

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON COUNCIL
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC FISHERIES
COMMISSION

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HSMAS) in general agrees with the summary report of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee fourth regular session. However, the HMSAS does have the following additional comments for Council consideration.

At its Fourth Regular Session, the Northern Committee received a presentation by the ISC Albacore Working Group. The Working Group reported that progress on biological reference points (BRPs) for North Pacific albacore has been hampered by outdated biological information (i.e., growth rates and maturity schedules). The Working Group has completed a proposal for updating the biological information that, if funded, should considerably advance progress on BRPs. (NC4 Summary Report, Section 2.1.1).

Recognizing the need for updated biological information required to improve North Pacific albacore management, the HMSAS requests the Council recommend the WCPFC redouble its efforts to make progress on funding and conducting the requested albacore research.

HMSAS wants to make the Council aware that at the last session of the WCPFC Northern Committee there was no representation from the Pacific Council. There was, however, a representatives from WPFMC (the Executive Director), as well as three representatives from NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO). The HMSAS feels it would be good for the Council to send a representative to future Northern Committee Meetings.

The HMSAS would like to reiterate their recommendation made in September 2008 on vessel marking requirements, to be forwarded to the U.S. Commissioners to the WCPFC. Our recommendation is that vessels fishing in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the Eastern Pacific, and the Western Pacific be required to have the same vessel markings and not different marking requirements as will be the case to comply with WCPFC requirements. The industry is not concerned with the specific requirements, just that they are similar in all regions.

The Northern Committee has forwarded to WCPFC a “Draft Conservation and Management Measure for Pacific Bluefin Tuna,” (herein referred to as “Draft CMM”). This proposal was offered by Japan. [See: Attachment H of the Summary Report of the Northern Committee, Fourth Regular Session, Agenda Item E.2.a, Attachment 1, November 2008.] Importantly, Korea has expressed a reservation on the adoption of this proposal. [See: Attachment I, of Agenda Item E.2.a, Attachment 1, November 2008.]

The HMSAS recommends to the Council that the U.S. Delegation be requested to inform the WCPFC that in the area of the Eastern Pacific north of 20 degrees north that there exists no history of U.S. purse seiners taking Northern Pacific bluefin **recruits (age 0)**, and that in this area the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) has not identified or located spawning grounds of Northern Pacific Bluefin.

The HMSAS advises the Council that it is of the opinion that the unique circumstance of the small seiners fishing for coastal pelagic species (mackerel or sardines) in waters off Japan and Korea targeting or incidentally taking Northern Pacific bluefin **recruits (age 0)** is well documented and recognized as being restricted to waters in or near the spawning grounds of the Northern Pacific bluefin located in the area of the Western Pacific north of 20 degrees north.

The HMSAS recommends to the Council that the U.S. Delegation be requested to inform the WCPFC that it desires the Northern Committee to develop and provide more data on the catch of Northern Pacific bluefin **juveniles (ages 1-3)** in the waters of the Eastern Pacific north of 20 degrees north, in the waters of the Western Pacific north of 20 degrees north, and in those waters of the Western Pacific north of 20 degrees north, known as spawning grounds of the Northern Pacific Bluefin.

HMSAS refers the Council to Table 4, pages 45-46 of the Report of the Report of the Eighth Meeting of the International Scientific Committee for Tuna-Like Species in the North Pacific Ocean, [Agenda Item E.1.b, Attachment 1, November 2008.] Please note on the page 45, the catch history of Northern Pacific bluefin by small purse seiners of Japan starting in 1988. Also note on page 46 the substantial decline in the catch history of U.S. purse seine fleet starting in 1999, and the catch history of the Mexican Purse Seine Fleet starting in 1999. This data on page 46 has caused the HMSAS to have concerns about the implementation of paragraph 2 of the proposed Draft Conservation Management Measures (CMM) by the U.S. Government and about the future survival of the U.S. Northern bluefin purse seine fishery located in the Eastern Pacific, north of 20 degrees north. Under this proposed draft measure, the U.S Government would have the obligation “to ensure that total fishing effort” by (its) vessels for northern Pacific bluefin tuna in the area north of the 20 degrees north shall not be increased in 2009-2011.”

The HMSAS advises the Council that the fishing effort by purse seine vessels of the U.S. on Northern Pacific bluefin in the Eastern Pacific is not the source of problems that should be the primary focus of the Draft CMM. The problem of increasing fishing purse seine effort on *both* “**recruits**” of age 0 and “**juveniles**” ages 1-3, is taking place only in waters of the Western Pacific north of 20 degrees north. Further, and most importantly, this effort is taking place within or near the only known spawning grounds of the Northern Pacific bluefin waters off the coasts of Japan and Korea. This type of fishing effort is not taking place in the Eastern Pacific, and it never has. For this reason in particular, HMSAS sees no justification for the United States to be obligated to implement paragraph 2 of the Draft CMM.¹

PFMC
11/03/08

¹ “The Commission Members Cooperating Non-Members and participating territories (hereinafter referred to CCMs) shall take measures necessary to ensure that total fishing effort by their vessels for northern Pacific bluefin tuna in the area north of the 20 degrees north latitude shall not be increased in 2009-2011.”