

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS TO INTERNATIONAL REGIONAL FISHERY
MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS (RFMO)

The Northern Committee is a subsidiary body of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), responsible for making recommendations for Highly Migratory Species (HMS) stocks occurring principally north of 20° N latitude. Currently this body has identified as their responsibility the North Pacific stocks of albacore tuna, bluefin tuna, and swordfish. The Northern Committee may request scientific information and advice regarding these fish stocks from the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species (ISC). In addition, information on stock status presented by the WCPFC Scientific Committee may be relevant. The 5th Regular Session of the Scientific Committee is scheduled for August 10-21, 2009 in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

The Northern Committee will hold its 5th Regular Session, September 7-10, 2009 in Nagasaki, Japan. Any conservation recommendations they make are presented to the 6th Regular Session of the WCPFC, to be held December 7-11, 2009 in Papeete, Tahiti. Because the next Northern Committee meeting occurs the week before the Council's September meeting, the only opportunity for the Council to develop positions for consideration by the Northern Committee is at this meeting. Any such recommendations would be submitted to the U.S. delegation to the Northern Committee for presentation at the upcoming meeting.

Attachment 1 is the report of the Fourth Regular Session of the Northern Committee, held September 9-11, 2008.

Council Action:

1. Approve recommendations on HMS management to U.S. delegation to the Northern Committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item F.1.a, Attachment 1: Summary Report of the Fourth Regular Session of the Northern Committee, September 9-11, 2008, Tokyo, Japan (Hard copy report only, report with appendices on web and CD-ROM).

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview Kit Dahl
- b. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Approve Recommendations on Highly Migratory Species Management to the Northern Committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

PFMC
05/27/2009



**Commission for the Conservation and Management of
Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean**

**Northern Committee
Fourth Regular Session**

**Tokyo, Japan
9–11 September 2008**

SUMMARY REPORT

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**NORTHERN COMMITTEE
FOURTH REGULAR SESSION**

**Tokyo, Japan
9–11 September 2008**

SUMMARY REPORT

AGENDA ITEM 1 — OPENING OF MEETING

1. The Fourth Regular Session of the Northern Committee (NC4) took place in Tokyo, Japan from 9–11 September 2008. The meeting was attended by members from Canada, China, Cook Islands, Japan, Republic of Korea, Philippines, Chinese Taipei, United States of America (USA) and Vanuatu. The list of meeting participants including observers is included in Attachment A.

1.1 Welcome

2. Masanori Miyahara, Chair of the Northern Committee, opened the meeting and welcomed participants.

1.2 Adoption of agenda

3. The provisional agenda was adopted without any amendments (Attachment B). The documents that supported the meeting are posted on the WCPFC website.

1.3 Meeting arrangements

4. Japan, as a host, briefed the meeting arrangements.

AGENDA ITEM 2 — CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

2.1 Report from the 8th International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean

5. Gary Sakagawa, Chairman of the ISC, introduced the ISC8 report to the NC4. He summarized ISC accomplishments during the 2007–2008 year and provided a status report of stock assessment works, described the new focus for ISC's bycatch research, and provided results of analysis on the geographic center of striped marlin abundance in the North Pacific Ocean. He summarized the ISC's

conservation advice as follows:

- 1) North Pacific albacore advice from ISC7 still holds. F should not be increased from the current level ($F=0.75$, based on 2002–2004);
- 2) Current (2002–2004) F for Pacific bluefin tuna must not be increased;
- 3) Striped marlin advice from ISC7 still holds. F should be reduced from the current level (2003 or before); and
- 4) No advice for swordfish because a full stock assessment has not yet been completed.

A summary of his presentation is in Attachment C.

2.1.1 North Pacific albacore

6. Ray Conser, chair of the ISC Albacore Working Group, reported on: i) the stock status of the North Pacific albacore (NPALB); ii) the working group's current conservation advice; iii) preparations for the next stock assessment; and iv) the status of research on biological reference points. The last NPALB stock assessment was completed in December 2006, using fisheries data through 2005. This assessment was qualitatively updated in July 2008. The next full assessment is scheduled for March 2010. Progress toward completion of the next assessment is good. However, progress on biological reference points has been hampered by outdated biological information for NPALB (i.e. growth rates and maturity schedules). The working group has completed a proposal for updating the biological information that, if funded, should considerably advance the progress on biological reference points. A summary of his presentation is in Attachment D.

2.1.2 Pacific bluefin tuna

7. Yukio Takeuchi (Japan) presented the results of the Pacific bluefin tuna stock assessment conducted in 2008 and provided conservation advice for the stock. In summary, ISC highlighted the importance of not increasing fishing mortality from the current level, based on results of the stock assessment with regard to the current F relative to potential limit and target reference points. He also presented the work plan of Pacific Bluefin Tuna Working Group between now and ISC9. A summary of his presentation is in Attachment E.

2.1.3 North Pacific swordfish

8. Gary Sakagawa reported that the ISC Billfish Working Group is making progress towards completing a swordfish stock assessment in 2009.

2.1.4 North Pacific striped marlin

9. Gary Sakagawa gave an overview of stock structure and fishery information used for stock assessment of North Pacific striped marlin. No new stock assessment was conducted in 2008, so the previous conservation advice holds. He also presented the analysis of the center of distribution of the stock biomass for the central and western North Pacific Ocean. The analysis indicated that the majority (two-thirds) of the estimated biomass of striped marlin occurs north of 20°N in the western and central North Pacific Ocean. A summary of his presentation in relation to North Pacific striped marlin is in Attachment C.

2.1.5 Other issues arising from the ISC

10. Naozumi Miyabe (Japan) provided a presentation on ISC data concerns, including discussion points and decisions that took place at the 7th STATWG meeting held from 19–21 July. All members were represented at the meeting except China, the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES). The matters discussed included review of annual data submission, data flow, a review of data submission protocols, remaining data gaps, employment of permanent Database Administrator, updates of website and ISC's researcher's webpage. According to these discussions, a work plan was developed.

11. Another important subject introduced by Naozumi Miyabe was biological research needs in order to develop new estimates or updated estimates of life history parameters for the ISC assessment works. Although there is no WCPFC budget allocated to ISC activities, several proposals for biological research on albacore and billfish were developed for discussion. In relation to this, ISC has organized a task force to consider designing a multispecies and large-scale biological sampling programme for both age and growth, and maturity studies. A summary of his presentation is in Attachment F.

2.2 Report of the Fourth Regular Session of the Scientific Committee (SC4), 11–22 August 2008, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

12. The WCPFC Science Manager, SungKwon Soh, presented a summary report on the outcomes of SC4 in relation to the work of the NC. Four new stock assessments were conducted in 2008 for bigeye tuna, skipjack, South Pacific albacore, and swordfish in the southwest and south-central Pacific. The ISC provided the requested scientific information in relation to an assessment of the geographic center of stock abundance for striped marlin, and the status and conservation advice of the three northern stocks. Several recommendations and findings on various issues related to bycatch mitigation and data gaps were prepared for WCPFC5. One research project to investigate mitigation methods for North Pacific striped marlin was newly included into the 2009 work programme and given a high priority. A summary of presentation is in Attachment G.

2.3 Conservation and management measures for the northern stocks

2.3.1 Northern Pacific bluefin tuna

13. NC4 discussed a draft conservation and management measure (CMM) for Northern Pacific bluefin tuna provided by Japan. The chair invited members to participate in an informal discussion of the draft CMM because there were several concerns on the draft in terms of wording among members. After the informal discussion, the NC reached an agreement on the amended draft CMM with reservation of one member (Attachment H). The member made a statement on this matter (Attachment I). While the reservation is expected to be lifted in time for the Commission meeting in December, the NC may call a brief meeting, if necessary, in the margins of the Commission meeting to resolve the reservation. With this understanding, NC4 recommends that the Commission consider and adopt the attached draft CMM.

