

## **SWR INFORMATIONAL REPORT: INTERNATIONAL HMS ACTIVITIES**

### **Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)**

The IATTC (with working groups) is scheduled to meet June 14-18, 2004, in Lima, Peru. A draft agenda was recently published on the IATTC Web Site ([iattc.org](http://iattc.org)) and includes discussion of fleet capacity, bycatch, conservation measures, and finance issues. The General Advisory Committee recently established to provide advice to the U.S. Commissioners and Department of State will meet May 17, 2004, in Long Beach to help prepare U.S. positions for the meeting.

### **U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty**

Congress last week enacted legislation authorizing the Secretary of Commerce, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, to implement such regulations as are necessary for the U.S. to meet its obligations under the Treaty. NMFS is evaluating the potential to complete rulemaking in time for implementing the reciprocal fishing limits June 1, 2004 (the original target date had been June 1, 2003, but legislative authority did not exist at that time). A decision on this matter will be made by the end of this week.

A consultation on the Treaty is scheduled for April 14, 2004, in Vancouver, Canada. This will be useful even if NMFS concludes that regulations cannot be implemented by June 1, 2004, as it will provide a final chance to agree on the reporting system to be used (and possibly refined by testing in 2004) when the reciprocal limits are implemented. U.S. and Canadian industry will be represented at this consultation, at which fisheries data also will be exchanged consistent with the Treaty.

## **SWR INFORMATIONAL REPORT - DOMESTIC HMS ACTIVITIES**

The final rule to implement approved provisions of the Council's Fishery Management Plan for U.S. West Coast Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species (FMP) has been filed with the Federal Register and will publish April 7, 2004. It should be noted that permit, reporting and vessel identification requirements will not go into effect until the Office of Management and Budget has approved the Paperwork Reduction Act requests; this is anticipated in 60 days or less. However, NMFS is working to establish vessel owner lists so that application forms (partly filled in, in most cases) can be sent to persons known to have landed HMS in recent years. This is intended to simplify the permit process for the fishermen. The final rule will implement the Council's prohibition of shallow swordfish sets on the high seas west of 150° W. longitude. Meanwhile, the NMFS companion rule under the authority of the ESA to prohibit shallow sets targeting swordfish east of 150° W. longitude will be effective April 12, 2004, and will stay in effect until the FMP can be amended to ensure that the fisheries would not jeopardize the continued existence of any species of sea turtle

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council's proposed regulatory amendment under its

fishery management plan for pelagic fisheries that would effectively reopened the swordfish fishery operating out of Hawaii was approved. The Council briefing book includes a detailed list of provisions in that program, which includes a fleet effort limit, transferable vessel effort limits, a requirement to use circle hooks and mackerel bait, fixed limits on sea turtle interactions, and 100% observer coverage. The section 7 consultation under the ESA concluded that the fisheries as they would be expected to operate under this new management program would not jeopardize the continued existence of any listed species. The results of that consultation will be made available to the Pacific Council. It should be noted that the Western Pacific Council proposal eliminates the requirement to register a vessel for use with a longline limited entry permit by the end of October of one year in order to use the vessel in the fishery the next year. This means that many of the owners of the vessels now used out of the West Coast can re-register their vessels in Hawaii when the ESA rule goes into effect and can then fish under the effort limitation program that was approved.