

## HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON INITIAL SCOPING OF BIENNIAL SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) provides supplemental and revised information on the recreational fishery for bluefin tuna previously provided in the HMSMT Report under this agenda item. Information is provided on two additional topics for management measures to be potentially implemented under the biennial process:

- 1) Mr. Pete Dupuy’s request to establish a longline fishery in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) for swordfish and tuna (Supplemental Public Comments 1 and 2, Agenda Item E.4.c), and
- 2) 2) Enforcement Consultants’ request to change Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) requirements for the Drift Gillnet (DGN) fishery.

### Recreational Fishery for Bluefin Tuna

Estimates of recreational landings by the anglers on California charter vessels in Table 4 of the HMSMT Report were revised and presented in Table 1 below. The annual estimates of total landings decreased very slightly, ranging from 2 to 446 fish. In addition, the estimates are subdivided into landings from U.S. waters, Mexico waters, and U.S.-Mexico waters. The landings into California from U.S.-Mexico waters are from statistical reporting blocks that straddle the U.S.-Mexico border. In addition, the estimated annual total number of angler days targeting tuna fishing from charter vessels is provided. During 2001-2013, angler effort ranged from over 200,000 angler days during 2001 and 2002 to below 75,000 angler days during 2010 and 2011.

Table 1. Annual landings (number of fish) in California and Mexico waters and number of tuna –targeted angler days for U.S. charter vessels during 2001-2013. (Source: California Fisheries Information System (CFIS), Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel (CPFV) logbook data, extracted April 15, 2014.)

Year	Landings From U.S. waters	% From U.S.	Landings from U.S.-Mexico waters	% From U.S.-Mexico	Landings from Mexico waters	% From Mexico	Total Landings	Total Number of Tuna Angler Days
2001	3,796	17%	33	0%	18,078	83%	21,907	223,511
2002	12,266	37%	979	3%	20,153	60%	33,398	212,648
2003	2,733	12%	125	1%	19,433	87%	22,291	192,773
2004	438	13%	47	1%	2,906	86%	3,391	197,334
2005	686	12%	37	1%	5,034	87%	5,757	133,731
2006	1,271	17%	78	1%	6,124	82%	7,473	153,356
2007	185	18%	2	0%	841	82%	1,028	105,104
2008	2,800	27%	359	4%	7,028	69%	10,187	153,573
2009	2,718	22%	70	1%	9,350	77%	12,138	145,879
2010	150	2%	156	2%	8,153	96%	8,459	63,629
2011	2,305	7%	438	1%	28,751	91%	31,494	72,635
2012	5,485	14%	142	0%	34,386	86%	40,013	147,446
2013	5,419	9%	1,054	2%	56,877	89%	63,350	140,947

The bag limit analysis presented in Table 6 of the previous HMSMT Report under this agenda item is also revised as shown in Table 2 below. Based on information from 466 angler bags sampled during 2007-2013, most bluefin tuna landed, an estimated 95%, were taken in bags of 5 fish or fewer. Approximately two-thirds of bluefin landings were taken in bags of 1 or 2 fish. This analysis includes bag samples of fish from U.S. and Mexico waters, landed by anglers from charter and private vessels into California. To estimate the percentage of landings by bag size, sample records are expanded to the estimated total number of bluefin tuna landed in California based on year, month, subregion, and fishing mode strata.

Table 2. Frequency of occurrence for bluefin tuna in angler landings\* into California during 2007-2013. (Source: Recreational Fisheries Information Network (RecFIN), extracted June 21, 2014).

Bag Size	Bag Frequency in Sample	Bag Percentage of Sample	Percentage of Fish (Expanded)	Cumulative Percentage of Fish (Expanded)
0	303	63.7%	0	0
1	125	26.3%	46.0%	46.0%
2	19	4.0%	16.7%	62.7%
3	7	1.5%	16.6%	79.2%
4	9	1.9%	10.7%	90.0%
5	4	0.8%	5.0%	95.0%
6	4	0.8%	0.7%	95.6%
7	2	0.4%	2.3%	97.9%
8	1	0.2%	0.9%	98.8%
10	2	0.4%	1.2%	100.0%

\* Type A+B1 data were weighted by catch estimates: Type A are fish actually observed by the sampler and type B1 are fish reported by anglers (as distinguished from fish released alive). Limit of 10 bluefin tuna from all areas, all subregions, all fishing modes. Bag Analysis Tool: [http://www.recfin.org/data/sample\\_data/angler-bag-frequency-plots-and-size-analysis](http://www.recfin.org/data/sample_data/angler-bag-frequency-plots-and-size-analysis).

In Appendix Table 1 of the HMSMT Report, annual estimates of U.S. recreational landings in metric tons are provided for 2000-2012, as reported by the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Fishes. These estimates represent only the CPFV landings into California and do not include the comparatively minor estimated landings by anglers fishing from private vessels. Using the same estimation methods, the HMSMT, in consultation with National Marine Fisheries Service staff, provides a preliminary estimate for 2013 of 985 mt. The overall average weight of bluefin landed during 2013 was 15.5 kg, based on Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) sampling data from 2011.