2.3.2 North Pacific albacore

14. The NC considered a proposal by the USA on the interim management objective and measures for North Pacific albacore to achieve the interim objective. With appreciation to the USA for their effort, the NC discussed the revised USA proposal in an informal discussion group, and adopted the revised proposal (Attachment J). NC4 recommends that the Commission endorse the proposal.

15. The USA presented amendments of CMM-2005-03 and their proposal is in Attachment K. NC4 agreed to revisit the proposal at NC5 and requested its members to report to NC5 their interpretation and implementation of fishing effort control for North Pacific albacore as required under CMM-2005-03.

2.3.3 North Pacific swordfish

16. NC4 considered no action for North Pacific swordfish at this meeting because no new scientific information and conservation advice was received from the ISC.

2.4 Conservation and management measures for other species

2.4.1 Bigeye and yellowfin tuna

17. The Chair recalled what happened with regard to the bigeye tuna CMM at the last Commission meeting. The Chair also noted that SC4 recommended a minimum 30% reduction in fishing mortality from the average levels for 2003–2006. While the NC has no jurisdiction to formulate a recommendation for bigeye tuna, the stock is important to the NC. Some members raised a concern on the plausible shift of fishing efforts to the area from south to north of 20°N. NC4 agreed to advise the Commission to note that any excessive fishing effort should not be shifted from one area to another

2.4.2 Sharks

18. NC4 noted the recommendation of SC4 regarding the application of shark measure (CMM-2006-05) to vessels less than 24 m in length.

2.4.3 Seabirds

19. NC4 noted that a discussion on seabirds would be taken up elsewhere in the Commission.

2.5 Working group on striped marlin

20. The progress of the NC's working group on striped marlin was reported on by the Science Manager, who served with Ziro Suzuki as co-facilitator of the group. The Commission had requested that the NC form the working group in order to take on a number of specific tasks identified by the NC at NC3, with a view towards developing a draft CMM, with SPC and FFA input, for consideration by the SC at SC4 (see paras 125–126 of the WCPFC4 Summary Report, and para 38 of the NC3 Summary Report).

21. In reviewing the progress of the working group, NC4 acknowledged that little progress had been made. It found, however, that the work remained important and that the tasks identified at NC3

were still relevant. The ISC provided a list of fisheries papers containing striped marlin information for use by the striped marlin working group. The NC members agreed to intensify their efforts to contribute to the work of the group, with a view to producing useful results in time to be reviewed by the Commission at WCPFC5. The USA offered to help identify a person that could serve as convener of the group.

2.6 Regional Observer Programme

22. NC4 considered the implementation of the Regional Observer Programme (ROP) for fishing vessels exclusively targeting fresh fish in the area north of 20°N in accordance with CMM-2007-01 adopted by Commission.

23. NC4 agreed to establish an intercessional email working group, as proposed by Japan, to seek an applicable measure in implementing the ROP in the area. Takumi Fukuda (Japan) was nominated as convener of the group.

AGENDA ITEM 3 — DATA

3.1 Review of the status of data and data gaps for northern stocks

24. The ISC Chair highlighted that the ISC has data and information needs. Information gaps in life history, catch characteristics about size and sex, independent abundance index, catchability, etc. are crucial obstacles to stock assessment. He emphasized research investments and multi-national projects to provide upgraded stock assessment information and requested support from the NC. He also reported on the limited capacity and progress in relation to bycatch issues within the ISC. The new focus for the ISC bycatch issues is described in Attachment C.

AGENDA ITEM 4 — FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

4.1 Work programme for the Northern Committee 2008–2012

25. NC4 revised the NC's work programme for 2008–2012 as attached in Attachment L.

AGENDA ITEM 5 — COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

5.1 International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC)

26. NC4 noted a number of issues raised by SC4 with regard to data and coordination between the ISC and the SC. NC4 requested that the ISC develop, in consultation with the WCPFC Secretariat, a process to address the issues as follows:

- 1) explore the potential benefits of improving both northern and southern albacore stock assessments through the exchange of stock assessment experiences for Pacific albacore and through collaboration between scientists currently working on assessments;
- 2) explore procedures for coordinating efforts to close data gaps and for data access to reduce uncertainties in assessments; and
- 3) consider ways to align its data standards and processes with those adopted for the Commission.

27. In relation to data gaps, the ISC requested access to WCPFC's database on catches from non-ISC members that fish for tuna and tuna-like species in the Pacific Ocean north of the equator. The ISC also informed NC4 of its effort to complete a North Pacific swordfish stock assessment in July 2009, and requested the Commission's involvement. The ISC noted that further details for the date and venue of the workshop will be duly informed to the WCPFC Secretariat.

28. On behalf of the Commission, NC4 expressed appreciation to the ISC for the provision of valuable scientific information that assists the work of the Commission.

5.2 Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission

29. The Secretariat noted that a Draft IATTC/WCPFC Agreement on the Exchange of Data was delivered to the IATTC for their review at the Third Consultative Meeting between WCPFC and IATTC in Panama, 27 June 2008. NC4 also appreciated the contribution of the IATTC.

5.3 Review of interim arrangements for scientific structure and functions

30. NC4 noted the Commission's consultancy on the review of the Commission's science structure and functions, and welcomed David Agnew from the Marine Resource assessment Group (MRAG) Ltd. David Agnew briefed NC4 on the progress of MRAG's work, and stated that the final report would be available in April 2009.

AGENDA ITEM 6 — OTHER MATTERS

6.1 Administrative arrangements for the Northern Committee

6.1.1 Secretariat functions and costs

31. NC4 deferred further consideration of this agenda item to a future session of the NC.

32. In order to respond the ISC's request on research proposals requested by the NC, NC4 agreed to request the Commission at WCPFC5, to establish a separate account for northern species research consisting of two items: albacore research (USD95,000) and data management (USD50,000). Subject to further consideration on the financial allocation, the NC invited any voluntary contribution from NC members to the account.

6.1.2 Rules of Procedure

33. NC4 deferred further consideration of this agenda item to a future session of the NC.

6.2 Next meeting

34. The Fifth Regular Session of the NC will meet in Japan. Tentative schedule will be 8–10 September 2009 in Japan.

6.3 Other business

35. The current chairmanship will be terminated in December and will be elected at WCPFC5 in December 2008.

6.3.1 Driftnet fishing on the high seas in the Convention Area

36. The USA and Japan reported that many illegal driftnet fishing activities are conducted on the high seas in the WCPFC Convention Area. The USA also mentioned that target species of the illegal fishing activity shifts from salmon to highly migratory species such as albacore. Some members noted the importance of collaboration among members and of avoidance of duplication on programmes to eliminate illegal fishing.

37. NC4 discussed the continued occurrence of, and potential recent increase in, illegal high seas driftnet fishing in the Convention Area. A number of members noted that these vessels appear to be shifting effort from salmon to highly migratory species, such as albacore and swordfish, which are under the jurisdiction of the Commission. National and international initiatives to eliminate high seas driftnet fishing were recognized, as were coordinated enforcement efforts among a number of WCPFC members, including the 1st tripartite meeting in Canada that brought together representatives from the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission, the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum, and the WCPFC.

38. In an effort to further deter and eliminate high seas driftnet fishing in the Convention Area, NC4 encouraged the Commission to draw attention to the prevalence of these illegal fishing activities and the potential harmful impacts of high seas drift net fishing on WCPFC fisheries resources. Further, NC4 recommended that the Commission adopt a CMM prohibiting high seas driftnet fishing in the Convention Area.

39. The USA intends to present a proposal regarding high seas driftnet fishing at WCPFC5 and welcomed participation from other members in the development of such a proposal.

AGENDA ITEM 7 — REPORT TO THE COMMISSION

7.1 Adoption of the report of the Third Regular Session of the Northern Committee and recommendations to the Commission

40. NC4 adopted the Summary Report of its Fourth Regular Session.

AGENDA ITEM 8 — CLOSE OF MEETING

8.1 Closing of meeting

41. The NC chair appreciated participants for the successful conclusion of this meeting. The meeting closed on Thursday, 11 September 2008.



