

NMFS REPORT

Mr. Mark Helvey and Mr. Craig Heberer will discuss recent NMFS activities related to highly migratory species (HMS) management and international activities, including at least the information provided in Agenda Item J.1.a.

Dr. Gary Sakagawa will brief the Council on Science Center activities.

Council Task:

Discussion.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item J.1.a, NMFS Report.

Agenda Order:

- a. Regulatory Activities
- b. Science Center Activities
- c. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- d. Public Comment
- e. Council Discussion

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PFMC
10/17/05

Regulatory and International Activities

IATTC Resolution on VMS for US flag Tuna Vessels over 24 meters - The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) passed a Resolution at its 72nd meeting in Lima, Peru that directs member nations to place a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) on tuna fishing vessels greater than 24 meters in length. The NMFS Southwest Region Sustainable Fisheries Division will begin drafting the regulation to implement this Resolution for U.S. commercial fishing vessels under authority of the Tuna Conventions Act. The proposed regulation will only pertain to commercial tuna fishing vessels at this time. The need to include HMS charter recreational fishing vessels under future VMS coverage will be revisited at a later date, in consultation with the Pacific Council, should that need be demonstrated.

Status of Foreign Flag Vessel Permitted to Tranship Live Bluefin Tuna within the US EEZ - The NMFS International Fisheries Division has granted an application from a foreign flag fishing vessel to receive and transship live bluefin tuna caught by US flag purse seine vessel(s) for transport to Mexico. To date, the vessel has not received any bluefin from U.S. flag vessels for transport to Mexico.

Status of HMS Logbook Database Technician Support - The NMFS Southwest Region has set aside funding for Fiscal Year 2005-2006 to hire a full time database support technician whose primary duties will be to keypunch HMS FMP logbooks. Secondary duties will include tracking and cross-checking of logbook and landing databases to generate reports on compliance with HMS FMP reporting requirements. The incumbent begins work at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center in La Jolla on December 1st.

Eastern Pacific Ocean Fisheries Issues - On November 1, 2005, NOAA Fisheries, Southwest Region will host a meeting of the General Advisory Committee (GAC) to the U.S. Section of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) in conjunction with the U.S. Department of State (DoS) at the NOAA Fisheries Southwest Fisheries Science Center in La Jolla, California.

Issues to be discussed at the 5th meeting of the GAC are the health of the various fisheries in the eastern Pacific Ocean such as those for yellowfin, bigeye, skipjack, and albacore tunas, and measures for the conservation of tunas in preparation for the annual meeting of the IATTC, June 2006. Currently agenda topics are: review of the IATTC June 2005 meeting, how conservation measures and other IATTC resolutions will impact U.S. fishermen, clarification of terms of current memberships of GAC members and procedures to add new members, suggestions for establishing the Science Advisory Sub-Committee, review of Pacific-wide developments in HMS management and conservation since June 2005, preview of the second meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (to be held December 2005), U.S. goals for the June 2006 IATTC annual meeting and Working Group Meetings for 2006, and GAC meeting plans for next year. The GAC will begin developing proposed U.S. resolutions package for 2006 and beyond.

Albacore Resolution - Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) - NMFS is working with the Department of State and industry in preparing a draft resolution on capping fishing effort on north Pacific albacore in the convention area of the WCPFC to be submitted at the Northern Committee meeting of the WCPFC this December in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia. The resolution calls for the WCPFC, through the Executive Director, to communicate the resolution to the IATTC and request that the two commissions engage in consultations with a view to reaching agreement on a consistent set of conservation and management measures for North Pacific albacore tuna, and specifically, to propose that both Commissions adopt as soon as practicable, uniform conservation and management measures and reporting measures needed to ensure that compliance is achieved.

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