

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON CHANGES TO BIENNIAL MANAGEMENT MEASURES BEGINNING APRIL 2011

At the September 2010 meeting, the Council approved management measure alternatives for public review for the 2011-12 biennial management cycle. If approved, regulations would be implemented in 2011 and would subsequently remain in effect unless changed. The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) and Council staff drafted an analysis on changing the deep-set longline fishery landings and retention limits for swordfish, which is presented in Attachment 2 (Agenda Item J.2.a).

Routine Management Measure Alternatives

Washington Recreational Limits for Albacore

In September 2010, the Council approved a range of alternatives for public review including status quo, 10, 15, 20, and 25 albacore bag limits that would occur on a per-trip basis for the Washington recreational fishery.

HMSMT Discussion:

The HMSMT heard a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) report (Agenda Item J.2.b) regarding a decision subsequent to the September 2010 Council meeting to recommend Alternative 1, the status quo (no action) alternative, on the albacore bag limits. The HMSMT acknowledges the WDFW decision to postpone any possible further action on this proposal until the results of the 2011 North Pacific albacore stock become available, and does not offer any further recommendations on this issue.

Deep-set Longline Fishery Landing and Retention Limits for Swordfish

In September 2010, the Council approved for public review the following alternatives for changing landing and retention limits for incidentally-caught swordfish in the deep-set longline (DSLL) fishery targeting tuna:

1. No Action (status quo) – retain existing regulations with a 10 swordfish retention and landing limit per trip.
2. If no observer is onboard a deep-set longline vessel, establish a 25 swordfish trip limit for vessels targeting tuna using circle hooks, and 10 swordfish trip limit for vessels using tuna-hooks. If an observer is onboard a DSLL tuna vessel then the number of swordfish that can be retained is not limited. These regulations would be consistent with a regulatory change proposed by the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council for DSLL vessels managed under the Pelagics Fishery Ecosystem Plan.

To aid the Council in its decision process, the HMSMT prepared an analysis to compare the distribution of swordfish caught on DSLL trips using observer data for the west coast fishery (2005-2009 seasons) and for the Hawaii fishery (2004-2009 seasons); the results are summarized in the table below and illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. The table and figures show that 100 percent of west coast based trips and 90.5 percent of Hawaii trips caught ten or fewer swordfish, and that 99 percent of Hawaii trips caught 20 or fewer swordfish.

West Coast and Hawaii Deep-set Longline Observed Swordfish Catch by Trip				
Catch per Trip	Trip Frequency		Cumulative Percentage	
	West Coast	Hawaii	West Coast	Hawaii
0	4.5%	13.9%	4.5%	13.9%
1	18.2%	14.5%	22.7%	28.4%
2	27.3%	13.1%	50.0%	41.5%
3	18.2%	10.3%	68.2%	51.8%
4	13.6%	9.4%	81.8%	61.2%
5	9.1%	8.8%	90.9%	70.0%
6	4.5%	5.6%	95.5%	75.6%
7	0.0%	4.3%	95.5%	79.9%
8	0.0%	4.0%	95.5%	83.9%
9	0.0%	3.5%	95.5%	87.4%
10	4.5%	3.1%	100.0%	90.5%
11	0.0%	1.9%	100.0%	92.4%
12	0.0%	1.5%	100.0%	93.9%
13	0.0%	1.1%	100.0%	95.0%
14	0.0%	1.0%	100.0%	96.1%
15	0.0%	0.8%	100.0%	96.9%
16	0.0%	0.6%	100.0%	97.5%
17	0.0%	0.6%	100.0%	98.1%
18	0.0%	0.3%	100.0%	98.4%
19	0.0%	0.2%	100.0%	98.6%
20	0.0%	0.4%	100.0%	99.0%
21	0.0%	0.2%	100.0%	99.2%
22	0.0%	0.1%	100.0%	99.2%
23	0.0%	0.3%	100.0%	99.5%
24	0.0%	0.1%	100.0%	99.6%
25	0.0%	0.1%	100.0%	99.6%
Over 25	0.0%	0.4%	100.0%	100.0%

