

PFMC April 2008 Briefing Book Submission

The Antigua Convention

Background

In 2003, the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) adopted a resolution that approved the Antigua Convention, a major revision of the original 1949 convention establishing the IATTC. This new text brings the convention current with respect to internationally accepted norms for the conservation and management of living marine resources, in particular for management of highly migratory species and for taking an ecosystem-based approach to management in the Pacific Ocean. Specifically, the Antigua Convention revises the 1949 IATTC Convention to: reflect current IATTC practices; incorporate important changes in international law (United Nations Highly Migratory Fish Stocks Agreement); and provides for the full participation of non-state entities (European Community, Taiwan). The Antigua Convention expands the jurisdiction of the 1949 Convention Area to include the waters of the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean (EPO) bounded by the coast of the Americas, the 50° N. and 50° S. parallels, and the 150° W. meridian. The Antigua Convention shall enter into force and effectiveness fifteen months after the deposit of the seventh instrument of ratification or accession of the Parties to the 1949 Convention establishing the IATTC. Thus far, eleven Parties to the 1949 Convention have signed the Antigua Convention and five have deposited their instrument of ratification or accession with the depository (the United States). To date (March 2008), the United States has not ratified the Antigua Convention, though it has received Senate advice and consent to ratification. The next step is signature of the instrument of ratification by the President.

Pending Implementing Legislation for the Antigua Convention: In 2006 and 2007, the Administration, through the Department of State, forwarded the draft implementing legislation to Congress, but that legislation has not been acted upon. The Hill has heard from the Administration that ratification is a high priority. Both NOAA and State have been contacted by Congressional staff regarding legislative priorities for 2008, and the Antigua Convention was identified as a top priority on our list. Congressional inquiries continue, but there is no indication as to when a Bill might be introduced.