

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) offers the following comments related to 1) the closure of the commercial fishery for Pacific bluefin tuna, 2) items specific to the upcoming Third International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) North Pacific Albacore Management Strategy Evaluation Workshop, and 3) electronic logbooks.

Closure of the Commercial Fishery for Pacific Bluefin Tuna:

The HMSAS has concerns about: 1) Why the fishery was allowed to operate under a 25 mt trip limit after 375 mt was landed, and (2) How the fishery was allowed to land an amount that so far exceeded the 425 mt annual quota? We appreciate the joint report submitted by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) ([Agenda Item J.3a, Supplemental CDFW-NMFS Report 1](#)) and would hope lessons learned this season will assist the CDFW and NMFS in developing reporting methodologies/systems that minimize the likelihood of overages in the future.

Acknowledging a small quota for the 2018 season (which will be determined after a full accounting of 2017 catch is determined) we offer the following suggestions and recommendations:

Trip Limit for 2018 Season

The HMSAS suggests a trip limit of up to 5 mt until the fishery reaches 60% of the total 2018 quota is landed, at which point the trip limit will drop to 2 mt. The final number would be determined based on the number of California-based purse-seine vessels active on the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) vessel registry for 2018. This year, there were a total of nine California-based vessels on the registry. Beginning August 1, purse seine vessels not on the IATTC vessel registry were allowed to submit a request to be included on the registry for 2018.

This low trip limit is designed to ensure the fishery does not experience an overage for the 2017-18 combined quota while protecting the other sectors from the effects of closure.

Incidental Catch in the Remainder of 2017

Pacific bluefin tuna incidentally caught in the drift gillnet (DGN) fishery in 2017 will have to be discarded given the closure of the fishery. We also learned those discarded fish will be included in the catch total for 2017. In effect, those fish will be wasted in the purest sense of the word. As such, the HMSAS suggests the Council recommend reopening the fishery for the 2017 season to the incidental take of Pacific bluefin tuna in non-purse seine fisheries. If Pacific bluefin tuna incidentally caught in the DGN fishery are to be included in the final 2017 commercial take number, it is the appropriate and responsible thing to do. We will defer to NMFS and CDFW for

determining the ability to reopen the fishery and the mechanics for how exactly it will be accounted for. This could include requiring buyers retain the head and guts and collect certain other types of information for the Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) to fulfill scientific needs as well.

2017 Catch

Catch across the Pacific this year indicates that recovery of the stock is well underway. As we near a time when increased opportunities for take are available, the HMSAS would implore the Council, NMFS, and the State Department to ensure the U.S. share of any Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) quota is fair to U.S. fishermen.

North Pacific Albacore Fishery:

In order to understand how North Pacific albacore (NPA) harvesting nations intend to move forward with the management of the NPA, all involved or affected should read “Attachment H” to the Northern Committee of the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WCPFC) thirteenth regular session recently held in Korea (see [Agenda Item J.4, Supplemental Attachment 2](#)).

The International Scientific Committee (ISC) advises the Northern Committee (NC) of the WCPFC. The ISC is composed of the leading scientists from harvesting nations in the North Pacific. The albacore working group (ALBWG) is part of the ISC and deals specifically with albacore. The scientist use the latest procedures to estimate NPA abundance to include standardized abundance indexes, sex specific M-at-age vectors, model time frames, length based age, and sex structured stock synthesis, etc.

Based upon the ISC advice, the NC determined that an appropriate Limit Reference Point (LRP) for albacore is $20\% \text{SSB}_{\text{current}_{F=0}}$, and a management strategy to insure that the risk of the biomass decreasing below the LRP is low. The NC nations intend for the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process to go forward and to be used to determine appropriate target reference points (TRP) and harvest control rules for future management decisions.

As part of the MSE process there will be a workshop in Vancouver, B.C., October 17-19, 2017, to further refine the MSE objectives. The HMSAS would like to see the objective from the 2016 Workshop regarding “Limit the magnitude of change to effort or catch to $< 15\% \dots$ ”¹ replaced by the objective proposed by the ALBWG to “Maintain F at the target value with reasonable variability.”

The MSE process was originally proposed as a way industry could have input on future management processes and actually encouraged such participation. Unfortunately for U.S. industry, the original venue was costly to participate. Since Vancouver is close to the U.S., costs are reasonable. The HMSAS requests that the Council send two industry members, Wayne Heikkila and Doug Fricke, to the MSE Albacore Workshop in Vancouver, BC, October 17-19.

¹ Report of the Albacore Working Group Workshop, International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species In the North Pacific Ocean 26-30 May 2016 Table 3 (*Proposed Management Objectives for the North Pacific Albacore stock*) Page 25 - May 2016

Electronic Logbooks:

Also, the HMSAS strongly encourages the Council to investigate and determine why there is not a comprehensive electronic logbook available for all HMS fisheries. There are workable versions being tested on albacore boats on the west coast and HMS boats in Hawaii but have never been approved for fleetwide use. Approved versions are currently being used on the east coast. Fishermen have worked in the past years with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and NMFS to produce a user friendly version. Fishermen are now looking forward to implementation agency-wide. This technology would enhance data collection accuracy and advance effective management of HMS.

PFMC

09/16/17