

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
SOUTHWEST REGION
HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES
ACTIVITY REPORT

Closure - U.S. Longline Fishery for Bigeye Tuna

On July 6, 2006, NMFS closed the U.S. longline fishery for bigeye tuna in the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) Convention Area for the remainder of 2006. This closure was necessary because catch levels for bigeye tuna in the Convention Area reached the 150 metric ton limit for 2006 [Federal Register: July 6, 2006 (Volume 71, Number 129)] as agreed upon in the 2004 – 2006 Tuna Conservation Resolution.

US-Canada Albacore Treaty Vessel List

NMFS published a Federal Register Notice [Federal Register: August 18, 2006 (Volume 71, Number 160)] that clarifies NMFS' original intention that the vessel owners intending to fish for albacore in Canadian waters notify NMFS each year to be placed on the "vessel list" that remains valid for a single calendar year. The vessel list then reverts to zero vessels on December 31 of each year. Revising the way the list is created and updating the list every year is intended to facilitate the United States' obligation to annually provide Canada a current list of U.S. vessels that are likely to fish albacore off the coast of Canada. NMFS is undertaking rulemaking to clarify the requirements in 50 CFR 300.172.

Drift Gillnet EFP

The timeline for finalizing the documentation for the DGN EFP will be approximately mid-September. NMFS Protected Resources Division (PRD) staff are in the final stages of completing the Section 7 Biological Opinion and NMFS PRD staff anticipate completing the required MMPA 105(a)(5)(e) permits for marine mammals around mid-September. Once all the necessary documentation has been completed, NMFS will make a final decision on whether to approve or disapprove the EFP application.

New HMS Listserve

NMFS SWR announced the availability of a new Highly Migratory Species (HMS) listserv called West Coast HMS Listserv. Subscriber to the listserv will receive NMFS generated notices via email that announce issues important to fishermen who fish highly migratory species in the Pacific Ocean. This listserv is open to the public, but is not intended to be used for discussion purposes, rather for public announcements. To join please send an email request to Join-NMFS.WestCoastFisheries-HMS@noaa.gov.

Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission's 74th Annual Meeting

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) held its 74th annual meeting, June 26-30, 2006, in Busan, Korea. Subsidiary meetings conducted included the Joint Working Group on

Fishing by Non-Parties, the Permanent Working Group on Compliance, and the Working Group on Finance. (Current IATTC resolutions may be found on the Commission's website at: www.iattc.org.) Dr. Robin Allen, IATTC Executive Secretariat, announced his retirement effective September 1, 2007.

Resolutions Adopted at the June 2006 IATTC Meeting:

- Tuna Conservation Measures for 2007 - extension of program past the current 2006 recommendations. This measure mimics the current Resolution for Tuna Conservation Measures with the change of annual longline catch of bigeye tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean during 2007 not to exceed 500 metric tons or their national 2001 catch level, whichever is higher. This change provides the increased flexibility that the U.S. sought for managing the U.S. longline fleet.
- Consolidated Resolution on Bycatch – extends the requirements of the current Resolution until January 2008. The Resolution requires full retention of juvenile tunas and non-target species of fish, and provides for a review of compliance on the full retention measure (by flag state or entity) to take place in the Permanent Working Group on Compliance in 2007.
- Transshipments – a Resolution on the regulation of transshipments on the high seas was adopted, similar to measures adopted in ICCAT and IOTC. A cornerstone of this Resolution is the establishment of an observer program from vessels receiving transshipments of tuna and tuna like species. This Resolution limits transshipment on the high seas. This Resolution does not apply to troll vessels, pole-and-line vessels, or vessels engaged in the transshipment of fresh fish at sea.

Other Recommendations and Accomplishments

- A list of cooperating parties was adopted. Cooperating parties must request to be listed as a cooperating party annually. For 2006, the cooperating parties are Belize, Canada, China, Cook Islands, the European Union, Honduras, and Chinese Taipei (Taiwan).
- Next meeting dates – 18-29 June 2007. Place has not been determined. However, Panama and Mexico were put forward as possible venues.

NOTE:

- 2005 Resolution regarding Northern Albacore Tuna – this Resolution was not brought forward for further discussion, clarification, or additions. This Resolution requires that the total level of fishing effort for North Pacific albacore tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean not be increased beyond current levels.