

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

Allocation of Commercial Catch Limit for Pacific Bluefin Tuna in 2015-2016 established by Resolution C-14-06

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) was informed that National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) will commence rulemaking under the Tuna Conventions Act to implement the provisions of Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) Resolution C-14-06, Measures for the Conservation and Management of Pacific Bluefin Tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, 2015-2016. This includes catch limits for Pacific bluefin for commercial fisheries, The Bluefin commercial catch allocation for 2015-16 international agreement was set for a U.S. quota at 600 metric tons for the next two years.

The HMS Advisory Subpanel proposes the following allocation per year for NMFS to consider in developing the proposed rule:

- The targeted catch for all HMS fisheries should be set at 250 metric tons, with a catch limit of 20 tons per trip delivery.
- After the 250 metric tons is met, the incidental catch for all HMS fisheries should be set at 50 metric tons with a trip limit of 2 tons per trip delivery.
- If in the first year three hundred tons of bluefin harvest are not achieved, the rollover balance will be allocated to an addition of the 250 ton targeted catch.

IATTC October 26-28, 2014 - 87th Meeting (Resumed)

The HMSAS is very disappointed that the U.S. government negotiated a 43 percent cut in the U.S. annual quota for bluefin. It is assumed that the petition filed by the Biological Center for Diversity and potential litigation drove the Commerce Department to ignore the HMSAS advice to the Council. The September advice was that the problem with the resource was created by decades of Japan's overfishing 0-1 age bluefin. Since Japan was responsible for creating the problem the U.S. commercial quota should not be reduced. The HMSAS was heartened by the report that the U.S. worked closely with Mexico to negotiate an agreement with Japan. The HMSAS continues to believe that the impact of the U.S. commercial fishery and U.S. recreational fisheries have such a miniscule effect on the bluefin stocks that neither should be reduced from current levels.

*It should be noted that despite Japan's claim that it does not have sport fishing for bluefin, multiple websites on the internet advertise Japanese sport fishing, including for bluefin. It should also be noted that Mexico and the U.S. now have a quota in the IATTC, and there is **no set quota** for Japan or the Asian countries. They are just supposed to keep the total fishing effort by their vessels below 2002-2004 levels.*

Eleventh Regular Session of the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)

The HMSAS thinks that the most important issue for West Coast albacore harvesters at the annual meeting is the Forum Fishery Agency (FFA) proposal (WCPFC-11-2014-DPO5, 3 November 2014) to ban all high seas fishing for South Pacific Albacore by longline and troll gear, or to set a total allowable catch (TAC) for each country's fleet on the high seas areas of the Treaty Area. This would eliminate or unfairly curtail the U.S. South Pacific albacore troll fishery.

1. The HMSAS requests that the Council advise the U.S. Delegation to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) that there is no scientific information to support the assertion that the troll fishery has any impact on the resource. Quite the opposite. A scientific paper (WCPFC-9-2012-IP11, 14 November 2012, "Projection Analysis of Alternative Management Options for South Pacific Albacore") clearly states that the troll fishery has no impact on the resource.
2. The Council should also advise the U.S. Delegation to the WCFPC that any curtailment of the U.S. South Pacific troll fishery should be based on the best available science and otherwise is non-negotiable.

If the U.S. Delegation were to take this position, it could avoid the type of bargaining which reduced the Bluefin commercial quota for the U.S. at the IATTC meeting in October 2014.

It is possible that there may be some unofficial discussion of the Northern Committee's work plan and the Precautionary Framework for North Pacific Albacore, as well as the scheduled International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) workshop for April 2015 on Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) around the margins of the meeting.

3. The HMSAS asks the Council to emphasize that whatever the discussions are concerning suggested target reference points and harvest control rules, the goal is to have uniformity across the North Pacific and compatibility between the WCPFC and the IATTC findings as guided by the ISC.
4. The HMSAS suggests that the Council, at their March 2015 meeting, consider appointing an economist from the HMSMT to attend the ISC April 2015 workshop on MSE.

PFMC
11/17/14