

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE REPORT ON  
HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT

International Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Activities

Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) - As reported in June, the IATTC in June provisionally adopted a resolution recommending that the Parties to IATTC (and cooperating non-Parties) take action to prohibit their purse seine vessels from fishing for tuna in the convention area in the month of December 2003 and to limit their longline vessels' catches of bigeye tuna to the levels achieved in 2001. However, the Government of Ecuador subsequently reported that it could not support this action, and the IATTC scheduled an extraordinary meeting for October 5-6, 2003, to determine what (if any) restrictions to place on fisheries in 2003. At that meeting, the IATTC agreed to recommend that the Parties and cooperating non-Parties take action to prohibit purse seine fishing in a portion of the convention area to purse seine fishing in December 2003 and to prohibit purse seine fishing throughout the full convention area for a six-week period in the summer of 2004; and to limit longline catches in 2004 and 2005 to the levels reached in 2001. The Department of State has approved the IATTC recommendation, and NOAA Fisheries is promulgating the necessary 2003 regulation immediately. The 2004 closure and limits will be promulgated in early 2004.

U.S./Canada Albacore Treaty - NOAA Fisheries continues to hope that Congress will enact legislation to provide authority for regulations to implement the amended treaty in time for implementing regulations to be promulgated by June 2004. Meanwhile, NOAA Fisheries is working to identify additional options for a vessel activity monitoring/reporting program that will ensure the U.S. has good records for carrying out the reciprocal fishing limits. Informal talks with industry will occur in the next few weeks, and a meeting with Canadian officials and industry will be planned for January 2004 to explore fully the most cost-effective system that could go into effect in June 2004. It will likely involve a combination of an automated telephone declaration system and direct phone-in system to track vessels crossing the U.S./Canada border, but with several options for reaching the phone stations. Further progress will be reported to the Council in March 2004.

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