



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
West Coast Region  
Sustainable Fisheries Division  
510 Desmond Drive SE, Suite 103  
Lacey WA, 98503

June 13, 2014

D. O. McIsaac, Ph.D.  
Pacific Fishery Management Council  
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101  
Portland, Oregon 97220

Dear Dr. McIsaac:

NMFS continues to support the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) efforts to advance a precautionary management strategy for North Pacific albacore. We note especially the direction reiterated by the Council in March of 2013 to continue to advance the concepts in the *Framework for a Precautionary Management Approach for North Pacific Albacore* draft document in both the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission's (IATTC) regional fishery management arenas.

Concurrent with a delayed pace in the WCPFC arena and some engagement in the IATTC arena, NMFS has been considering a pathway forward that would take advantage of the upcoming IATTC meeting. Please find attached a draft resolution intended for consideration by the IATTC at its meeting in July. The proposed resolution would task the IATTC scientific staff with analyzing the effects of two harvest control rules under a range of reference points and determining whether each scenario would meet performance criteria. The various reference points are intended to represent the range of proposals being considered by Parties to both the IATTC and WCPFC, as well as by the Council. NMFS has presented the proposed resolution to both the Scientific Advisory Subcommittee and the General Advisory Committee members to the U.S. delegation to the IATTC at their June 4-5, 2014 meetings.

We regret the tardiness in providing a draft of the proposed resolution for the June 2014 Advance Briefing Book, but we ask that it be provided for review and comment by the appropriate Council advisory bodies and that the Council considers it together with concepts in the *Framework for a Precautionary Management Approach for North Pacific Albacore* during deliberations under Agenda Item E.1 on Friday, June 20.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Turner".

Robert Turner  
Assistant Regional Administrator  
for Sustainable Fisheries

Attachment



## **Candidate Target and Limit Reference Points and Decision Framework for North Pacific Albacore**

*The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) gathered in Lima Peru, Mexico, on the occasion of its 87th Meeting:*

*Affirming* that Article 7.5.3 of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries that regional fisheries management organizations determine stock specific target and limit reference points and the actions to be taken if the points are exceeded or, *inter alia*, on the basis of the precautionary approach;

*Being mindful* of Article IV of the Antigua Convention regarding the application of the precautionary approach as described in the relevant provisions of the FAO Code of Conduct as well as the 1995 United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, for the conservation, management and sustainable use of fish stocks covered by this Convention.

*Noting* the importance of maintaining the long-term conservation and sustainable catch of North Pacific albacore for supporting the long-term economic and social benefits to the various North Pacific albacore fishery participants of Members and Cooperating Non-Members,

*Recognizing* that target reference points refer to the level of fishing mortality or level of the biomass which permit a long-term sustainable exploitation of the stocks, with the *best possible catch*; and limit reference points are maximum values of fishing mortality or minimum values of the biomass, which must not be exceeded,

*Observing* that the stock assessment of North Pacific albacore from the Albacore Working Group (ALBWG) of the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) indicates that the stock is not being overfished nor is it in an overfished state;

*Taking into account* that the IATTC scientific staff has initiated a discussion on the application of potential harvest control rules (HCRs) incorporating limit and target reference points and their evaluation within a framework of management strategy evaluation (MSE) process,

*Acknowledging* that continuing dialog between scientists and managers is necessary to define appropriate HCRs and reference points for North Pacific albacore and given that consensus regarding the most appropriate structure and assumptions associated with MSE simulations is key to attaining acceptance of optimal reference points and HCRs suggested by the completed MSE,.

