

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON SWORDFISH MANAGEMENT PROJECT PLANNING AND OBSERVER COVERAGE

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) reviewed the Swordfish Management Project Plan (SMPP) to provide guidance and the alternatives for increased drift gillnet (DGN) monitoring.

The SMMP seeks to guide the Council action on three goals. We agree with these goals with some modification. (Note: HMSAS suggestions are *italicized and underlined* below.):

1. Reduce protected species bycatch *to the extent practicable* in the swordfish fishery through mitigation, gear innovation, and individual accountability.
2. Reduce unmarketable *and prohibited* finfish catch *to the extent practicable* in the swordfish fishery through mitigation, gear innovation, and individual accountability.
3. Support the economic viability of the swordfish fishery so that it can meet demand for a fresh, high quality, locally caught swordfish *and reduce reliance on imported seafood*.
4. *Promote and support a wide range of harvest strategies for swordfish off the West Coast.*

The SMMP details 5 actions to be taken under the plan. We provide a progress update and suggested changes:

Reduce bycatch in the DGN Fishery through hard caps and performance standards

- HMSAS is open to considering hard caps for loggerhead and leatherback turtles only, if the Pacific Leatherback Conservation Area (PLCA) is open for DGN fishing.
- The HMSAS is supportive of continued examination of electronic monitoring and tools such as EcoCast to reduce rare event bycatch.

Limit fishing effort in the DGN fishery

- The Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) have taken the first steps outlined by implementing a Federal limited entry permit for the DGN fishery. As of today, only 2/3 of the DGN fleet has applied for a permit and may result in a reduced fishery size.

Allow access to the PLCA

- The HMSAS supports activities such as hardcaps on turtles (such as loggerhead and leatherback) and EcoCast linked to access to the PLCA. The Council in 2015 recommended approval of the Alliance of Communities for Sustainable Fisheries exempted fishing permit (EFP).

Develop longline fisheries

- The plan for longline review is still on NMFS's timeline for later on this year.

Develop new shortline fishery

- We are encouraged by Council action recommending approval of public review of Dr. John Hall's EFP to test deep-set shortline fishing gear off the California Coast.

Develop deep-set buoy gear

- Authorization of a deep-set buoy gear fishery is moving forward.

List of DGN Monitoring Alternatives

- The HMSAS supports moving towards electronic monitoring within 5 years with the overall goal of 20% total observer coverage (human or electronic). The costs of all monitoring shall not be paid for by the fishermen.
- When accessing the PLCA, the coverage shall be 100%.
- The minority of the HMSAS supports alternative 1 (Agenda Item G.7, Attachment 3, p. 9) with verification to logbook data.

PFMC

06/12/18