

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE U.S. SECTION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION (IATTC)

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) is the regional fishery management organization responsible for coordinating international management of highly migratory species stocks in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO). Both the Pacific-wide bigeye tuna stock and the separate eastern and western Pacific yellowfin tuna stocks continue to be subject to overfishing and may be approaching or have reached an overfished condition. They have also been declared subject to overfishing by the Secretary of Commerce.

The International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species (ISC) completed a stock assessment for striped marlin in 2007. This assessment was based on the assumption that striped marlin is a single stock in the North Pacific. It concluded that the stock is substantially depleted from historic levels, 6 percent of 1952 levels if a stock recruitment relationship ($h=0.75$) is assumed versus 16 percent of 1952 levels if recruitment is hypothesized to be driven by environmental conditions with recruitment variability around a mean level. Based on this information, the ISC Plenary recommended that “the fishing mortality rate of striped marlin (which can be converted into effort or catch in management) should be reduced from the current level (2003 or before), taking into consideration various factors associated with this species and its fishery. Until appropriate measures in this regard are taken, the fishing mortality rate should not be increased,” (see Attachment 1). The IATTC has also reported on the status of striped marlin in the EPO, based on the hypothesis that it is a separate stock, and reached a different conclusion. They conclude that “the stock of striped marlin in the EPO is probably in good condition, at or above the average maximum sustained yield (AMSY) level.” They also conclude that catches during 2001–05 are well below estimated AMSY.

According to IATTC catch data, Japan accounted for the largest proportion of striped marlin catch in the EPO, 2000–06, at 48 percent. The U.S. accounted for 0.37 percent of catch during this period. The IATTC data show that all reported Japanese and U.S. catches were made by longline gear. The 2007 Highly Migratory Species (HMS) stock assessment and fishery evaluation (SAFE) reports west coast landings of marlin (unspecified) from U.S. waters by the California commercial passenger fishing vessel fleet during this period at between 2 and 4 mt annually (or about 0.03 percent of all IATTC reported landings during the period). No catches by the private boat recreational fleet are reported for this period. The SAFE does not report commercial landings of marlin.

In 2007 the IATTC was unable to adopt a new resolution containing conservation measures for yellowfin and bigeye tunas to replace Resolution C-06-02, which expired at the end of 2007. They have held three extraordinary meetings, the last March 5–7, 2008, in addition to their 2007 annual meeting in an unsuccessful effort to reach agreement on conservation measures for these stocks. Attachment 3 is a revised version of the IATTC Secretariat (scientific staff) proposal for conservation measures provided for the March 2008 IATTC meeting. This proposal states that proportional reductions in fishing mortality of 20 percent for yellowfin and 30 percent for bigeye are needed to meet conservation goals. The Secretariat proposal includes a 74-day purse seine fishery closure, a purse seine closed area (a box bounded by 94° and 110° W longitude and 3°N to 5° S latitude) from September 12 to December 31, and national catch limits for bigeye caught

by longline gear. The analysis indicates that these measures would be sufficient to achieve the needed fishing mortality reductions.

The ISC also completed a stock assessment for North Pacific albacore tuna in 2007 (see attachment 1). It indicated that spawning stock biomass is at historically high levels but that current fishing mortality is high relative to most reference points. The current F would gradually reduce spawning stock biomass to the long term average by the mid 2010s. The ISC report also suggests the need for internationally recognized stock status reference points to facilitate the conservation and management of this stock. Both the IATTC and Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) adopted resolutions calling on nations to not increase fishing mortality on this stock.

The IATTC holds its annual meeting June 16–27, 2008, in Panama. The General Advisory Committee (GAC) to the U.S. Section will hold a 1-day meeting on June 2, 2008, in La Jolla, California, to solicit recommendations to the U.S. Commissioners on the U.S. position at the IATTC meeting. The Council has the opportunity now to formulate its own recommendations on conservation and management measures for EPO HMS stocks, which can be communicated to Rod McInnis, National Marine Fisheries Service Southwest Regional Administrator, who is a U.S. Commissioner, and the IATTC GAC for their consideration.

Council Action:

Develop Recommendations for the Conservation and Management of EPO HMS Stocks for Consideration by the U.S. Section to the IATTC.

Reference Materials:

- Agenda Item J.2.a, Attachment 1: Report of the Seventh Meeting of the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean. October 30, 2007 (Excerpts; complete document on web and CD-ROM).
- Agenda Item J.2.a, Attachment 2: Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission Fishery Status Report Number 5. 2008 (Excerpts; complete document on web and CD-ROM).
- Agenda Item J.2a, Attachment 3: Document IATTC-77-04 Rev; Proposal for Conservation of Yellowfin and Bigeye Tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview Kit Dahl
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Develop Recommendations for the Conservation and Management of Eastern Pacific Ocean HMS Stocks for Consideration by the U.S. Section to the IATTC

PFMC
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