**Commission for the Conservation and Management of
Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean**

**NORTHERN COMMITTEE
FOURTH REGULAR SESSION**

**Tokyo, Japan
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ATTACHMENTS

**The Commission for the Conservation and Management of
Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean**

**Northern Committee
Fourth Regular Session**

**Tokyo, Japan
9–11 September 2008**

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

CHAIRMAN

Masanori Miyahara

Chief Counselor
Fisheries Agency of Japan
1-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
100-8907
Tel: 81-3-3591-2045
Email: masanori_miyahara1@nm.maff.go.jp

CANADA

Sylvie Lapointe

Director, Straddling and Highly Migratory Fish
Stocks
Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
200 Kent St., 8E239, Ottawa
Ontario K1A 0E6
Tel: 613-993-6853
Email: lapointesy@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Sem Ponnambalam

International Fisheries Officer
Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
8E228, 200 rue Kent St., Ottawa
ON K1A 0E6
Tel: 613-993-1860
Email: Sem.Ponnambalam@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

CHINA

Xiaobing Liu

Bureau of Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture
No.11 Nongzhanguan Nanli
Beijing100125
Tel: 86-10-59192928
Email: inter-coop@agri.gov.cn

Lianshan Miao

Fishing Industry
Liaoning Kimliner Ocean Fishing Co., Ltd.
Liyuan Mansion, 12 Minze Street, Dalian
Tel: 86-411-82738191
Email: miaolianshan@vip.sina.com

COOK ISLANDS

Joshua Mitchell

Director, Offshore Fisheries
Ministry of Marine Resources
PO Box 85
Rarotonga
Tel: 682-28730
Email: J.Mitchell@mmr.gov.ck

Carl Hunter

Director, Pacific Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
PO Box 105
Rarotonga, Cook Islands
Tel: 682-29347; Fax: 682 21247
Email: region@mfai.gov.ck

JAPAN

Takashi Koya

Senior Fisheries Negotiator, International Affairs Division, Fisheries Agency of Japan
1-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
100-8907
Tel: 81-3-3502-8459
Email: takashi_koya@nm.maff.go.jp

Takumi Fukuda

Assistant Director, International Affairs Division, Fisheries Agency of Japan
1-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
100-8907
Tel: 81-3-3502-8459
Email: takumi_fukuda@nm.maff.go.jp

Haruo Tominaga

International Affairs Division, Fisheries Agency of Japan
1-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
100-8907
Tel: 81-3-3502-8459
Email: haruo_tominaga@nm.maff.go.jp

Kenichi Mitsuhashi

International Affairs Division, Fisheries Agency of Japan
1-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
100-8907
Tel: 81-3-6744-2366
Email: kenichi_mitsuhashi@nm.maff.go.jp

Takahisa Yamamoto

International Affairs Division, Fisheries Agency of Japan
1-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
100-8907
Tel: 81-3-3502-8459
Email: takahisa_yamamoto@nm.maff.go.jp

Hitoshi Fujita

Assistant Director, Far Seas Fisheries Division, Fisheries Agency of Japan
1-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
100-8907
Tel: 81-3-6744-2364
Email: hitoshi_fujita@nm.maff.go.jp

Shingo Fukui

Far Seas Fisheries Division, Fisheries Agency of Japan
1-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
100-8907
Tel: 81-3-6744-2364
Email: shingo_fukui@nm.maff.go.jp

Hiroto Imai

Assistant Director, Resources and Environment Research Division, Fisheries Agency of Japan
1-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
100-8907
Tel: 81-3-6744-2380
Email: hiroto_imai@nm.maff.go.jp

Yuji Yoshihara

Resources and Environment Research Division, Fisheries Agency of Japan
1-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
100-8907
Tel: 81-3-6744-2380
Email: yuuji_yoshihara@nm.maff.go.jp

Wataru Tanoue

Fisheries Coordination Division, Fisheries Agency of Japan
1-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
100-8907
Email: wataru_tanoue@nm.maff.go.jp
Tel: 81-3-5510-3307

Takuya Tanimoto

Fishery Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
2-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
100-8919
Tel: 81-3-5501-8338
Email: takuya.tanimoto@mofa.go.jp

Yuji Uozumi

Director-General, National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries
5-7-1 Shimizu-Orido, Shizuoka 424-8633
Tel: 81-54-336-6001
Email: uozumi@fra.affrc.go.jp

Hitoshi Honda

National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries
5-7-1 Shimizu-Orido, Shizuoka 424-8633
Tel: 81-54-336-6042
Email: hhonda@fra.affrc.go.jp

Naozumi Miyabe

National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries
5-7-1 Shimizu-Orido, Shizuoka 424-8633
Tel: 81-54-336-6032
Email: miyabe@fra.affrc.go.jp

Koji Uosaki

National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries
5-7-1 Shimizu-Orido, Shizuoka 424-8633
Tel: 81-54-336-6036
Email: uosaki@affrc.go.jp

Kotaro Yokawa

National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries
5-7-1 Shimizu-Orido, Shizuoka 424-8633
Tel: 81-54-336-6035
Email: yokawa@affrc.go.jp

Yukio Takeuchi

National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries
5-7-1 Shimizu-Orido, Shizuoka 424-8633
Tel: 81-54-336-6039
Email: yukiot@fra.affrc.go.jp

Gakushi Ishimura

National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries
5-7-1 Shimizu-Orido, Shizuoka 424-8633
Tel: 81-54-336-6039
Email: gakuyaku@fra.affrc.go.jp

Tsutomu Nakamura

Japan Set-net Fisheries Association
1-9-13 Akasaka,
Minato-ku, Tokyo
Tel: 81-3-3584-6815
Email: nihonteichi@shore.ocn.ne.jp

Toshio Tsukahara

Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation
6F, Sankaido BLDG.,
1-9-13, Akasaka,
Minato-ku, Tokyo, 107-0052
Tel: 81-3-3585-5087
Email: tsukahara@ofcf.go.jp

Shigeru Kuramochi

Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation
6F, Sankaido BLDG.,
1-9-13, Akasaka,
Minato-ku, Tokyo, 107-0052
Tel: 81-3-3585-5087
Email: kura@ofcf.or.jp

Yoshihiro Kitazato

Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation
6F, Sankaido BLDG.,
1-9-13, Akasaka,
Minato-ku, Tokyo, 107-0052
Tel: 81-3-3585-5087
Email: kita@ofcf.or.jp

Kunikazu Shimamoto

Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation
6F, Sankaido BLDG.,
1-9-13, Akasaka,
Minato-ku, Tokyo, 107-0052
Tel: 81-3-3585-5087
Email: shimamoto@ofcf.or.jp

Akihiko Yatsuzuka

National Offshore Tuna Fisheries Association
of Japan
Tohan No. 3 Bldg. 1-3-1Uchikanda,
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 101-0047
Tel: 81-3-3295-3721
Email: yatsuzuka@kinkatsukyo.or.jp

Mitsuyuki Nakamori

All Japan Purse Seine Fisheries Association
Okana No. 1 Bldg, 2-7-9 Toranomom,
Minato-ku, Tokyo, 105-0001
Tel: 81-3-3591-3731
Email: zenmaki@atlas.plala.or.jp

Makoto Hotai

Japan Purse Seiner's Association
3-11-3-901 Nagahama, Chuo-ku, Fukuoka-shi,
Fukuoka 810-0072
Tel: 81-92-711-6261
Email: makoto-hotai@enmaki.jp

Takahiro Motogawa

Daiei Suisan Co.,Ltd
1-8-6 Yamatomadhi, Shimonoseki-shi,
Yamaguchi 750-0067
Tel: 81-92-711-6261

Junichi Hirata

North Japan Sea Purse Seine Fisheries
Association
4-5, Toyomi-cho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo, 104-0055
Tel: 81-3-6220-1263
Email: j-hirata@tafco.maruha.co.jp

