

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON RECOMMENDATIONS
TO INTERNATIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) discussed recommendations that the Council might consider making to the U.S. delegation to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC). The HMSMT reviewed the IATTC and International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) stock assessments that have been completed since the June 2010 Council meeting as well as the conservation recommendations that were presented by the IATTC Secretariat at the 1st Meeting of the IATTC Scientific Advisory Committee meeting on September 2-3, 2010 (Agenda Item K.3.a, Supplemental Attachment 5).

Bigeye and Yellowfin Tunas

The HMSMT recommends that the Council support the bigeye and yellowfin tuna conservation measures that were recommended by the IATTC Secretariat for the years 2011-2013. The recommendations include continuing the 2010 measures included in IATTC Resolution C-09-01. These measures include a 62-day purse seine closure in the IATTC Convention Area, a 30-day purse seine closure of the high seas area to the west of the Galapagos Islands, and bigeye tuna catch limits in the longline fisheries operating in the IATTC Convention Area. The results of the IATTC bigeye tuna stock assessment indicate that the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) stock of bigeye tuna has improved since the last assessment and is no longer subject to overfishing or in an overfished condition according to the IATTC. The results of the IATTC yellowfin tuna stock assessment indicate that the EPO stock of yellowfin tuna is also not subject to overfishing or in an overfished condition according to the IATTC. Both assessments indicate that the measures in place during 2010 could be relaxed in terms of reducing the length of the purse seine closures or increasing the catch limits in the purse seine fishery; however, sensitivity analyses conducted as part of the stock assessments indicate that there is some uncertainty over the results of the stock assessments. The HMSMT, therefore, believes that retaining the 2010 measures, which are more precautionary, is warranted.

Pacific Bluefin Tuna

The HMSMT recommends that the Council support the IATTC Secretariat's recommendation that annual catches of Pacific bluefin tuna by commercial tuna vessels not exceed the average annual level of catches during 1994-2007. The HMSMT does not recommend the Council support the IATTC Secretariat's recommendation that annual fishing effort for Pacific bluefin tuna by sportfishing vessels not exceed the maximum annual level of fishing effort during 2006-2010.

Based on the results of the ISC Pacific bluefin tuna stock assessment, which indicates that the stock is subject to overfishing based on all commonly used reference points, the HMSMT believes that a reduction in fishing mortality of Pacific bluefin tuna is necessary. However, the U.S. catch of Pacific bluefin tuna is relatively insignificant in comparison to the total catch by all nations. The average U.S. catch of Pacific bluefin tuna in the EPO, including both commercial and recreational catch for the years 2004-2008, is less than one percent of the average stockwide

catch of Pacific bluefin in the North Pacific Ocean. For the same time period, the U.S. recreational fishery accounts for slightly less than half of the total U.S. catch.

The Council may want to consider either supporting the exemption of the recreational fishery from the management measures, or including the recreational fishery in the proposed commercial measure. The advantage of combining the commercial and recreational fisheries in a single measure is that it would limit annual catches and would make the baseline years more consistent.

North Pacific Albacore

In regard to North Pacific albacore and the formation of an *ad hoc* working group to develop an operational definition of the “current levels” of effort specified in IATTC Resolution C-05-02, the HMSMT recommends that the Council support U.S. participation in the working group. Rather than focus on the definition of “current effort,” the working group should focus on establishing a management framework for albacore in anticipation of the 2011 North Pacific albacore ISC stock assessment. This approach would be consistent with what the U.S. delegation supported at the WCPFC Northern Committee meetings. The Council also may want to recommend that the U.S. delegation work to ensure that there is an opportunity for the Council to have input on such a management framework.

Full Retention of Tuna Caught by Purse Seines

The HMSMT considers the IATTC Secretariat’s recommendation to renew the tuna retention requirement in the purse seine fishery a good conservation measure if uniformly implemented and enforced by all members of the IATTC.

In summary the HMSMT recommends the Council:

- Support the IATTC Secretariat’s recommendations for bigeye and yellowfin tuna management measures;
- Support the IATTC Secretariat’s recommendations for Pacific bluefin tuna management measures that would apply to the commercial fishery;
- Either exempt the recreational fishery from the Pacific bluefin tuna management measures recommended by the IATTC Secretariat, or include the recreational fishery in the IATTC Secretariat’s proposed commercial Pacific bluefin tuna measures;
- Support U.S. participation in the IATTC’s albacore working group; however, rather than focusing on the definition of “current effort,” the working group should focus on establishing a management framework for albacore in anticipation of the 2011 North Pacific albacore ISC stock assessment; and
- Support renewal of the tuna retention requirement in the purse seine fishery only if uniformly implemented and enforced by all Parties to the IATTC.

Table 1. Upcoming International HMS Meetings

Date	Meeting	Location
Sept. 17, 2010	General Advisory Committee to U.S. delegation to the IATTC meeting	La Jolla, CA
Sept. 23-Oct. 1, 2010	IATTC and AIDCP annual meetings	Antigua, Guatemala
Sept. 30-Oct. 5, 2010	WCPFC Technical and Compliance Committee	Pohnpei, Micronesia
December 6-11, 2010	WCPFC annual meeting	Honolulu, HI
March 2011	ISC albacore stock assessment	Shimizu, Japan
July 2011	ISC Plenary meeting	To be decided
May 2012	ISC bluefin tuna stock assessment	To be decided

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