

BIGEYE TUNA OVERFISHING RESPONSE

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) notified the Council that it must take action to address overfishing of bigeye tuna by June 14, 2005. A similar notification was given to the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WPFMC). At the June 2005 meeting, the Council moved to begin work on an amendment to the fishery management plan (FMP) for U.S. West Coast Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species (HMS) as the proper response to address this issue. NMFS Southwest Region agreed to take lead responsibility on developing the amendment package for Council consideration.

The HMS Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report, available at this Council meeting, includes new information indicating that the Eastern Pacific Ocean bigeye tuna stock is apparently overfished (i.e., the stock biomass is below the minimum stock size threshold). The December 15, 2004, letter notifying the Council that overfishing is occurring states that “the stock structure of bigeye tuna in the Pacific Ocean is unresolved.” It based the determination on two stock assessments, one treating bigeye as a single Pacific-wide stock and the other, conducted by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, for the Eastern Pacific only. A reevaluation of this question could lead to a reconsideration of stock status in the Eastern Pacific. If declared overfished, the Council would be required to prepare a rebuilding plan.

At this meeting NMFS will provide a preliminary range of alternatives for the Council to consider to address overfishing of bigeye tuna. These alternatives form the basis for the development of an FMP amendment.

Council Task:

Review the range of alternatives presented by NMFS, identify modifications to the range of alternatives or propose new alternatives, and adopt the resulting range of alternatives for public review.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item J.5.b, Attachment 1: Draft Amendment 1 to the U.S. West Coast Fisheries For Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan to Stop Overfishing in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. NMFS Report
- c. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- d. Public Comment
- e. **Council Action:** Adopt Public Review Draft FMP Amendment Alternatives Responding to Overfishing of Bigeye Tuna

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