Noboru Ota

North Japan Sea Purse Seine Fisheries
Association
4-5, Toyomi-cho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo, 104-0055
Tel: 81-3-6220-1263
Email: n-ohta@maruha-nichiro.co.jp

Yoshinao Naito

SAN-IN Purse Seine Fisheries Cooperative
66 Eimachi, Sakaiminato-shi, Tottori 684-0006
Tel: 81-859-44-7171
Email: y-naito@kyowacom.co.jp

Kotaro Tanaka

North Pacific Purse Seine Fisheries Association
Sankaido Bldg. 2F,
1-9-13 Akasaka,
Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-0052
Tel: 81-3-3585-7941
Email: hej94561@biglobe.ne.jp

Hide Nakayama

North Pacific Purse Seine Fisheries Association
Sankaido Bldg. 2F,
1-9-13 Akasaka,
Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-0052
Tel: 81-3-3585-7941
Email: hej94561@biglobe.ne.jp

Takayoshi Nagashima

Shizuoka Purse Seine Fisheries Association
69-3 Heda, Numazu-shi, Shizuoka 410-3402
Email: wbs72997@mail.wbs.ne.jp
Tel: 81-558-94-2306

Kazuyasu Kando

National Large mesh Fishery Association
Fuji Bldg. 5F,5-32-6 Shinbashi, Minato-ku
Tokyo 105-0004
Tel: 81-3-5401-0637

Kazuo Shima

Japan Far Seas Purse Seine Fishing Association
1-14-10 Ginza, Chuo-ku Tokyo, 104-0061
Tel: 81-3-3564-2315
Email: japan@kaimaki.or.jp

Yuki Okuda

Japan Far Seas Purse Seine Fishing Association
1-14-10 Ginza, Chuo-ku Tokyo, 104-0061
Tel: 81-3-3564-2315
Email: japan@kaimaki.or.jp

Minoru Honda

Japan Far Seas Purse Seine Fishing Association
1-14-10 Ginza, Chuo-ku Tokyo, 104-0061
Tel: 81-3-3564-2315
Email: japan@kaimaki.or.jp

Chihiro Kino

Japan Far Seas Purse Seine Fishing Association
1-14-10 Ginza, Chuo-ku Tokyo, 104-0061
Tel: 81-3-3564-2315
Email: japan@kaimaki.or.jp

Sakae Terao

Japan Far Seas Purse Seine Fishing Association
1-14-10 Ginza, Chuo-ku Tokyo, 104-0061
Tel: 81-3-3564-2315
Email: japan@kaimaki.or.jp

Tatsuo Abe

Hakko Gyogyo Co.,Ltd
2-12-1 Sakanamachi, Ishinomaki-shi, Miyagi
986-0022
Tel: 81-225-96-6796
Email: info-office@hakkomaru.com

Osamu Shirakawa

TAIYO A&F CO., LTD
4-5, Toyomi-cho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo, 104-0055
Tel: 81-3-6220-1263
Email: fishery2@maruha-nichiro.co.jp

Takashi Furukatsu

TAIYO A&F CO. LTD
4-5, Toyomi-cho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo, 104-0055
Tel: 81-3-6220-1263
Email: fishery2@maruha-nichiro.co.jp

Yoshimi Tateno

TAIYO A&F CO.,LTD
4-5, Toyomi-cho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo, 104-0055
Tel: 81-3-6220-1263
Email: fishery2@maruha-nichiro.co.jp

Toshio Abe

TAIYO A&F CO.,LTD
4-5, Toyomi-cho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo, 104-0055
Tel: 81-3-6220-1263
Email: fishery2@maruha-nichiro.co.jp

Masao Tobari

Kyokuyo Suisan CO.,Ltd
1441-1 Habuchi, Oigawa-cho, Shida-gun,
Shizuoka 421-0213
Tel: 81-54-622-5112
Email: masao_tobari@kykuyo.co.jp

Taro Kawamoto

Kyokuyo Suisan CO.,Ltd
1441-1 Habuchi, Oigawa-cho, Shida-gun,
Shizuoka 421-0213
Tel: 81-54-622-5112
Email: tarokawamoto@nifty.com

Makoto Miyake

Adviser, Japan Tuna Fisheries Co-operative
Association
2-31-1 Eitai,
Koto-ku, Tokyo, 135-0034
Tel: 81-3-5646-2382
Email: p.m.miyake@gamma.ocn.ne.jp

Hisao Masuko

International Division, Japan Tuna Fisheries
Co-operative Association
2-31-1 Eitai,
Koto-ku, Tokyo, 135-0034
Tel: 81-3-5646-2382
Email: gyogyo@japantuna.or.jp

Shinba Fukuda

International Division, Japan Tuna Fisheries
Co-operative Association
2-31-1 Eitai,
Koto-ku, Tokyo, 135-0034
Tel: 81-3-5646-2382
Email: gyogyo@japantuna.or.jp

Kikuo Chiyo

International Division, Japan Tuna Fisheries
Co-operative Association
2-31-1 Eitai,
Koto-ku, Tokyo, 135-0034
Tel: 81-3-5646-2382
Email: gyogyo@japantuna.or.jp

Noriyoshi Kofune

National Ocean Tuna Fishery Association
Coop Bldg 7F,
1-1-12, Uchikanda,
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-8503
Tel: 81-3-3294-9634
Email: n-kofune@zengyoren.jf-net.ne.jp

Mitsunori Murata

National Ocean Tuna Fishery Association
Coop Bldg 7F,
1-1-12, Uchikanda,
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-8503
Tel: 81-3-3294-9634

Masashi Nishimura

Japan Fisheries Association
Sankaido BLDG. 8F,
1-9-13, Akasaka,
Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-0052
Tel: 81-3-3585-6683
Email: mnishimu@suisankai.or.jp

Jun Machiba

National Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Associations
1-1-12 Uchikanda,
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-8503
j-machiba@zengyoren.jf-net.ne.jp
81-3-3294-9617

REPUBLIC OF KOREA**Chiguk Ahn**

Official
Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
Tel: +82-2-500-2429
Email: chiguka62@yahoo.com

In Keun Park

General Manager
Korea Overseas Fisheries Association
6th floor, Samho Center Bld, "A" 275-1
Yangjae-Dong, Seocho-Ku, Seoul, Korea
Tel: +82-2-589-1612
Email: parkik@kosfa.org

Jong Koo Lee

Businessman
Dongwon Industries Co., Ltd.
275 Yangjae Dong
Seocho Ku, Seoul, Korea
Tel: +82-2- 589-3070
Email: jklee@dongwon.com

Jeong IL Chu

Manager, Sajo Industries co., Ltd.
157, Chungjeongno 2-ga, Seodaemun-gu, Seoul,
Korea
Tel: +82-2-3277-1652
Email: mata@sajo.co.kr

K. H. Ahn

Team Manager, Silla Co., Ltd
286-7, Seokchon-dong
Songpa-gu, Seoul, Korea
Tel: +82-2-3434-9717
Email: goodcatch@sla.co.kr

Yong Seok Choi

Attaché for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Embassy of the Republic of Korea
Tel: +81-3-5476-3268
Email: 88badaro@hanmail.net

Yong Il Jeon

Sungkyunkwan University
53 Myeongnyun-dong 3ga, Jongne-gu,
Seoul, Korea
Tel: +82-2-760-0478
Email: yjeon@skku.edu

PHILIPPINES**Benjamin F.S. Tabios Jr.**

Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
3rd Flr PCA Bldg., Elliptical Road
Diliman, Quezon City
Tel: 632-426-3426
Email : benjo_tabios@yahoo.com

Augusto Natividad

Co-Chairman
Philippines Tuna Industry
Email: gus@frabelle.net

Richard Sy

President
Sun Tai Int'l Fishing Corp.

