

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA AND WORKLOAD PLANNING

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) recommends that the Council continue to accept deep-set buoy gear (DSBG) exempted fishing permit (EFP) applications at its June meetings, as many of the applications received and approved by the Council to date have not yet been issued. The HMSMT feels that collecting as much data as possible to inform DSBG authorization remains a high-priority, as EFP holders will continue to develop the fishery until DSBG is fully authorized.

The HMSMT recommended in March 2018, that the Council move back to the schedule and application process specified in COP 20, but now feels that using the expedited application template that the HMSMT developed is still appropriate for standard buoy gear and linked buoy gear applications that are comparable to already approved EFPs, as long as they meet all of the application requirements. A single meeting would be adequate for the Council to approve these, but applications proposing a new configuration or methodology, or activities other than DSBG, will still need to undergo the two meeting process and complete the application process according to the Council Operating Procedure (COP) 20, not using the expedited application template.

The HMSMT also suggests that the Council schedule meeting time to consider recommendations to NMFS on the extension of currently issued EFPs that will expire at the end of 2019. The Council could recommend extension of these EFPs until full DSBG authorization occurs, unless circumstances require the termination of a specific EFP or EFPs.

Following Council discussion of the DGN hard caps letter submitted by NMFS, the HMSMT is concerned about reopening the DGN hard caps decision on the agenda in the near future. The heavy additional workload that the HMSMT would have to assume would severely limit HMSMT members' ability to meet Council assignment deadlines for DSBG authorization and DGN performance metrics. Both of these items have been designated as high-priority by the Council and would have to be rescheduled so that the HMSMT could complete related analyses if the Council decides to take up hard caps immediately. In addition, any analysis that the HMSMT or NMFS would have to complete to inform potential impacts will require knowing the number of DGN permittees that would be affected. In light of the California State Senate Bill SB1017, California will not be able to provide this information, or even an estimate of remaining permits, until after January 1, 2020.