preliminary list of proposed performance metrics presented in [Fisheries Innovation Workgroup \(FIW\) Report 2](#). The HMSMT provides the following feedback and recommendations for Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) consideration as the metrics are developed and finalized.

- 1) The HMSMT supports the FIW's recommendation to use the HMS Roadmap Goal B (as written) for establishing performance metrics.
- 2) Recommend the FIW to focus on the development of ratio-based metrics (bycatch-to-target catch, bycatch-to-revenues) which facilitate comparison of different exempted fishing permits (EFPs) and contain information on both economic and bycatch performance.
- 3) Recommend the FIW use data sources from both shallow and deep-set longline east of 140°W longitude, as well as data from the drift gillnet and deep-set buoy gear fisheries, and include all HMS landings to the West Coast.
- 4) The HMSMT supports the recommendation of the FIW to develop a qualitative economic viability survey to gain information from EFP participants on profitability.
- 5) Request Council guidance on which proposed option(s) the FIW should consider when moving forward on defining acceptable bycatch.
- 6) Recommend that the species list be revised to include all species in Option 1 with the addition of most species in Option 2, as outlined below.

The HMSMT views the development of defined performance metrics as a tool to evaluate EFPs innovating new approaches to achieve economic viability balanced with conservation objectives. Therefore, the HMSMT recommends the Council select metrics that provide the opportunity to assess the trade-offs between conservation risks and economic benefits. It is also important that metrics can be standardized for comparison between different fishing methods.

Ratio Metrics and Benchmarks

The HMSMT recommends the FIW simplify the metrics for which benchmarks are developed, and prioritize the use of ratio metrics. The proposed ratio metrics comparing bycatch to indicators of potential profitability (e.g., bycatch to catch, and bycatch to revenue) will provide insights into which new fishing methods best balance conservation objectives with economic viability. Notably, the ratios themselves include information on catch, bycatch, revenues, etc. in the numerators and denominators, so no information is “lost” through this focus, but the resulting metric is richer, simpler, and can be applied to multiple fishing methods or fisheries. To create these metrics and benchmarks, the FIW must determine which species and their relative weightings to include in the bycatch and catch production list and to calculate the metric. Examples of criteria for bycatch species might include Endangered Species Act status or life history characteristics associated with fishery vulnerability. Examples for catch production could include price per pound, exploitation level relative to catch limits, etc. Consideration should also be given to disposition status (e.g., significant injury, mortality), etc. The HMSMT is prepared to assist the FIW in developing an

index of multi-species fisheries production (i.e., taking into account catch and bycatch), to help compare new methods with different catch composition and product quality. A multispecies index of fisheries production would measure the combined catch or bycatch of several species, giving more weight to species with greater economic value or conservation impact. Below, the HMSMT discusses also using ratios in defining acceptable levels of bycatch.

Data Sources

The HMSMT discussed the fishery data sets which the FIW proposed using in the creation of performance metrics and benchmarks. Where the FIW proposes using data from the shallow-set long line (SSLL) fishery, including landings into Hawai'i, the HMSMT recommends including both deep and shallow-set longline landings of catch made east of 140°W longitude for these benchmarks. There is concern that the data from SSLL fishing west of 140°W longitude, including landings made into Hawai'i, may be too dissimilar to West Coast species composition and landings. Also, given the uncertainty of the potential fishing methods that may be proposed under EFPs, and the desire to promote multi-species HMS fishing opportunity, the HMSMT recommends including both shallow and deep-set long line fishery data, as well as data from the drift gillnet and DSBG fisheries. The HMSMT also recommends including all HMS landings to the West Coast for calculating economic metrics (not only swordfish and bluefin tuna).

EFP Reporting and Annual EFP Data Summaries

The HMSMT supports the collection of EFP data, annual EFP reporting requirements, and the development of a qualitative economic viability survey to gain information from EFP participants on the profitability of the gear. Typically, National Marine Fisheries Service presents summary statistics on EFP activities at the June Council meeting each year. Information on catch, bycatch, effort, price, and ex-vessel revenue is routinely collected through observer reports, logbooks, and fish tickets in the course of EFP operations. However, information is often lacking on EFP participants' costs. In many cases, applicants have included their individual assessments of the economic viability of EFP practices in their required annual reports (which have often appeared as informational reports in the Council's briefing books). Given that the format and amount of information reported has varied from participant to participant, standardization of annual report requirements, including the expected information to be collected, would assist both EFP holders and the Council in evaluating the efficacy of EFP practices.

Acceptable Levels of Bycatch

The HMSMT had a robust discussion on defining "acceptable levels" of bycatch, which is part of the FIW's charge. The HMSMT acknowledges the potential for uncertainty in management if the Council is to decide whether to recommend new gears for authorization without clear standards of bycatch performance in place. Defining an "acceptable level" of bycatch could also help fishermen understand what the Council is looking for in their development of EFP applications.

The HMSMT debated multiple approaches for determining an "acceptable level" and did not reach consensus. Some HMSMT members felt establishing fixed limits on bycatch of individual species would not be the best approach. Those HMSMT members suggested only defining acceptability in terms of bycatch rates or as ratios of bycatch to target species harvest. Other HMSMT members suggested using bycatch rates or ratios to target species harvest alongside upper limits based on absolute catch counts.

The HMSMT offers the following options to consider when moving forward on the charge of defining acceptable bycatch. Any combination of options #1 through #3 could be used in conjunction with one another:

1. Determine an acceptable rate of bycatch for each species or species group of concern. The rate would correspond to bycatch per unit of effort (BPUE), with effort defined as number of hooks, days fished, soak time, or some other metric that allows comparison between different fishing methods. The acceptable level could be based on BPUE observed in other fisheries or other considerations.
2. Determine an acceptable ratio of bycatch to target species harvest, or some other indicator of economic performance such as ex-vessel revenue. The acceptable ratio could be based on considerations around how much bycatch of a given species or species group the Council views as an acceptable impact of producing a given amount of target species harvest.
3. Determine an acceptable amount of bycatch for each species or species group of concern. This could be based on potential biological removal, observed bycatch rates in other fisheries, or other considerations, and would not preclude the use of rates and/or ratios to evaluate EFP performance.
4. Defer the effort to determine acceptable bycatch until more data are available. It may be worth waiting on more information from current and future HMS EFPs before attempting to establish decision criteria for when an EFP gear should be authorized. In the meantime, focus on the FIW's approach of weighing EFP performance metrics against multiple benchmarks.

The Council may also wish to clearly articulate how these values would be used when evaluating EFPs and potential new gear types to be authorized. The HMSMT is prepared to support the Council and FIW on this issue, recognizing that it might merit additional discussion by the Council, FIW, and advisory bodies prior to the March meeting.

Species List

The HMSMT supports including all species in Option 1, and adding the species from Option 2, except for blue shark, shortfin mako shark, California sea lion, and "unidentified seal". There are no population concerns for these identified species at present. The HMSMT also proposes changing "unidentified shearwater" to include all Shearwater species.

PFMC

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