

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Outcomes of the Tenth Regular Session of the Western and Central Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)

The WCPFC held its Tenth Regular Session December 2-6 in Cairns, Australia and adopted 10 conservation and management measures (CMM). CMM 2013-01, for Bigeye, Yellowfin, and Skipjack in the Western Pacific Ocean, and CMM 2013-09, for Pacific Bluefin Tuna, are of particular interest to the Council.

Bigeye tuna has been subject to persistent overfishing in the Western Pacific and may be overfished. Yellowfin tuna is fully exploited. CMM 2013-01 is a three-year measure through the end of 2017. Because purse seine fleets using fish aggregating devices (FADs) tend to catch more juvenile fish, contributing to overfishing, CMM 2013-01 imposes limits on the number of sets that may be made on FADs along with general effort controls on purse seine vessels. Catch limits are established for longline fisheries. All of these measures represent reductions from limits in the previous three-year measure (CMM 2008-01) and its extension (CMM 2011-01) and one-year replacement (CMM 2012-01). CMM 2013-01 also introduces elements to control capacity in the purse seine fleets. CMM 2013-01 is complicated and gives members latitude in how to implement limits on various fisheries. For that reason, there is concern about whether it will be effective in ending overfishing on bigeye tuna.

CMM 2013-09 builds on previous measures for Pacific bluefin tuna with language that more clearly defines mortality limits, especially for juvenile fish. It also removes the exemptions for Korean fisheries and the Japanese artisanal fishery that were in previous measures.

The full text of these measures and the meeting report may be obtained from the WCPFC website at <http://www.wcpfc.int/>. A January 2, 2014 letter from National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Pacific Islands Regional Director Michael Tosatto to Council Chair Dorothy Lowman (Agenda Item K.3.a, Attachment 1) summarizes the key measures adopted at the Tenth Regular Session.

International Precautionary Management Framework for North Pacific Albacore

In 2011, the WCPFC Northern Committee adopted into its work plan the development of a precautionary management framework for North Pacific albacore culminating in revisions to the current conservation and management measure, CMM 2005-03. The Council has been briefed on the development of the management framework at previous meetings (see materials from the June meetings in 2012 and 2013). In June 2013, the Council directed staff to consolidate information in Highly Migratory Species Management Team and Scientific and Statistical Committee reports provided on this topic and advance precautionary management concepts to the U.S. delegation to the September 2013 Northern Committee meeting. As one matter of emphasis, the Council recommended that the management framework should adopt Spawner-per-Recruit-based reference points and a linear precautionary reduction in fishing mortality based on stock status. Council Executive Director Dr. Donald McIsaac sent a letter to the U.S.

delegation that included the consolidated report and a conceptual structure for a management framework (Agenda Item K.3.a, Attachment 2). Based in part on these recommendations, the U.S. delegation developed a proposal that was distributed at the Northern Committee meeting and subsequently included in the meeting report (Agenda Item K.3.a, Attachment 3). While there was no floor consideration of this matter at the WCPFC annual meeting, there were discussions about the need for intercessional work prior to the 2014 Northern Committee meeting.

This year, the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) is conducting a new stock assessment on North Pacific Albacore. The Albacore Working Group will meet April 14-28 in Chinese Taipei to complete the assessment. The assessment will be adopted along with any conservation recommendations at the ISC Plenary, July 16-21. Under this agenda item, the NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center will report to the Council on these and other ISC stock assessment activities.

The Northern Committee will consider the assessment results, conservation reservations, and further development of the precautionary management framework at their next meeting in September 2014. The Northern Committee could also propose revisions to the CMM 2005-03, which would then be submitted for adoption at the Eleventh Regular Session of the Commission in December 2014.

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission will hold its 87th meeting July 14-18, 2014, in Lima, Peru. Although this overlaps with the ISC Plenary when the North Pacific albacore stock assessment is formally adopted, the results are likely to be known and could play a role in any action taken by the IATTC on North Pacific albacore management.

Furthermore, at the 85th IATTC meeting, June 10-14, 2013, Resolution C-13-03, Supplemental Resolution on North Pacific Albacore, was adopted (supplementing Resolution C-05-02 on North Pacific albacore). Among other things, it states that:

- “The IATTC scientific staff shall review work undertaken within the ISC and the WCPFC towards the development of a precautionary approach framework for North Pacific albacore that includes target and limit reference points and harvest control rules and make recommendations in respect of such a framework for consideration by the Commission.”
- “The Commission shall continue efforts to promote compatibility between the conservation and management measures adopted by the IATTC and the WCPFC in their goals and effectiveness with respect to North Pacific albacore.”

Therefore, the precautionary management framework currently under developed in the Northern Committee forum could influence similar efforts by the IATTC. Since the IATTC Convention Area covers the Eastern Pacific including the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone, any such action would more directly affect management of the west coast albacore fishery. An early indication of action in the IATTC forum is likely to emerge at the next Scientific Advisory Committee meeting, May 12-16, 2014, in La Jolla, California.

Council Action:

Provide Guidance for the Development of the Precautionary Framework for the North Pacific Albacore Tuna Management, Including Biological Reference Points and Decision Rules

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item K.3.a, Attachment 1: Summary of CMMs adopted by the WCPFC.
2. Agenda Item K.3.a, Attachment 2: Letter from Dr. Donald McIsaac to Mr. Michael Tosatto, Council recommendations to the U.S. Delegation to the Ninth Meeting of the Northern Committee.
3. Agenda Item K.3.a, Attachment 3: Precautionary Management Framework for North Pacific Albacore (USA Concept paper), Attachment G to the Summary Report of the Ninth Regular Session of the Northern Committee.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview Kit Dahl
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Provide Guidance for the Development of the Precautionary Framework for the North Pacific Albacore Tuna Management, Including Biological Reference Points and Decision Rules

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