

SOUTHWEST FISHERIES SCIENCE CENTER REPORT
HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES

International Scientific Committee (ISC) Update

A total of four stock assessments were scheduled by the ISC for the 2013-2014 assessment cycle: 1) north Pacific swordfish (including Eastern Pacific Ocean [EPO] stock; February 11-19, Honolulu); 2) Pacific bluefin tuna (February 17-22, La Jolla); north Pacific albacore tuna (April 14-28, La Jolla); and 4) north Pacific blue shark (June 2-9, Keelung, Taiwan). Due to the poor stock status of Pacific bluefin tuna and need for immediate management action, the ISC Plenary held an intercessional meeting (webinar) on March, 12 to review and endorse the stock assessment of Pacific bluefin tuna. For the other stocks, the ISC Plenary will review the stock assessments during the upcoming ISC Plenary meeting during July 16-21 in Taipei. The Southwest Fisheries Science Center is the U.S. lead for Pacific bluefin tuna, north Pacific albacore and north Pacific blue shark. The PIFSC is the U.S. lead for billfish.

Pacific Bluefin Tuna Update

An update stock assessment was conducted by the ISC PBFWG in La Jolla during February 17-22, 2014 and the ISC Plenary reviewed and endorsed the assessment during an intercessional meeting (webinar) on March, 12. Stock assessment report is available at (http://isc.ac.affrc.go.jp/reports/stock_assessments.html) Results were highly similar to the previous full assessment in 2012. In summary, based on reference point ratios, overfishing is occurring and the stock is overfished. The current F (average 2009-2011) exceeds all target and limit biological reference points (BRPs) commonly used by fisheries managers except for F_{loss} . For example, $F_{2009-11}/F_{20\%} = 1.90$. The ratio of SSB in 2012 relative to unfished SSB (depletion ratio) is also low (4.2% of virgin SSB).

In addition, the PBFWG examined future projection scenarios requested by the WCPFC NC. The results of the future projections suggest that "unless the historical average level (1952-2011) of recruitment is realized, increase of SSB cannot be expected under the current WCPFC and IATTC conservation and management measures, even under full implementation (Scenario 1), and "no scenario except for Scenario 6¹, the strictest one, demonstrates increase of SSB assuming the current low recruitment continues. Given the result of Scenario 6, further substantial reduction of fishing mortality and juvenile catch over the whole range of juvenile ages should be considered to reduce the risk of SSB falling below its historically lowest level."

¹ For the WCPO, a 50% reduction of juvenile catches from the 2002-2004 average level and F no greater than $F_{2002-2004}$. For the EPO, a 50% reduction of catches from 5,500 t.

North Pacific Albacore Tuna Update

A full stock assessment was conducted by the ISC ALBWG in La Jolla during April 14-28, 2014. The ISC Plenary will review the stock assessment during the upcoming ISC Plenary meeting during July 16-21 in Taipei. Until the ISC Plenary completes its review and endorses the results of the stock assessment, the stock assessment is considered to be preliminary. Nevertheless, the preliminary results of the assessment suggest that the north Pacific albacore stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

PFMC
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