HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON THE HMS ROADMAP: EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS BENCHMARKS AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) appreciates the substantial efforts of the Fisheries Innovation Workgroup (FIW), Council staff, and participants in developing a collaborative approach to advancing innovation and fishing opportunities in highly migratory species fisheries. The HMSAS recognizes the significant progress made in bringing diverse perspectives together and supports the FIW's recommendations, including adoption of the Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) Evaluation Framework, its incorporation into the HMS Roadmap, and improvements to the EFP guidance and materials and other innovative tools and measures.
The HMSAS welcomes the opportunity to continue its involvement as recommended by the FIW, including tracking gear innovation, sharing research and EFP results, identifying funding opportunities, and facilitating early engagement with prospective applicants. The HMSAS recommends that the Council provide sufficient time on future HMSAS agendas, with appropriate staff support, to undertake these responsibilities and periodically evaluate progress. Maintaining a record of successful and unsuccessful efforts, informed by the practical experience of fishermen, will be essential to assessing the effectiveness of these initiatives and guiding future Council decisions.

The HMSAS further emphasizes the need to encourage EFP participation, particularly larger-scale fishing operations capable of meaningfully increasing domestic seafood production. This is particularly important given the impending loss of the DGN fishery and the historic contribution of that fishery to our seafood supply chain. The loss of historical fishing opportunities and continued reliance on imported seafood, that is harvested in a manner that is not as protective of certain bycatch species, underscores the importance of developing economically viable domestic fisheries with higher production levels. The HMSAS supports clear, accessible guidance for prospective applicants and encourages the Council and NMFS to pursue opportunities that allow responsible fishing innovation to translate into increased harvest, greater industry participation, and long-term fishery and fishing community viability. The HMSAS also supports tasking the HMSMT with reviewing and updating the HMS Roadmap at the June 2027 meeting.

PFMC
11/15/26