



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

JUN 19 2013

Mr. Dan Wolford, Chairman
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, Oregon 97220

Mr. Arnold Palacios, Chairman
Western Pacific Fishery Management Council
1164 Bishop Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chairmen Wolford and Palacios,

I am writing to you to share the outcomes of the 85th Meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) held in Veracruz, Mexico. The United States was represented at this meeting by three of the four U.S. Commissioners, which included Don Hansen, Ed Stockwell, and myself. The Department of State was represented by two staff members including Council member David Hogan. The rest of the U.S. delegation was comprised of NOAA and NMFS staff as well as members of the U.S. fishing industry. Both Pacific Council and Western Pacific Council staff were also part of the U.S. delegation. Other U.S. observers of the meeting included Pew Charitable Trusts, Defenders of Wildlife, and the International Sustainable Seafood Foundation.

The IATTC plenary was held immediately following several IATTC working group meetings and the annual meetings of the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP), all of which were occurred from June 3rd through 14th. Several procedural issues resulted in slowing the meetings' progress, hampering the IATTC's ability to complete the entirety of its Agenda. By way of this letter I would like to share with you those proposals adopted by the IATTC as well as NMFS' initial assessment of the regulatory actions that will result from the adoption of the proposals. I conclude with other meeting results that may be of particular interest to the Pacific Council.



A Resolution on the Conservation and Management of Tropical Tunas

A proposal was adopted that amends Resolution C-12-01 on tuna conservation. This Resolution extends the current conservation measures for yellowfin, bigeye, and skipjack tunas for both purse seine and longline fisheries for three additional years; unless stock assessment results indicate that an earlier change is needed.

Specifically, the IATTC agreed for 2014 through 2016 to: 1) a closure for all purse seine vessels for a period of 62 days; 2) a 30-day closure for all purse seine fishing in the area known as the Corralito for additional bigeye tuna protection; 3) a continuation of the annual bigeye tuna catch limits for large scale longline fleets including 500 metric ton bigeye tuna limit in the U.S. longline fishery in the eastern Pacific Ocean for vessels over 24 meters in length from; and (3) renewal of the tuna retention program that requires all bigeye, skipjack, and yellowfin tuna caught by a purse seine vessel of class sizes 4-6 (i.e., larger than 182 cubic meters carrying capacity) be retained on board and landed, except fish deemed unfit for human consumption for reasons other than size and the single exemption of this would be during the final set of a trip, when there may be insufficient well space remaining to accommodate all of the tuna caught in that set.

The proposed and final rulemaking implementing these measures will take place over the next several months and is anticipated to be in effect by early January 2014. This rulemaking amends regulations governing the longline and purse seine fisheries targeting tuna and tuna-like species in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO), and will be issued under authority of the Tuna Conventions Act of 1950.

Measures for the Conservation and Management of North Pacific Bluefin Tuna in the EPO

A Resolution for the conservation and management of Pacific bluefin tuna was jointly submitted by Japan, Korea and Mexico and was adopted by the IATTC. The measure is effective for 2014 only, and includes a catch limit of 5,000 metric tons for commercial fleets in the EPO. As is currently the case, there is a provision for 500 metric tons for nations that have historically fished Pacific bluefin tuna in the EPO. Because the effect of fisheries in the western and central Pacific ocean (WCPO) is much greater than in the EPO, this Resolution contains a strong message to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) that they should take effective measures to reduce fishing mortality in the WCPO. The Resolution indicates that continuation of conservation measures in the EPO beyond 2014 will be contingent upon effective action in the WCPFC. NMFS is currently undertaking rulemaking under the Tuna Conventions Act and anticipates that this measure will be effective in early January 2014.

Resolution for the Collection and Analyses of Data on Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)

A resolution requiring the identification/marketing of FADs and reporting of the deployment, use, catch, bycatch, shark and turtle entanglements, retrieval, and design of FADs was adopted. The

provision requires that each member nation begin collecting data on FADs by January 1 of 2015. The data could be collected via logbooks or other domestic reporting requirements and NMFS is currently evaluating how to proceed. By the annual meeting of the IATTC in 2016, the scientific staff must analyze the data collected and make recommendations for managing FADs. This resolution also prohibits intentional setting of purse seines around whale sharks and requires release of whale sharks that are encircled non-intentionally.

Supplemental Resolution on North Pacific Albacore

A joint Canada and U.S. proposal was adopted that requires reporting of catch and effort in fisheries that target albacore and fisheries that land albacore that were caught incidentally to other target species. This Resolution supplements existing Resolution C-05-02 that calls on IATTC Members to not allow their fishing effort on albacore to increase beyond current effort levels. The new data reporting requirement for this supplemental Resolution will be completed by December 2013.

Additional Information

Many additional resolutions were considered, including a hammerhead shark catch prohibition, a more general shark conservation measure, port state measures, IUU identification procedure clarification, catch documentation scheme proposal, and data confidentiality changes. Although progress toward consensus on many of these proposals occurred, they were ultimately objected to by at least one party and will need to be resubmitted prior to next year's meeting. The United States supports many of the provisions within those proposals not adopted and therefore plans to work intersessionally with particular nations in the hopes of moving toward future consensus on the conservation and management of marine resources in the EPO.

Reference Points Recommended by IATTC Staff

As an interim measure, IATTC staff recommended that the Commission adopt specific target and limit reference points that were approved by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC). Many nations could not support this recommendation noting that there is not enough of a scientific basis to adopt these interim measures and any measures that are adopted should be specific to EPO fisheries. The U.S. and other nations encouraged the IATTC to prioritize this issue for their scientific staff and Scientific Advisory Committee, and that by next year's meeting develop specific target and limit reference points to be discussed. Further, member nations noted that any such target and limit reference points should be developed in conjunction with other tuna RFMOs.

Appointment of IATTC Director

Unfortunately, the IATTC was not able to agree upon a process for appointing a new Director or reappointing the current Director. The term of the current Director is defined in the Antigua

Convention as four years. That term expires in August 2014. Intersessional work will need to be done if the IATTC is to avoid a lapse in the Directorship.

Meeting of the Working Group for the Review of Implementation of Measures Adopted by the Commission

During the review by all Parties of the progress in implementing the measures adopted by IATTC, the United States noted that it has not yet completed domestic regulations to require all vessels 24 meters in length or greater (subject to Resolution C-04-06, on Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS)) to carry a VMS. The U.S. noted that we are currently pursuing rulemaking for those vessels not yet covered. Unfortunately, Mexico continued to press the issue questioning if U.S. vessels 24 meters or greater in length that are not now carrying VMS are IUU fishing. In developing the new VMS regulations, NMFS will make use of VMS equipment that is already required on U.S. vessels and will attempt to integrate this requirement with other VMS requirements.

Cooperating non-member appointments

Four cooperating non-member applications were approved for 2013 (Bolivia, Cook Islands, Honduras, and Indonesia). Bolivia and Cook Islands were renewed while Honduras and Indonesia were new applications.

86th Meeting of the IATTC

The 2014 IATTC annual meeting will be held in Lima, Peru. Dates were not confirmed during this meeting, but preliminary discussions focused on holding the meeting during the first two weeks of July.

Sincerely,



Rodney R. McInnis
U.S. Commissioner

cc: Will Steele, Regional Administrator, NWR
Michael Tostatto, Regional Administrator, PIRO