CHINESE TAIPEI**Chi-Chao Liu**

Specialist
Fisheries Agency, Council of Agriculture,
No.1 Yugang North 1st Road, Chien chen
district
Kaohsiung Taiwan
Tel: +886-7-823-9890
Email: chichao@msl.f.gov.tw

Hung Pi Chi

Assistant
Overseas Fisheries Development Council
19, Lane 113, Roosevelt Road, Sec.4,
Taipei, Taiwan
Tel: +886-7-823-9892
Email: Alice970801@gmail.com

Chia-Chi Fu

Secretary
Overseas Fisheries Development Council
19, Lane 113, Roosevelt Road, Sec.4,
Taipei, Taiwan
Tel: +886-2-2738-1522-115
Email: joseph@ofdc.org.tw

Yu-Chih Lin

3F-2 No.2 Yu-Kang Middle 1st Road
Chien Jehn District
Kaohsiung, Taiwan
Tel: 886-7-8419606
Email: martin@tuna.org.tw

Shih-Chieh Ho

3F-2 No.2 Yu-kang Middle 1st Road
Chien Jehn District,
Kaohsiung, Taiwan
Tel: +886-7-841-9606
Email: martin@tuna.org.tw

Shui-Kai Chang

70 Line-hai Road, Kaohsiung, 804
Taiwan
Tel: +886-7-5252000 #5303
Email: skchang@faculty.nsysu.edu.tw

Chao-chin Huang

Taiwan Tuna Association
3F-2 No.2 Yu-Kang Middle 1st Road
Chien Jehn District, Kaohsiung, Taiwan
Tel: +886-7-841-9606
Email: edward@tuna.org.tw

Yu Shang

Section Chief
Department of International Organizations of
Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
2 Kaitakelan Blvd. Taipei, 10048 Taiwan
Tel: +886-2-2348-2526
Email: Yshang9@gmail.com

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**Charles Karnella**

International Fisheries Administrator
Pacific Island Regional Office
1601 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1110
Honolulu, HI 96814
Tel: 808-944-2206
Email: Charles.Karnella@noaa.gov

Tom Graham

Fishery Policy Analyst
Pacific Island Regional Office
1601 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1110
Honolulu, HI 96814
Tel: 808-944-2219
Email: tom.graham@noaa.gov

Samuel G. Pooley

Research & Science Director
Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center
NOAA
2570 Dole Street
Honolulu, HI 96822
Tel: 808- 983-5301
Email: Samuel.Pooley@noaa.gov

Ramon Conser

Supervisory Research Fish Biologist
Southwest Fisheries Science Center
NOAA
8604 La Jolla Shores Drive
La Jolla, CA. 92037
Ph: 858-546-5688
ray.conser@noaa.gov

Sarah McTee

Foreign Affairs Officer
Department of State
Office of Marine Conservation
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC
Tel: 202-647-3941
Email: McTeeSA@state.gov

Wayne Heikkila

Executive Director
Western Fishboat Owners Association
PO. Box 992723, Redding, CA 96099
Tel: 530-229-1097
Email: wfoa@charter.net

Kitty Simonds

Executive Director
Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management
Council
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400
Honolulu, HI 96813
Tel: 808-522-8220
Email: Kitty.Simonds@noaa.gov

Svein Fougner

Consultant
Hawaii Longline Association
32506 Seahill Drive
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275
Tel: 310-377-2661
Email: sveinfougner@cox.net

Randi Parks Thomas

National Fisheries Institute/Tuna Council
7918 Jones Branch Drive, #700
McLean, VA 22102
Tel: 1-703-752-8895
Email: rthomas@nfi.org

VANUATU**Robert Jimmy**

Director, Vanuatu Fisheries Department
VMB 9045
Tel: 678-23119/23621
Email: robert.jimmy@gmail.com

Christopher Emelee

Fleet Administrator
Vanuatu Government
Email: c.emelee@yahoo.co.nz

OBSERVERS**FIJI****Suresh Chandra**

Principal Fisheries Officer
Ministry of Primary Industries Fisheries
Department
Tel: 679 3362611; Fax: 679 336 1184
Email: schandra001@fisheries .gov.fj

KIRIBATI**Kintoba Tearo**

Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources
Development, Kiribati
Tel: 21099; Fax: 21120

PALAU**Nannette Malsol**

Fisheries Law Compliance Officer
Bureau of Marine Resource
Ministry of Resources & Development
P.O Box 5050
Koror 96940
Tel: 680-488-3125; Fax: 680-488-3555
Email: tunapal@papaunet.com

PAPUA NEW GUINEA**Justin Ilakini**

Industry Liaison Officer
National Fisheries Authority
Box 2016
Port Moresby, NCD
Tel: 675-3090444
Email: jilakini@fisheries.gov.pg

TUVALU**Uale Taleni**

Secretary
Ministry of Natural Resources and
Environment
Email: utaleni@gov.tv

**AMERICAN FISHERMEN'S RESEARCH
FOUNDATION****Peter H. Flournoy**

Attorney
American Fishermen's Research Foundation
740 North Harbor Drive
San Diego, CA 92101
Tel: 619-232-0954
Email: phf@international-law-offices.com

FORUM FISHERIES AGENCY

Lara Manarangi-Trott

WCPFC Liaison Officer
Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency
PO Box 629, Honiara, Solomon Islands
Tel: 677-21124
Email: lara.manarangi-trott@ffa.int

***INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC
COMMITTEE FOR TUNA AND
TUNA-LIKE SPECIES IN THE NORTH
PACIFIC OCEAN (ISC)***

Gary Sakagawa

ISC Chairman
Southwest Fisheries Science Center
ISC and SWFSC
8604 La Jolla Shores Drive
La Jolla, CA 92037
Tel: 858-546-7177
Email: Gary.Sakagawa@noaa.gov

WWF

Mark Stevens

1250 24th St. NW
Washington, DC 20037
Tel: 1-202-297-5037
Mark.stevens@wwfus.org

***ORGANIZATION FOR THE PROMOTION
OF RESPONSIBLE TUNA FISHERIES***

Yuichiro Harada

Organization for the Promotion of Responsible
Tuna Fisheries
9F Sankaido Bldg.,
1-9-13 Akasaka,
Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-0052
Tel: 81-3-3568-6388
Email: harada@opr.or.jp

Kentaro Tabata

Organization for the Promotion of Responsible
Tuna Fisheries
9F Sankaido Bldg.,
1-9-13 Akasaka,
Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-0052
Tel: 81-3-3568-6388
Email: tabata@opr.or.jp

Saburo Hitomi

Organization for the Promotion of Responsible
Tuna Fisheries
9F Sankaido Bldg.,
1-9-13 Akasaka,
Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-0052
Tel: 81-3-3568-6388
Email: hitomi@opr.or.jp

SECRETARIAT

SungKwon Soh

Science Manager
P.O Box 2356
Kolonias, Pohnpei 96941
Federated States of Micronesia
Tel: 691-320-1992/1993
Fax: 691-320-1108
Email: sungkwon.soh@wcpfc.int

Ziro Suzuki

Japan Trust Coordinator
PO Box 2356
Kolonias, Pohnpei 96941
Federated States of Micronesia
Tel: 691-320-1992/1993
Fax: 691-320-1108
Email: ziro.suzuki@wcpfc.int

David Agnew

Commission consultant
MRAG
18 Queen Street
London W1J 5PN
Tel: +44-207-255-7755
Email: d.agnew@mrag.co.uk

**The Commission for the Conservation and Management of
Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean**

**Northern Committee
Fourth Regular Session**

**Tokyo, Japan
9–11 September 2008**

AGENDA FOR THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE NORTHERN COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM 1. OPENING OF MEETING

- 1.1 Welcome
- 1.2 Adoption of agenda
- 1.3 Meeting arrangements

AGENDA ITEM 2. CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

- 2.1 Report from the 8th ISC
- 2.2 Report of the Fourth Regular Session of the Scientific Committee (SC4)
- 2.3 Conservation and management measures for the northern stocks
 - 2.3.1 Northern Pacific bluefin
 - 2.3.2 North Pacific albacore
 - 2.3.3 North Pacific swordfish
- 2.4 Conservation and management measures for other species
 - 2.4.1 Bigeye and yellowfin tuna
 - 2.4.2 Sharks
 - 2.4.3 Seabirds
- 2.5 Working Group on Striped Marlin
- 2.6 Regional Observer Programme

