

## NMFS RESPONSE TO COUNCIL'S QUESTIONS ABOUT CERTAIN ANECDOTAL INFORMATION

### **Background:**

At the November 2014 meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) requested that NMFS prepare two White Papers providing factual information about international fishery matters that had been frequently discussed, but only in an anecdotal context.<sup>1</sup> There are concerns that:

- Some countries, specifically Japan, which claim not to catch Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF) recreationally or incidentally may be engaged in such fishing activities.
- China's fleet size has been growing quickly and that they have not been reporting catch in a timely or accurate manner.

The Council recommended that the White Papers on these topics be discussed at the March Council Meeting under Recommendations for International Management Activities, agenda item H.2.c.

### **Methods:**

To address this request, NMFS requested the assistance of the U.S. Department of State, NMFS Office of International Affairs, the Southwest Fisheries Science Center, and the NMFS Atlantic Highly Migratory Species branch. Where appropriate, embassies and other diplomatic and unofficial contacts directly requested information related to the Council's concerns. Additionally, informal online research was conducted for the issue regarding recreational fishing for PBF in Japan.

### **Findings:**

#### *Pacific Bluefin – Recreational and Incidental Catch*

Of the authorities that were contacted about this matter (China, Korea, Taiwan, and Japan), Korea and Taiwan have responded to date. Their responses, as received by NMFS West Coast Region, are included below.

#### **Taiwan**

*Q1. How does Taiwan define commercial, subsistence, and recreational fisheries, as well as incidental catches?*

Taiwan has not precisely defined commercial and subsistence fisheries. Recreational fisheries [are defined as] the activities [in which] a recreational fishing vessel carries passengers on board or to islands or reefs to engage in harvesting aquatic animals or plants or watching fishing operations or watching natural environment and wildlife or whale watching.

#### **Catch and effort of Pacific bluefin tuna**

<b>Year</b>	<b>PBF Catch (t)</b>	<b>Number of authorized vessels</b>
2010	410	561
2011	316	590
2012	214	530
2013	295 (preliminary)	513

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/1114decisions.pdf> (page 3-4)

*Q2. Which of the aforementioned methods result in catch of PBF, both currently and historically?*

Some of the fishing vessels which have ever caught Pacific bluefin tuna are less than 50 GT, part of them are family business, and the captain of the vessel is same as the vessel owner, however, we did not particularly distinguish between commercial or subsistence fisheries. Recreational fisheries do not catch Pacific bluefin tuna.

### **Korea**

*Q1. How does Korea define commercial, subsistence, and recreational fisheries, as well as incidental catches?*

Korea's Distant Water Fisheries Act doesn't provide definitions of commercial, subsistence, and recreational fisheries, as well as incidental catches. However, the generally known definition is that commercial catch refers to the activity of catching fish for commercial profit.

*Q2. Which of the aforementioned methods result in catch of PBF, both currently and historically?*

Both currently and historically, Korea's catch of PBF is the result of commercial fishing as the catches are used for commercial profit.

*Q3. What is the amount of catch and effort associated with each method, if applicable?*

Below are the catch and effort associated with commercial fishing:

Year	PBF catch (t)	Number of OLPS vessels
1982	31	48
1983	13	48
1984	4	48
1985	1	48
1986	344	48
1987	89	48
1988	32	48
1989	71	48
1990	132	48
1991	265	48
1992	288	48
1993	40	48
1994	50	48
1995	821	36
1996	102	36
1997	1,054	36
1998	188	36
1999	256	36
2000	2,401	32
2001	1,176	32
2002	932	32
2003	2,601	29
2004	773	29
2005	1,318	29
2006	1,012	29
2007	1,281	29
2008	1,866	29
2009	936	27
2010	1,196	25
2011	670	25
2012	1,422	24
2013	604	24

\* OLPS : Offshore Large Purse Seine

## Japan

Though NMFS has received no response from Japan to date, a NMFS employee who is fluent in Japanese was able to conduct a thorough online search for evidence of recreational fishing trips for bluefin and translate the information from related websites. The following is evidence that recreational fishing opportunities are offered by several Japanese charter businesses, operating from several ports along the entire coast of Japan.

