

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE REPORT

Regulatory Update

Reopen Pacific Bluefin Tuna (PBF) Commercial Fishery

Based on a recommendation from the Pacific Council at its September 2014 meeting, NMFS is proposing to reopen the U.S. commercial PBF fishery and, as an emergency action, impose a 1 metric ton (mt) trip limit for PBF. The fishery with a trip limit would remain open until the 500 mt catch limit, established under Resolution C-13-02 of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, is reached. This action would be effective through December 31, 2014, in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO). This vacates the closure made by NMFS on September 5, 2014, because updated information indicates that only 404 mt of the 500 mt catch limit was taken and that, based on preliminary data, the fishery was closed prematurely.

Bigeye Tuna Closure

The most recent catch and landings data available indicate that the 2014 catch limit of 500 mt is expected to be reached; therefore, NMFS is closing the U.S. pelagic longline fishery for bigeye tuna to vessels over 24 meters in overall length in the EPO. This closure will be effective on October 31, 2014, and remain in effect through December 31, 2014. This action is necessary to prevent the fishery from exceeding the applicable catch limit established by Resolution C-13-01 of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, which governs tropical tuna conservation and management in the EPO from 2014-2016. For more information on this rulemaking, please see the final rule: <http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/publications/frn/2014/79fr19487.pdf>.

Final Rulemaking for Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and Pre-trip Notification (PTN)

The public comment period for the proposed rule (79 FR 54950, September 15, 2014) to implement mandatory VMS and PTN requirements for swordfish/thresher shark large-mesh drift gillnet vessels closed on September 30, 2014. Three public comments were received and will be addressed in the final rule. NMFS is in the process of preparing the final rulemaking package which is expected to be completed by mid-November. The rule is expected to be effective immediately upon publishing in the Federal Register.

Pacific Bluefin Tuna Petition

NMFS received over 400 comments on the Center for Biological Diversity's (CBD) petition. NMFS will consider these public comments and recommendations received in determining whether to proceed with the development of the regulations requested by the CBD. A decision is expected before the end of the year.