AGENDA ITEM 3. DATA

- 3.1 Review of the status of data and data gaps for northern stocks

AGENDA ITEM 4. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

- 4.1 Work Programme for 2009–2012

AGENDA ITEM 5. COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

- 5.1 ISC
- 5.2 IATTC
- 5.3 Review of interim arrangements for scientific structure and function

AGENDA ITEM 6. OTHER MATTERS

- 6.1 Administrative arrangements for the Committee
 - 6.1.1 Secretariat functions and costs

- 6.1.2 Rules of Procedure
- 6.2 Next meeting
- 6.3 Other business
 - 6.3.1 Driftnet fishing on the high seas in the Convention Area

AGENDA ITEM 7. REPORT TO THE COMMISSION

- 7.1 Adoption of the report of the Fourth Regular Session of the Northern Committee and recommendations to the Commission

AGENDA ITEM 8. CLOSE OF MEETING

- 8.1 Closing of the meeting

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REPORT OF THE ISC TO NC4

Dr Gary Sakagawa, Chairman of the ISC, introduced ISC's report to NC4, indicated that the ISC was established in 1995 to advance fishery science of North Pacific highly migratory species through partnership, cooperation and collaboration among stakeholders. The process used by the ISC involves joint work by members of working groups during periods between intercessional workshops and review of results and performing stock assessment analyses at intercessional workshops. To promote transparency and quality assurance, a series of three workshops are usually involved in completing a full stock assessment of a species. The first workshop focuses on review and compilation of data, including data for abundance indices and selection of assessment models. The second workshop concentrates on compilation of estimates for life history parameters, and agreement on starting values and assumptions for running the assessment models. Exercising the assessment models with data and multi-runs and evaluating the results, including different interpretations occurs at the third workshop.

He also summarized the accomplishments of the ISC during the year, which are contained in the Report of the Eighth Meeting of the ISC (ISC8), as follows: 1) seven intercessional meetings held, 2) full stock assessment of Pacific bluefin tuna completed, 3) analysis of geographic center of striped marlin completed, 4) "Kobe" diagrams prepared for North Pacific albacore to demonstrate value and shortcoming, 5) minimum spawning stock biomass as a biological reference point for North Pacific albacore explored, 6) progress made for full swordfish stock assessment to be completed in 2009, and 7) the 8th ISC plenary meeting held in July 2008. These accomplishments and more are contained in the ISC8 report.

Dr Sakagawa then introduced the chairpersons of the ISC working groups to present results for stock assessment questions for North Pacific albacore (Dr Ray Conser), Pacific bluefin tuna (Yukio Takeuchi) and Statistics (Dr Naozumi Miyabe). Because the chairpersons for the Bycatch Working Group (Dr Chris Boggs) and Billfish Working Group (Dr Gerard DiNardo) were not present, he substituted and presented information on plans for bycatch work and swordfish assessment and results of center of abundance of striped marlin.

The ISC Bycatch Working Group received instructions at ISC8 for refocusing its work plan. It will concentrate on reviewing bycatch mitigation methodologies and ongoing research by members. It will de-emphasize collection of bycatch data to estimate total bycatch or to assess population status of seabirds and sea turtles. It will collect shark information for conducting stock assessments when sufficient information is available and when necessary stock assessment skills are available to the

Working Group.

The Billfish Working Group is making progress towards completing a swordfish stock assessment in 2009. It also completed analysis to determine the geographic center of abundance of striped marlin in the North Pacific Ocean. The analysis essentially used data from the 2006 striped marlin stock assessment, particularly catch per unit of effort (CPUE) data from the Japanese distant water longline fleet. CPUE data or abundance indices were stratified by time and area then weighted by the size of the areas and different size selectivity by time and area. The results showed that about two-thirds (64–73%) of the biomass of striped marlin in the North Pacific Ocean occurs north of 20⁰ N latitude.

Dr Sakagawa concluded the ISC report with a summary of ISC conservation advice: 1) ISC7's North Pacific albacore advice still holds. With current (2002–2004) high F of 0.75, F will need to be reduced; 2) Current (2002–2004) F for Pacific bluefin tuna must not be increased; 3) ISC7's striped marlin advice still holds. F should be reduced from the current level (2003 or before); and 4) There is no advice for swordfish because a full stock assessment has not yet been completed. A summary of administrative matters included the need for investment to close information gaps, such as the need for updated life history information, complete information on catch characteristics and investment to support infrastructure needs, such as webpage development, database development and maintenance and for collection of biological data.

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ISC ALBACORE WORKING GROUP (ALBWG) REPORT

Albacore stock status and conservation advice

The last albacore stock assessment was completed in December 2006 using fishery data through 2005. Stock status and conservation advice were provided to the ISC7 plenary (July 2007) and to NC3 (September 2007). The principal conclusions from the 2006 assessment were:

1. Spawning stock biomass (SSB) in 2006 was estimated at about 153,000 mt; 53% above time series average.
2. Retrospective analysis showed noticeable trend of over-estimating abundance.
3. Over last 15 years, recruitment fluctuated around long-term average of roughly 28 million fish.
4. Presently, population is being fished ($F_{2002-2004} = 0.75 \text{ yr}^{-1}$) at roughly $F_{17\%}$; similar to “pessimistic” scenario in 2004 assessment.
5. Current F (2002–2004) is high relative to commonly used biological reference points.
6. SSB is forecasted to decline to an equilibrium level of 92,000 mt by 2015.
7. ISC-ALBWG expressed concern about the substantial decline in total catch over the last few years.
8. $F_{SSB-\text{Min}}$ analysis indicated that at the 95% probability of success all of the threshold F s would require reductions from current F .
9. Finally, ISC-ALBWG recommended that all countries support precautionary-based fishing practices.

No formal update of the stock status has been conducted. However, at its 15–16 July 2008 meeting, the ALBWG did undertake a qualitative update using available fisheries data from 2006 and 2007. This qualitative update found:

1. Total catch in 2006 was slightly greater than in 2005. However, in 2007, the catch increased substantially, returning to a level more typical of the past decade.
2. Recent values of CPUE were either stable or higher than in 2005.
3. Recent information regarding the magnitude of the 2003 year-class was mixed with some data sources appearing to be consistent with a strong 2003 year-class and other sources not.
4. Results of the updated projections (using the now known 2006 and 2007 catch) indicated:
 - i. Estimated probabilities of the SSB remaining above the SSB reference points — as calculated in the last stock assessment (2006) — were modestly underestimated.
 - ii. Because the realized catch in 2007 was less than that assumed in the projections, the F in 2007 may have been less than “current F ” (0.75 yr^{-1}).

The ALBWG concluded:

1. Data updates and limited analysis since the last stock assessment, provide a slightly more optimistic view of SSB level and the probability of exceeding $F_{SSB-Min}$ biological reference points (BRPs), than did the 2006 assessment.
2. Any changes with respect to target BRPs (optimistic or pessimistic) are unknown.
3. However, the ALBWG suggests that that qualitative interpretation of only two years of additional data (2006 and 2007) should be viewed with caution until such time that another stock assessment can be completed to more fully understand recent stock trends.
4. The ALBWG offers no new conservation advice above and beyond that which was provided to ISC7 in July 2007.

