

## HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON YELLOWFIN TUNA STATUS

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) reviewed the most recent stock assessment for yellowfin tuna<sup>1</sup>, the report from the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and the letter from National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) notifying the Council that overfishing of Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) yellowfin tuna is occurring, and would like to offer the following comments and recommendations.

### **Yellowfin Tuna Stock Status**

The recent yellowfin tuna stock assessment is based on data through 2005 for fisheries operating in the EPO. The results of the base-case assessment indicate that recent fishing mortality is slightly higher than  $F_{MSY}$  ( $F_{Recent}/F_{MSY} = 1.02$ ) and that the biomass is slightly below  $B_{MSY}$  ( $B_{Recent}/B_{MSY} = 0.99$ ). Given the review and endorsement of the Council's SSC, the HMSMT recognizes that overfishing is occurring, yet the stock is not overfished. The HMSMT also noted that these results show a modest improvement over the results of the 2005 assessment. The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission's (IATTC) resolution C-04-09 established conservation measures for yellowfin and bigeye tuna, which were updated through resolution C-06-02. Given that U.S. West Coast vessels account for less than 1% of the total EPO yellowfin tuna landings, management of the stock will need to continue to be handled on an international level.

### **Process and Timeline**

Similar to addressing bigeye tuna overfishing, the HMSMT recommends that measures to address yellowfin tuna overfishing be developed through the IATTC process. It is anticipated that yellowfin tuna management for those vessels operating out of the U.S. West Coast will be incorporated into the HMS fishery management plan through a plan amendment, and that an environmental assessment for the amendment will be developed to analyze the potential impacts to West Coast fisheries and communities. To that end, the HMSMT would appreciate guidance from the Council and/or NMFS as to the timeline for this process in conjunction with scheduled IATTC discussions on this issue.

### **HMSMT Recommendations:**

1. Work with the IATTC in developing a plan to end yellowfin tuna overfishing in the EPO; and
2. Provide guidance to the HMSMT on the process and timing for developing alternatives to address yellowfin tuna overfishing in the EPO.

PFMC  
11/13/06

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<sup>1</sup> Hoyle, S.D and Maunder, M.N. 2006. Status of yellowfin tuna in the eastern Pacific Ocean in 2005 and outlook for 2006. IATTC Working Group to Review Stock Assessments 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting May 15-19, 2006. 94 pp.