

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE (NMFS) REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES

Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) Meeting Outcomes

The IATTC SAC meeting was held on May 9-13, 2016, in La Jolla, California. The IATTC scientific staff provided stock assessment results and stock status indices for tuna, tuna-like species, and sharks in the eastern Pacific Ocean. The IATTC scientific staff also presented the Staff Conservation Recommendations for 2016 ([SAC-07-08](#)). In addition, the members of the SAC provided recommendations that will be available online¹. Dr. Steven Teo, from the Southwest Fisheries Science Center, was the U.S. Representative to the SAC.

Scientific Advisory Subcommittee (SAS) and General Advisory Committee (GAC) Meeting Outcomes

The GAC, the advisory body to the U.S. Section of the IATTC, and its scientific subcommittee, the SAS, met in La Jolla, California May 26 and 27, 2016. The SAS met to discuss the scientific aspects of issues to be discussed at the upcoming meetings of the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program, Fleet Capacity and Fish Aggregating Device Working Groups, and the IATTC. The GAC met the following day and reviewed recommendations from the SAS.

The GAC recommendations to the U.S. Section on potential proposals had conflicting viewpoints, which are discussed below. The submitted proposals for the 90th meeting of the IATTC can be found under Agenda Item D.2, Supplemental Attachment 3².

Pacific Bluefin Tuna (PBF) Conservation and Management

Although recommended by IATTC scientific staff, some members of the GAC expressed that extending the catch limits in [Resolution C-14-06](#) for an additional two years (i.e., 600 metric tons (mt) for the U.S. fleet and 6,000 mt for Mexico, applicable to 2017 and 2018) is too conservative, while other members stated the measure was not precautionary enough. The GAC did agree that there should be cooperation with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) with the goal of reducing fishing mortality. The U.S. proposal contains

¹ For more information, visit:

<https://www.iattc.org/Meetings/Meetings2016/SAC7/7thMeetingScientificAdvisoryCommitteeENG.htm>

² Recall [NMFS Supplemental Report F.4.b](#) for March 2016 Council meeting, which introduced potential U.S. proposals.

catch limits consistent with IATTC scientific staff recommendations and urges the WCPFC to continue efforts to reduce fishing mortality on both juvenile and adult PBF.

Tropical Tuna Conservation and Management

Large longline vessels

There were conflicting recommendations regarding the bigeye tuna catch limit for large longline vessels (over 24 meters in length) - some recommended keeping the current catch limit of 500 metric tons while others recommended an increase to the status quo. Ultimately the U.S. proposal incorporated a small increase - 750 metric tons for countries with historical catch.

Large purse-seine vessels

Regarding closure days for large purse-seine vessels, some GAC members opposed the IATTC scientific staff recommendation to increase the closure period from 62 to 87 days, while others said that any alternative would be acceptable as long as it had a comparable conservation benefit. The IATTC scientific staff developed alternatives for implementing an increase to closure days ([IATTC 90-04d\(i\)](#)); however, these were released a short time before proposals were due, not allowing the U.S. time to evaluate. Therefore the U.S. plans to discuss options for increasing closure days at the IATTC meeting.

Some members of the GAC recommended that a vessel that is in port and not fishing for at least 120 consecutive days should be added to the reasons a vessel could apply for an exemption to the purse seine closure period. Currently, a vessel owner can apply for an exemption only if the boat was out of commission due to *force majeure*. This recommendation was incorporated into the U.S. proposal.

Finally, there was widespread support for clarifying language requiring full retention of tropical tunas caught by purse seine vessels. The U.S. proposal includes language that better defines the few exceptions vessels have to discard tropical tunas.

Other Proposals

The United States submitted proposals regarding high seas boarding and inspection, observer safety at sea, and seabird and shark conservation. There was general support for all these proposals.

U.S. - Canada Albacore Treaty

The Treaty Data Working Group (DWG) met via teleconference on May 4, 2016 (see attached meeting minutes and data table). The data (catch, landing ports, and effort) for 2014 was considered finalized and data for 2015 is considered preliminary for both the U.S. and Canada. There were some differences in estimates for 2015 landings by each nation's fleet in the others' ports, and this will be further investigated.

The DWG also discussed and developed a procedure for considering future data requests. There was discussion regarding a request that was discussed at the March 2016 Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting pertaining to catch by Canadian vessels within the Canadian territorial waters (less than 12 nm from shore). The DWG was unaware of such a request and considered there was no pending data request before this DWG meeting.

During the DWG call, the American Albacore Fishermen Association made a data request for the number of Canadian and U.S. vessels fishing in each others' respective EEZs and their levels of catch, including no catch. The DWG approved the request and, after the meeting, developed Table A included in the meeting minutes.

On May 19th, the U.S. and Canadian delegations and members of the public met via teleconference to conduct the annual bilateral consultation and data exchange under the Treaty. The results of the DWG, the schedule of the exchange of vessel lists for the 2016 season, and the potential for discussion of the status of the Treaty were discussed. There was general consensus that any discussions on the potential future of the Treaty would be appropriate only after the 2016 season has concluded and stakeholders consulted on their views, consistent with the discussion of the Treaty at the March 2016 PFMC meeting. It was expressed by the United States that if there were a basis for a discussion on any future reciprocal fishing access regime, such a meeting could take place in the late fall of 2016.