ALBWG progress and plans for the next stock assessment

The ALBWG met twice during the past year:

- 1) Regular meeting (8 days): 28 February–6 March 2008 in La Jolla, USA
- 2) Update meeting (2 days): 15–16 July 2008 in Takamatsu, Japan

Terms of reference for both meetings were multi-objective in nature. Some ALBWG objectives continue from meeting to meeting (e.g. the ALBWG preparation for the next stock assessment; annual update of national fishery statistics; etc). Other objectives focus on requests from the ISC plenary and the WCPFC Northern Committee (NC) and are usually handled at a single meeting. Accomplishments of the ALBWG over the past year include:

- Updated national fishery statistics (through 2007).
- Assessment model development for the next assessment (SS2 model).
- Develop “Kobe” plots using results from the last (2006) stock assessment.
- Consider recent NC requests for additional projections associated with the assessment.
- Develop work plans for 2008–2010 in preparation for the next stock assessment.
- Election of new chair (R. Conser).
- Provide a qualitative update on stock status since the last assessment.
- Develop a biological research plan designed to improve albacore stock assessment.
- Review illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing and its effects on stock assessment.
- Rescue historical fishery data pertaining to albacore.
- Consider interim management objectives for North Pacific albacore ($F_{SSB-Min}$ reference points).
- Quantify fishery Impacts by gear type using results from the last stock assessment.

A series of ALBWG meetings will be necessary to complete the next stock assessment:

- i. Regular meeting: 24 February–3 March 2009, Shimizu, Japan
- ii. Update meeting: 8–9 July 2009, Taiwan (with ISC9 plenary)
- iii. Regular meeting: 6–13 October 2009, place to be determined
- iv. Assessment meeting: 2–9 March 2010, place to be determined

Meeting ii, above, is tentative and may only be necessary should the NC make additional management related requests of the ALBWG. All other meetings are required in order to complete the next assessment by March 2010.

Overall cooperation among ALBWG members, as well as progress on assigned tasks, has been good. However, the ALBWG would like to point out several issues that may affect future work.

1. ALBWG participation by ISC members is quite variable. Some members attend all meetings, while others do not. Continuity of participation (preferably by the same scientists) is critical so that the consensus achieved from one meeting can be used as building blocks for subsequent meetings.
2. Competition for resources with other ISC WGs and regional fisheries management organization (RFMO) WGs (people, time, travel funds, etc.) is increasing at an unsustainable rate. Members need to provide additional scientists and funding to ensure that the ALBWG will be able to continue to meet its mandates.
3. NC and IATTC management requests may significantly increase the ALBWG workload and impede progress on next assessment

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REPORT OF THE ISC PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA WORKING GROUP

Y. Takeuchi, chair of the ISC Pacific Bluefin Tuna Working Group, presented the results of the stock assessment of the Pacific bluefin tuna conducted in May 2008 and the conservation advice made by the ISC8 in July 2008, as well as the work plan for now to the ISC9. The results of the current stock assessment are as follows.

1. Recruitment has fluctuated without trend over the assessment period (1952–2004), and does not appear to have been adversely affected by the relatively high rate of exploitation. Recent recruitment (2005–present) is highly uncertain — making short-term forecasting difficult. In particular, the 2005 year-class strength may have been underestimated in this assessment.
2. Spawning stock biomass (SSB) in 2005 is near the median level over the assessment period. If the future fishing mortality rate (F) continues at the current F level, the short-term outlook (2009–2010) indicates that SSB will either decline until 2010, or remain at approximately the 2005 level. In the longer term, SSB is expected to be at a level comparable to the SSB in 2005.
3. No relationship between SSB and recruitment is apparent over the range of “observed” SSB from the assessment. The assessment structure tacitly assumes that at least over the SSB levels “observed”, recruitment is more environmentally driven than SSB-driven.
4. Current F (2002–2004) is greater than commonly used biological reference points (BRP) that may serve, in principle, as potential target reference points. This includes F_{MAX} — a BRP that given the assessment structure and assumptions is theoretically equivalent to F_{MSY}. But the magnitude by which the F_{current} exceeds the target BRPs is variable.
5. Conversely, current F is less than commonly used BRPs that may serve, in principle, as potential recruitment overfishing threshold BRPs (e.g. F_{MED} and F_{SSB-min} — probability based reference point); that is, F_s above which, the likelihood of recruitment failure is high.
6. F_s on recruits (age 0) and on juveniles (ages 1–3) have been generally increasing for more than a decade (1990–2005). The catch (in weight) is dominated by recruits and juveniles (ages 0–3).
7. Total catch has fluctuated widely in the range of 9,000–40,000 t during the assessment time period. Recent catch is near the average for the assessment period (~22,000 t). Over the entire catch history, annual catch has never attained the equilibrium catch at F_{MAX} (45,000 t).

Based on the results of the PBF stock assessment, Y. Takeuchi presented the following conservation advice offered by the ISC.

1. Given the conclusions of the May–June 2008 stock assessment with regard to the current level of F relative to potential target and limit reference points, and residual uncertainties associated with key model parameters, it is important that the current level of F is not increased.
2. If F remains at the current level and environmental conditions remain favorable, then recruitment should be sufficient to maintain current yield well into the future.
3. A reduction in F, in combination with favorable environmental conditions, should lead to greater yield per recruit (Y/R) and spawning per recruit (SPR) and, after some lag, greater sustained yield.
4. Increases in F above the current level, and/or unfavorable changes in environmental conditions, may result in recruitment levels which are insufficient to sustain the current productivity of the stock.

Y. Takeuchi also explained the work plan between now and ISC9. Although ISC endorsed current stock assessment results, ISC noted that the modeling scenarios provide some output parameter estimates that have a low plausibility and thus the stock assessment results need to be interpreted with caution. Because of this concern, the Pacific Bluefin Tuna Working Group will revisit the analysis in order to refine the scientific advice. Work necessary to improve the basis for parameter specification, as well as model refinement, will be pursued over the coming year, starting with a December 2008 workshop. Progress on these issues will be reviewed by ISC9 next year and at that time a timetable for conducting a new stock assessment will be set.

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REPORT OF THE ISC STATISTICS WORKING GROUP

1. N. Miyabe presented the results of the 7th STATWG meeting, which was convened 19–21 July just prior to the plenary. All members were represented except China, the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES).

2. The annual ISC data submission deadline is 1 July. Data (Category I, II and III) were submitted by all members except China. Submitted data were shown in the form of summarized tables for different categories. However, the data presented in the tables did not match well with those data maintained by the species working groups. Unfortunately, these inconsistencies were not solved during the meeting since the newly submitted data were not yet verified by working group (WG) chairs as there was little time available prior to the meeting to accomplish this task.

3. The STATWG reviewed the current data submission protocol. Last year, the data submission protocol was changed in order to reduce duplication between the database administrator and species WG data managers. Presently, the data flow for Category II and III data is from the members' data correspondents to the species WG data managers.

4. K. Uosaki demonstrated how to upload and download and delete data using the ISC researchers webpage for data submission. This site was developed as a simple tool for data submission by national data correspondents. A user manual was also distributed. A new webpage update was introduced by H. Honda. This would allow ISC officers to help post documents. When an upload is made, the webmaster will automatically receive an email from the system so that the webmaster can complete posting the file on the appropriate window on the website.

5. Remaining data requirements or gaps were raised by the species WG chairs. Several species WG chairs pointed out that there might be some unreported catches by non ISC members held by other regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs). It was agreed that a data request should be made by the species WG chair. If this is not successful, then STATWG chair will send a blanket request to them. As a future work plan, 14 items were identified and priorities were set. Important items are listed below:

- Data request to other RFMOs (not covered by ISC);
- Check metadata including coverage info;
- Hire permanent Data Administrator;
- Rescue historical data;

- Provide oversight for archiving input, output, metadata and software;
- Monitor data reporting;
- Incorporate bycatch data (based on input from the Bycatch WG); and
- Further development of the website and ISC database.

6. Employment of permanent database administrator is considered essential but that position has been difficult to be met under the current personnel system at the National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries (NRIFSF). Database administrator responsibilities were given to one of the NRIFSF staff.

7. N. Miyabe also highlighted the biological research needs (age, growth, maturation, sex ratio) that were presented during the seminar especially by North Pacific albacore and billfish species working groups at ISC8. For albacore, biological parameters currently used were obtained about 50–60 years ago, and those for billfish require initial estimates and updates. In order to estimate these parameters, comprehensive data collection for biological samples are necessary involving various agencies and universities throughout North Pacific. For blue marlin, Pacific-wide collaboration is warranted as its distribution is continuous between the North and South Pacific.

