

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
ALBACORE FISHING EFFORT CHARACTERIZATION

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) discussed the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) document “Estimating recent effort for the U.S. fisheries landing albacore,” agenda item J.3.b, and the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) report, agenda item J.3.c. The requirement was to demonstrate that U.S. fishing effort for albacore tuna is not increasing. Neither method was satisfactory to the SSC. The SSC considers that, for this application, effort is being used as a surrogate for fishing mortality.

The HMSAS proposal provides a raw measure of effort that could not be used to demonstrate trends in fishing mortality.

Problems with the HMSMT document are more complex. The HMSMT attempted to account for all U.S. effort from nine separate fisheries. The single fishery with the most landings (79.1%) was the Troll/Baitboat fishery. This was used as the standard of comparison for other fisheries. For fisheries with effort data, effort was scaled based on the ratio of catch per unit of effort (CPUE). Fisheries without effort data were assumed to have CPUE equivalent to the Troll/Baitboat fishery. Effort was then summed across all fisheries. The major problem with this approach is the difficulty of comparing CPUE across widely differing fisheries especially in light of the high year-to-year variability in the CPUE data.

The SSC suggests an alternative procedure. First, fishing mortality for the U.S. fisheries (U.S. partial F) should be partitioned out of the overall international fishery mortality. If the U.S. partial F is stable or decreasing then the criterion of no increasing fishing mortality is satisfied. If the U.S. partial F is increasing, the segment of the fishery that is responsible can be identified by analyzing trends in fishing mortality by gear type.

PFMC
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