

## HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON SWORDFISH MANAGEMENT DATA REPORT AND FUTURE MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) is basing their comments on the statement at the end of the first paragraph in the briefing summary "...to provide the following information to inform a decision on whether to change the current west coast swordfish fishery." The following recommendations include:

- The existing drift gillnet (DGN) fishery opportunity for success can be enhanced by:
  - Changing the present southern boundary of the turtle exclusion zone from the offset line to a line extending due west from Point Sur;
  - Move the starting date ahead, at a minimum, from November 15 to November 1, preferably, moving to October 15 when there is warmer water in the fishing area; and
  - Finding other ways to lower the bycatch such as the Hawaii Turtle Watch Program.
- Continue research on the "Swordfish Buoy Gear" on the West Coast to determine whether it is practical to target swordfish and economically feasible as a supplement to the harpoon fishery. Data noted in the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) report indicated that the volume of fish caught in the Atlantic fishery would not be nearly as efficient as the current DGN fishery. The HMSAS advises this would only be an artisanal fishery and not a replacement for the DGN fishery.
- The HMSAS would encourage a process that will evaluate opportunities for Shallow Set Long Line (SSLL) fisheries both inside and outside the West Coast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). We note that the Hawaii SSLL fleet can fish inside and outside the Hawaii EEZ. This situation is particularly confusing to the HMSAS as Hawaiian longliners are allowed to impact a given number of turtles just outside our West Coast EEZ and deliver swordfish and other catch into our West Coast ports whereas our West Coast licensed fishermen are not allowed to impact one turtle.
- The HMSAS would like National Marine Fisheries Service to evaluate the benefits of the observers on the DGN vessels. The fishery has been observed for 22 years and the observer program is a burden on the fishery. Scheduling, insurance, cost and privacy invasion are all concerns and there is a question of how much additional information can be gathered after 22 years of data.
- The HMSAS request the HMSAS and HMSMT jointly review ways to reduce the number of DGN permits.

In summary, the HMSAS wants to emphasize that bullet one of moving the season ahead and moving the southern turtle exclusion line due west from Point Sur could have an immediate positive effect on the DGN fishery. In discussions with the HMSMT, there is new data since the southern line was determined that indicates the proposed changes would not generate significant additional encounters with leatherback turtles. The industry is willing to cooperate with the fishery managers to monitor any fishing in the opened areas.