

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON YELLOWFIN
TUNA OVERFISHING

In September 2007, the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) reported its preliminary recommendations on potential management measures to address yellowfin tuna overfishing (attached Agenda Item C.3.b. HMSMT Report).

For domestic regulations, the HMSMT continues to recommend that new management measures are not needed. As the HMSMT reported in September 2007, current measures included in the HMS fishery management plan are adequate to address the very low impact of U.S. fisheries on the stock.

For international fisheries, the HMSMT had indicated that it would incorporate relevant outcomes from upcoming Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) meetings in its recommendations for Council consideration in March 2008. The IATTC met last October to consider yellowfin and bigeye tuna conservation measures for 2008, but failed to adopt any. Measures adopted for 2007 expired at the end of the year, and therefore, no conservation measures are currently in place for bigeye and yellowfin tuna. In early March 2008, the IATTC again considered conservation measures, including new proposals developed by the IATTC staff and country delegations (Agenda Item C.2.a, Attachment 1). These proposals included time-area closures for the purse seine fishery and total allowable catch (TAC) limits for the longline fishery for 2008 through 2010. As in October, the IATTC again did not reach consensus and no conservation measures were adopted. The HMSMT endorses the full suite of conservation measures recommended in the March IATTC proposal.

Based on the outcomes of recent IATTC meetings, combined with reports that yellowfin tuna stocks continue to decline and fishing effort has increased to extremely high levels, the HMSMT recommends the Council strongly support adoption at the earliest possible date and full implementation of recommended conservation measures for international fisheries.

The team had considerable discussion on the proper scope of the “international actions” asked for by section 304(i)(2)(B) and concluded that the paragraph asks the Council to consider the international fishery as a whole and to recommend conservation and management measures needed to end overfishing. The team thought that conservation and management measures should be discussed without regard to how they would be implemented in the international arena. With that understanding, the challenge of implementing regulations within the IATTC forum is the real hurdle to ending overfishing on the yellowfin stock.

Council Action:

The HMSMT reiterates its specific recommendations outlined in its September 2007 report to the Council. In particular, the HMSMT recommends four critical actions to end overfishing and rebuild the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) yellowfin tuna stocks:

- 1. Reduce capacity in the purse seine fishery, consistent with IATTC resolutions C-00-10 and C-02-03 to control total fishing capacity.**

- 2. Design and implement an IATTC program to collect information on fish aggregating devices (FADs) and assess their impacts on target stocks, especially juvenile tunas.**
- 3. Set appropriate TAC limits for the purse seine fishery in the EPO, consistent with IATTC staff recommendations. In June 2007, an adjustable TAC of 200,000 mt was recommended.**
- 4. Implement time-area closures consistent with IATTC staff recommendations to reduce fishing mortality on yellowfin tuna stocks.**

3/9/08
PFMC