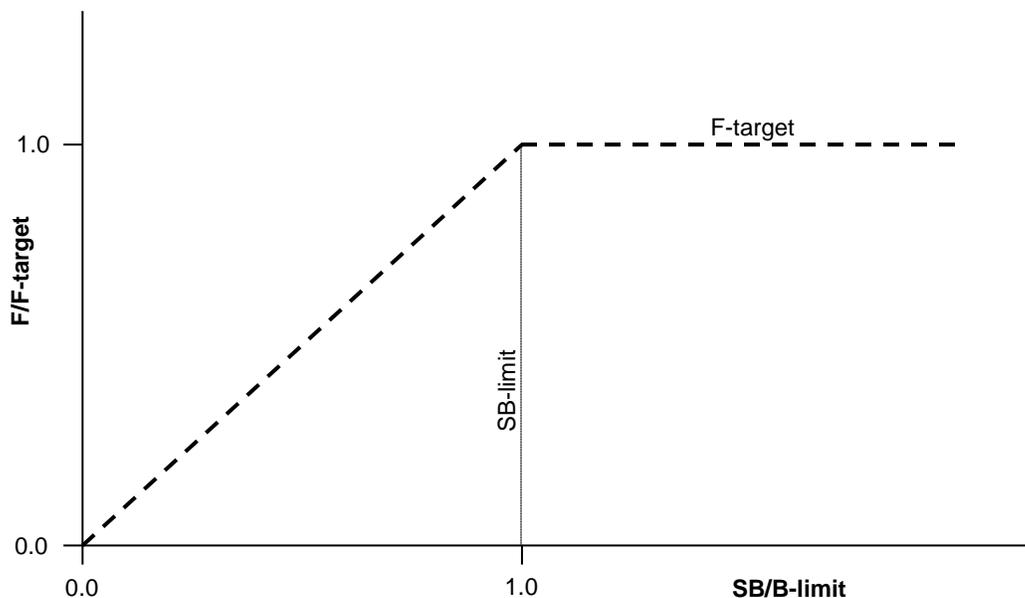
*The IATTC therefore resolves that:*

1. The Director shall direct the IATTC scientific staff to work with the ISC Albacore Working Group (ALBWG) in assessing the following candidates for fishing mortality (F) target reference points and spawning biomass (SB) limit reference points within the

framework of the MSE process for identifying the most appropriate reference points taking into account the fisheries exploiting them and various sources of uncertainty.

Target Reference Points	Limit Reference Points
F-target: $F_{10\%}$	SB-limit: $SB_{0.5R_0}$ , where $h = 0.75$ <sup>1</sup>
F-target: $F_{20\%}$	SB-limit: $SB_{0.5R_0}$ , where $h = 0.75$
F-target: $F_{20\%}$	SB-limit: 14% of unfished SB
F-target: $F_{30\%}$	SB-limit: 20% of unfished SB
F-target: $F_{40\%}$	SB-limit: 20% of unfished SB
F-target: $F_{SSB-ATHL}$	SB-limit: 20% of unfished SB

- In addition, as part of the MSE, the Director shall direct the IATTC scientific staff to work with the ISC ALBWG in using the most recent North Pacific albacore stock assessment to evaluate the 12 combinations of the six candidate sets of reference points above and the following two potential HCRs based on total allowable catch (TAC) and total allowable effort (TAE) controls. Under TAC management: i) if  $SB_{curr} \geq SB\text{-limit}$ , TAC for the subsequent three years set to correspond to F-target at  $B_{curr}$ ; if  $SB_{curr} < SB\text{-limit}$ , TAC for the subsequent three years set to correspond to  $(F\text{-target} * SB_{curr}) / SB\text{-limit}$  at  $B_{curr}$ . Under TAE management: if  $SB_{curr} \geq SB\text{-limit}$ , TAE for the subsequent three years set to correspond to F-target; if  $SB_{curr} < SB\text{-limit}$ , TAE for the subsequent three years set to correspond to  $(F\text{-target} * SB_{curr}) / SB\text{-limit}$ . (See following illustration.)



- Each of the alternative management strategies shall be evaluated with respect to the following performance criteria:

<sup>1</sup>  $R_0$  refers to the recruitment under unexploited conditions;  $SB_{0.5R_0}$ : spawning biomass corresponding to that which produces a 50% reduction in recruitment as calculated in a Beverton-Holt spawner-recruit model with steepness ( $h$ ) of 0.75. See SAC-05-14 for background.

- a. Success in achieving F-target: proximity of F to F-target and degree of variation in proximity
  - b. Success in avoiding overfished state: Frequency of, or probability of, breaching B-limit
  - c. Success in maintaining relatively high biomass (e.g., to avoid adverse ecosystem effects): average SB and inter-annual variation in SB
  - d. Stability in management regime: inter-annual variability in TAC or TAE
  - e. Yields: average annual catches, by fishery
  - f. Stability of yields: inter-annual variability in catches, by fishery
  - g. Catch success: catch per unit of effort, by fishery
  - h. Fishing opportunities: average annual fishing effort, by fishery
4. The Director and IATTC scientific staff shall work with the ALBWG in vetting the MSE design prior to running the simulations and encourage the ALBWG's review the results of the MSE prior to finalization.
  5. The IATTC scientific staff shall present the results of the MSE at the 2015 Scientific Advisory Committee meeting. If applicable, the staff should endeavor to recommend reference points in their provision of advice on the status of North Pacific albacore and on recommendations for management measures.
  6. The Commission shall continue efforts to promote compatibility between the conservation and management measures adopted by the IATTC and the WCPFC in their goals and effectiveness with respect to North Pacific albacore.
  7. The Director shall communicate this Resolution to the WCPFC Secretariat.