

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE U.S. SECTION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL
TUNA COMMISSION (IATTC)

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) suggests the Council provide recommendations to the IATTC for the following HMS species: yellowfin tuna, striped marlin, and albacore tuna.

At their recent extraordinary meetings, the IATTC failed to institute new management measures for yellowfin and bigeye tuna which are currently experiencing overfishing in the Eastern Pacific Ocean. The IATTC had tabled a proposal for conservation measures based on management goals to reduce the catch of yellowfin and bigeye tuna by 20 percent and 30 percent, respectively. The proposal was developed from conclusions based on the 2007 stock assessments and scientific advice stemming from them. The HMSMT recommends that the Council communicate to the U.S. delegation of the IATTC that it is inadequate to allow the fisheries to continue without conservation measures given the conditions of the stocks. The U.S. west coast fishers permitted under the Council's HMS can do little to curb overfishing given their minimal landings (less than one percent of eastern Pacific ocean [EPO] catch for each stock; 2007 SAFE Report), and the problem can only be solved in the international arena.

Regarding the recent pessimistic assessment of striped marlin in the North Pacific (Interim Scientific Committee [ISC] 2007), the HMSMT believes that the IATTC should reassess the status of striped marlin in the EPO. The latest IATTC Fishery Status Report indicates that the striped marlin population in the EPO is well above maximum sustainable yield and that fishing effort has been declining and should lead to increased abundance; however, a comprehensive stock assessment for striped marlin in the EPO has not been published since 2003. The Council should inform the U.S. delegation to the IATTC that an updated stock assessment is necessary in order to address international management needs. The Council can do little to address conservation concerns for striped marlin for U.S. west coast fishers since commercial landing of striped marlin under a Council HMS permit is already prohibited.

Finally, the U.S. is in compliance with the IATTC's resolution on north Pacific albacore conservation by demonstrating no increase in albacore fishing effort. It is not clear that other member nations are similarly in compliance. The Council should ask the U.S. delegation to the IATTC to inquire about compliance of the other member nations given the ISC's updated conservation advice based on the most recent stock assessment (ISC 2007).