Figure 1: Deep-set longline frequency of observed swordfish catch per trip

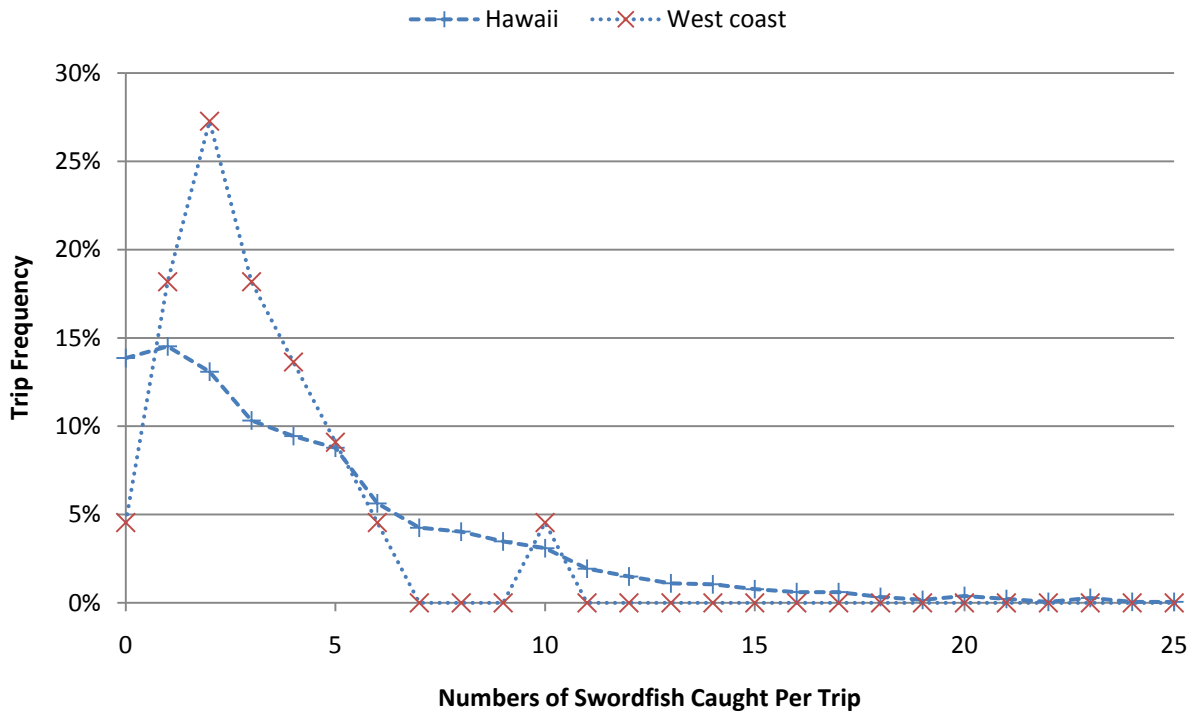
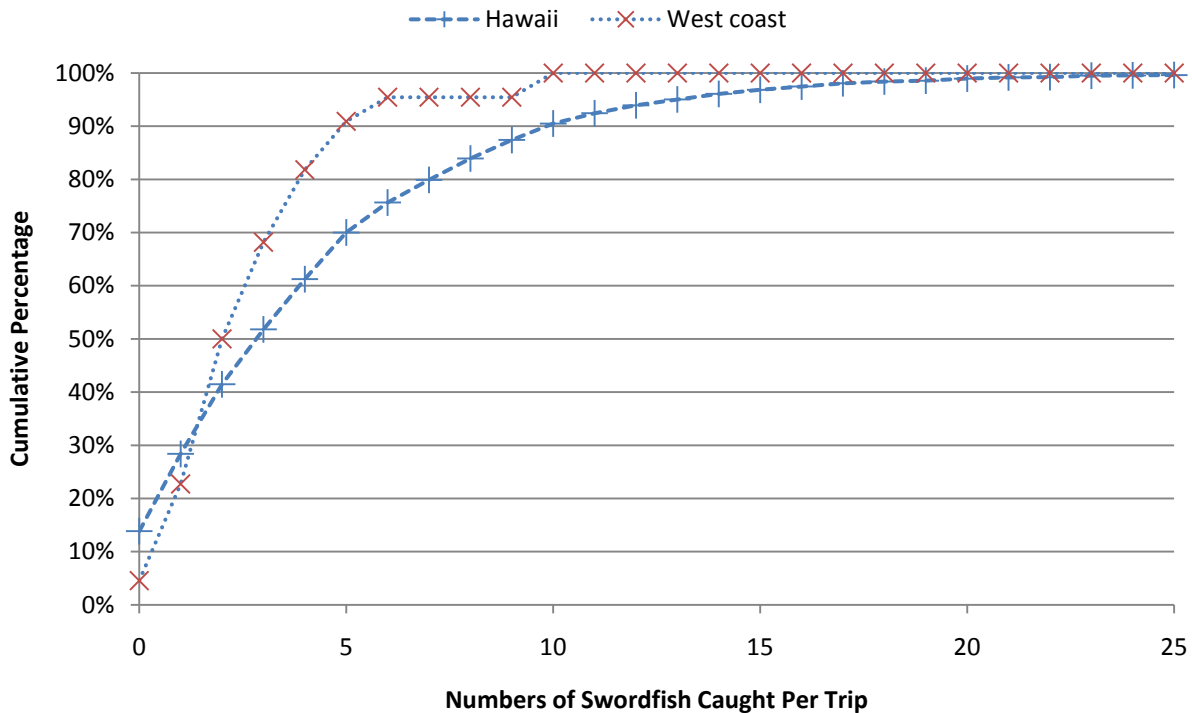


Figure 2: Deep-set longline cumulative percentages of swordfish catch per trip



HMSMT Discussion:

The HMSMT discussed the proposed regulatory change to swordfish landings and retention limits for west coast-based DSLL trips. A question was raised whether the data suggest a need to increase the limits, as swordfish are only targeted incidentally with catch seldom exceeding 10 in either the west coast or Hawaii fisheries. While the data demonstrate that catch in excess of 10 has not been recently observed for west coast trips and represent a minor share of Hawaii catch, it is possible that an increase in the landings and retention limit from its current level would encourage a change in targeting strategy. An increase to the percentage of DSLL trips with swordfish catch in excess of ten could result.

The HMSMT further discussed the possible effect of the regulation on catch of other species besides swordfish. The HMSMT notes that the sole current participant in this fishery uses gear shown to mitigate protected species conservation impacts, and fishes with 100 percent observer coverage. If the proposed regulatory change were adopted by the Council, potential conservation impacts of any changes in fishing practice would be included in the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) analysis.

The HMSMT supports moving forward with the proposal to increase the DSLL swordfish landings and retention limit. The proposed changes would potentially increase the opportunity for west coast-based deep-set longline fishers to catch and supply swordfish to west coast consumers using practices and gear that are already approved under the HMS Fishery

Management Plan. Potential impacts on nontarget species would be monitored through observer coverage. A NEPA analysis and regulatory impact analysis would be conducted to consider potential conservation and economic effects.

HMSMT Recommendations to Council:

Select alternatives for:

1. Washington Recreational Bag Limits for Albacore Tuna: No comment.
2. Deep-set Longline Fishery Landing and Retention Limits for Swordfish: Adopt Alternative 2.

PFMC
11/08/10