Company	Website	Proof of fishing
Orinawa	<a href="http://www.miyakojima-fishing.com/">http://www.miyakojima-fishing.com/</a>	Pictures and captions of PBF catches
Ocean Kids	<a href="http://oceankids-1975.jp/#">http://oceankids-1975.jp/#</a>	Pictures
Marine Challenger	<a href="http://marinechallenger.kir.jp/">http://marinechallenger.kir.jp/</a>	PBF listed as a target species; pictures and captions of PBF catch
Killer Whale	<a href="http://killerwhale.ever.jp/">http://killerwhale.ever.jp/</a>	Pictures

Additional sites of interest:

Website	Description
<a href="http://alljapantours.com/go-attrcont.php?cid=9&amp;sid=2&amp;p=AB112267716">http://alljapantours.com/go-attrcont.php?cid=9&amp;sid=2&amp;p=AB112267716</a>	Tourist site (in English) describing deep sea fishing activities – PBF listed as target species in some areas
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0g4ewIp0AQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0g4ewIp0AQ</a>	Video (in Japanese) showing recreational fishing and catch of PBF – location cannot be confirmed
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spMWkHKAXoc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spMWkHKAXoc</a>	Video (in Japanese) showing recreational fishing and catch of PBF – location cannot be confirmed

### *China – Fleet and Data*

Other organizations have documented concerns regarding the timeliness and accuracy of China’s data. Both the International Scientific Committee (ISC) and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) have called attention to China’s lack of or incomplete data submissions through their fishing history. They have never submitted data to the ISC.<sup>2,3,4</sup> There are historical gaps in submissions to the WCPFC and, though they have increased the consistency of submissions in the last five years, there are missing pieces of data within them.<sup>5</sup>

There has not been a similar concern documented from other entities about China’s possible fleet growth. Data for the Chinese longline fleet show that effort (amount of hooks) and catch (in metric tons) were high in 2011 and 2012 (the most recent years reported) when compared to the last 10 years.<sup>6</sup> However, there is no indication that this is due to a rapid increase in the number of vessels in the fleet. Instead, data (from the WCPFC Tuna Fishery Yearbook<sup>7</sup>) show the number of Chinese longliners has increased steadily since 2008, as have the number of longliners for most other countries. The same data submission shows that the number of active Chinese purse seine vessels is small and has not changed (+2 vessels) since 2008.

<sup>2</sup> [http://isc.ac.affrc.go.jp/pdf/ISC14pdf/Annex%202014-%20STATWG%20\(July%202014\)\\_final.pdf](http://isc.ac.affrc.go.jp/pdf/ISC14pdf/Annex%202014-%20STATWG%20(July%202014)_final.pdf) (pages 4, 6, and 7)

<sup>3</sup> <http://isc.ac.affrc.go.jp/pdf/ISC14pdf/Plenary%202001-%20ISC%20Action%20Plan%202013-14.pdf> (pages 1 and 2)

<sup>4</sup> [http://isc.ac.affrc.go.jp/pdf/STAT/ISC11STATWG\\_WP01.pdf](http://isc.ac.affrc.go.jp/pdf/STAT/ISC11STATWG_WP01.pdf) (page 1)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.wcpfc.int/system/files/SC10-ST-WP-01%20Data%20Gaps.pdf> (pages 6, 7, 9, 11, and 12)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.iattc.org/PDFFiles2/FisheryStatusReports/FisheryStatusReport12.pdf> (page 51, table A-9)

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.wcpfc.int/system/files/WCPFC\\_YB\\_2013.pdf](https://www.wcpfc.int/system/files/WCPFC_YB_2013.pdf) (page 9, Table 4; page 77 Table 42)

**Conclusions and Next Steps:**

Though NMFS did not obtain enough substantive material for a thorough analysis and explicit response to the anecdotal information, this report provides a summary of the currently known information regarding these topics. NMFS will continue to compile all information received from this inquiry and update the Council with any relevant additional information.