CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON PRELIMINARY 2014 COMMERCIAL BLUEFIN TUNA CATCH INFORMATION

In response to the 500 MT commercial limit of Pacific Bluefin Tuna (PBF) established by the IATTC for any cooperating nation with vessels fishing in the convention area, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has provided preliminary California commercial catch information to both the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). As of August 18, 2014, CDFW estimates that approximately 251 MT of PBF has been taken by California vessels; more than any year since 2009. The majority of the catch to date was made in five landings ranging in volume from 25-50 MT, taken with purse seine gear during a single week in mid-August in waters off Southern California.

CDFW does not actively monitor commercial catches of HMS inseason due to a lack of resources. However, staff provide monthly updates to both IATTC and NMFS on commercial PBF landings. Prior to July, commercial landings of PBF tallied just over 2 MT, the majority being landed in January. CDFW has continued to maintain frequent communications with both IATTC and NMFS on California's commercial catches during July and August as we become aware of them. CDFW was alerted to the catches in mid-August as a result of CDFW's dockside monitoring of commercial CPS and squid fisheries in San Pedro and Terminal Island. However, there are several large dealers who have purchased HMS species in the recent past – particularly in San Diego – who do not purchase CPS, and therefore are not included in CDFW's dockside monitoring programs. CDFW would not likely have awareness of these landings until the landing receipts are submitted.

State law requires landing receipts to be submitted twice monthly to CDFW, and the QA/QC and data entry process usually takes about six weeks before fish tickets enter the system.

True inseason monitoring and catch tracking programs, such as those for coastal pelagic species, salmon, and groundfish, require dedication of personnel and resources.