Estimates of U.S. recreational landings by weight are based on CPFV logbook numbers of bluefin landed into California, and fish size information from IATTC sampling data<sup>1</sup>. IATTC sampling. Estimates of recreational landings from U.S. waters are also available from RecFIN, although these estimates do not include landings of fish caught in Mexico and landed in California. Juvenile bluefin comprise the majority of recreational catch.

<sup>1</sup> United States Catch Time Series for Pacific Bluefin Tuna in the North Pacific Ocean, A.L. Coan, Jr., and J.F. Childers, Dec. 2007. A Working document submitted to the sixth meeting of the Pacific Bluefin Tuna Working Group of the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC), 11-19 December 2007, Shimizu, Japan. Document not to be cited without author's permission.

The HMSMT notes the following important data limitations regarding the information presented to characterize the U.S. recreational fishery for bluefin tuna:

- a. RecFIN estimates of recreational landings by anglers fishing in Mexico from private boats and returning to land in California are not available.
- b. Estimates of recreational landings by anglers fishing and landing in Mexico are not available.
- c. IATTC sampling for size of bluefin tuna was discontinued in 2011. IATTC sampling was limited in geographic coverage and time of day, and this may result in a bias toward sampling long-range trips with larger average sizes of tuna.
- d. California Department of Fish and Wildlife CRFS sampling is also limited, and may result in a bias toward sampling short-range trips.

#### Vessel Monitoring System

A member of the HMSMT was briefed by the Enforcement Consultants (EC) with regard to their recommendation on ping rates for VMS on HMS vessels for DGN vessels. The HMSMT notes that if VMS is addressed under the biennial process, it could not be implemented in time for the upcoming DGN season.

#### Longline Fishery Establishment

Referring to supplemental public comment 2, submitted by Pete Dupuy, dated June 9, 2014, the HMSMT understands Mr Dupuy's request as a petition to the Council allowing him a shallow/deep set commercial pelagic longline fishing permit for all waters under the jurisdiction of the Council HMS Fishery Management Plan (FMP). As noted in the Situation Summary, as part of the biennial process, the Council could consider regulatory changes that would allow a shallow-set longline fishery to operate. Implementation of limited entry programs and allowing a longline fishery in the EEZ (other than through approved activities under an EFP) are identified as fixed elements of the HMS FMP that can only be changed through an FMP amendment (FMP Section 2.4). Therefore, the Council would also have to amend the FMP if it wanted to establish a limited entry permit for this activity and/or change the current prohibition on using the gear in the EEZ.

The HMSMT would like to bring to the Council's attention information from the April 2007 Council meeting where the Council recommended NMFS issue an exempted fishing permit (EFP) to allow a single vessel to fish in the West Coast exclusive economic zone targeting swordfish in 2007 (<http://www.pcouncil.org/bb/2007/0407/J1.pdf> and <http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/0407decisions.pdf>). The EFP applicant was Mr. Dupuy. The purpose of the EFP was to gather preliminary information to help determine whether longline fishing could be an economically viable alternative to the current drift gillnet fishery with less environmental impact. NMFS and Council staff, with assistance from the HMSMT, prepared a draft EA to support the Council's final decision. In the end the applicant withdrew his EFP application.

With regard to Mr. Dupuy's proposal to finalize the HMS FMP to permit longline fishing on the high seas, the HMSMT sees the consideration of this action complementary to efforts already underway regarding the potential DGN transition and should be part of the suite of options considered for a viable swordfish fishery. The Council may want to consider tasking the HMSMT with updating the analysis performed in 2009 that would have amended the HMS FMP to permit shallow-set longlining on the high seas. The HMSMT acknowledges that the

discussions regarding amending the HMS FMP at the April 2009 meeting were unfavorable <http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/0409decisions.pdf> however; an updated analysis could inform future discussions related to DGN transitioning. Finally, amending the FMP to permit shallow-set longlining on the high seas would level the playing field given that Hawaii fishermen are permitted to shallow-set longline in the same area that Mr. Dupuy is not.

### **HMSMT recommendations**

In conclusion, the HMSMT provides the following recommendations and seeks guidance on the range of alternatives for analysis of topics the Council approves for further consideration of management measures:

- a. Harmonize recreational bag and possession limits for bluefin tuna with Mexico.
- b. For conservation purposes, the Council should evaluate more restrictive bluefin tuna bag limits (i.e. less than 5 fish/day). An analysis of conservation benefits to the stock relative to the economic costs to the recreational fishery should be included.
- c. The HMSMT notes that typical types of management measures for recreational fisheries may include limitations on bag size, fish size, times, areas, or gears.
- d. Encourage increased sampling of bluefin tuna recreational fisheries by their respective management bodies, especially to obtain representative fish size information.
- e. Consider amending the FMP to authorize a shallow-set longline fishery for swordfish on the high seas.

PFMC  
06/22/14