8. For North Pacific albacore, two-year term research proposal was developed whose total cost was estimated to be USD95,000. For billfish, ageing and maturity studies were proposed separately, requesting 3.5–4 year term project (USD10,000 per species) and three-year term histological examination (USD15,000 per species), respectively. More detail is provided in Annex 11, Appendix 1, of the ISC8 report.

9. Finally, it was recommended that a task force be formed to consider designing a multispecies and large-scale biological sampling programme for both age and growth and maturity studies. Each WG will first develop its own sampling plan. Then, these plans will be subsequently brought to the task force to begin development of a single coordinated multispecies biological sampling programme. The task force is composed of WG chairs and nation representatives, led by Drs. Chang and Holmes. It was also decided that the task force chair would distribute completed WG research plans to members. Prior to ISC9, the task force will meet to devise a coordinated multispecies biological sampling proposal for the plenary's consideration.

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**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC
COMMITTEE**

1. The provisional level of tuna catch for 2007 in the WCPO was around 2.4 million mt, where 73% was by purse seine, 10% by longline, 9% by pole-and-line, and the rest by other gear types. Skipjack was the dominant catch, comprising 72% of the total catch, followed by yellowfin (18%), bigeye (6%), and South Pacific albacore (4%).

2. Full stock assessments were conducted in 2008 for bigeye, skipjack, South Pacific albacore, and swordfish stocks. The following matrix shows a brief description of stock status and management implications for key tuna species in the WCPO.

Bigeye	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overfishing is occurring in the WCPO. While the stock is not yet in an overfished state with respect to total biomass, there is a 42.8% probability that the adult biomass is in an overfished state. • A minimum of 30% reduction in fishing mortality from the average levels for 2003–2006 was recommended with the goal of returning the fishing mortality rate to F_{MSY}. Additional reductions will be required in fishing mortality in the future if assessments indicate that fishing mortality is greater than F_{MSY}.
Yellowfin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The stock status description and management recommendations from SC3 are still current.
Skipjack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overfishing is not occurring and the stock is not in an overfished state. • The high recent catches are considered to be sustainable unless recruitment falls persistently below the long-term average.
SP albacore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The assessment results differ substantially from results from the 2006 assessment, due to the changes in biological information. These changes reduced the biomass estimates and raised fishing mortality. • The SC recommended that catches remain at current levels.
SW and south-central Pacific swordfish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plausible assessment results indicate that overfishing is not occurring and that the stock is not in an overfished state. • Due to the uncertainty in the assessment, no further increase in catch or effort was recommended.
SW Pacific striped	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was no stock assessment undertaken for striped marlin in the southwestern Pacific Ocean in 2008.

marlin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The stock status description and management recommendations from SC2 are still current: no increase in fishing mortality (i.e. fishing effort) on striped marlin in the southwestern Pacific.
NP albacore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal management advice that F should not be increased from the current level (F=0.75, based on 2002-2004) is still valid.
Pacific bluefin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No further increase of the fishing mortality from the current level. Increases in F above the current level, and/or unfavorable changes in environmental conditions, may result in recruitment levels which are insufficient to sustain the current productivity of the stock.
NP swordfish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No stock assessment; and no management advice is offered.
NP striped marlin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The fishing mortality rate should be reduced from the current level (to 2003 or before)

3. Issues on bycatch mitigation include further specification of streamer lines in seabird mitigation measure; application of shark measure to vessels less than 24 m in length; further study or industry-associated work related to small tuna on floating objects; and continued research on ecological risk assessment.

4. On data and information issues, the SC considered data gaps remained, including the provision of operational (and other) data to the Commission; research on sampling improvements in multispecies purse-seine sampling to reduce bias in species composition; and the results of the 5th Steering Committee Meeting of the Indonesia and Philippines Data Collection Project (IPDCP) and the 1st Steering Committee Meeting on Pacific Tuna Tagging Programme (PTTP).

5. The SC reviewed a working paper on the assessment of purse-seine fishing effort on the high seas and in the zones of non-Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) members (SC4-ST-WP-4), and requested CCMs to provide any additional changes, if they have, to the Secretariat by 15 September 2008.

6. In relation to the special requirements of developing states and participating territories, the SC expressed appreciation to the Federated States of Micronesia and the United States for their financial contribution to Special Requirement Fund. FFA members also expressed thanks to Japan for the Japanese Trust Fund for the capacity building in Pacific Island developing states.

7. For the future work programme, the SC proposed nine independent projects, including North Pacific striped marlin mitigation methods, in addition to the Commission's science services with a budget of USD795,000 for 2009. This budget includes no substantial increase from the indicative budget, except a small increase for the Commission's science services. For 2009, a full yellowfin stock assessment and a streamlined South Pacific albacore assessment were recommended.

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**DRAFT CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURE FOR
PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA**

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC),

Recalling that the Northern Committee at its Third Regular Session agreed to consider conservation and management measures for northern Pacific bluefin tuna at its Fourth Regular Session in 2008, based on results of stock assessment conducted in 2008,

Recognizing that members of the Northern Committee have made effort, on a voluntary basis, not to increase the fishing mortality rate of northern Pacific bluefin tuna,

Taking account of the conservation advice from the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) meeting in 2008 on this stock which highlighted that increase in fishing mortality (F) of northern Pacific bluefin tuna may result in recruitment levels which are insufficient to sustain the current productivity of the stock and that it is important that the current level of F is not increased,

Also recognizing that the trend of spawning stock biomass has been influenced substantially by the annual level of recruitment and that to collect fisheries data in an accurate and timely manner is critically important for the proper management of this stock, and

Further recalling that paragraph (4), Article 22 of the WCPFC Convention which requires cooperation between the Commission and the IATTC for the management of fish stocks such as northern Pacific bluefin tuna that occur in the Convention Areas of both organizations,

Adopts, in accordance with Article 10 of the WCPFC Convention that:

1. The interim management objective for Pacific bluefin tuna is to ensure that the current level of fishing mortality rate is not increased in the Convention Area. Initially, control over fishing effort will be used to achieve this objective as follows:
2. The Commission Members, Cooperating Non-Members and participating Territories (hereinafter referred to as CCMs) shall take measures necessary to ensure that total fishing effort by their vessels for northern Pacific bluefin tuna in the area north of the 20 degrees north shall not be increased in 2009–2011;

3. CCMs shall also take measures necessary to strengthen data collecting system for the northern Pacific bluefin tuna fisheries in order to improve the data quality and shorten time to report;
4. CCMs shall report to Executive Director by 31 July 2009 measures they implement paragraphs 2 and 3 above;
5. The Northern Committee at its Fifth Regular session in 2009 shall review reports CCMs submit pursuant to paragraph 4 above and consider, if necessary and appropriate, further measures with particular attention to the recent trend of increasing fishing mortality rate on ages 0–3;
6. The WCPFC Executive Director shall communicate this Conservation Management Measure to the IATTC Secretariat and its contracting parties whose fishing vessels engage in fishing for northern Pacific bluefin tuna and request them to take similar measures in conformity with paragraphs 2 and 3 above; and
7. To enhance effectiveness of this resolution, CCMs are encouraged to communicate with and, if appropriate, work with the concerned IATTC contracting parties bilaterally.
8. The provisions of paragraph 2 shall not prejudice the legitimate rights and obligations under international law of those small island developing State Members and participating territories in the Convention Area whose current fishing activity for northern Pacific bluefin tuna is limited, but that have a real interest in fishing for the species, that may wish to develop their own fisheries for northern Pacific bluefin tuna in the future.
9. The provisions of paragraph 8 shall not provide a basis for an increase in fishing effort by fishing vessels owned or operated by interests outside such developing coastal State, particularly Small Island developing State Members or participating territories, unless such fishing is conducted in support of efforts by such Members and territories to develop their own domestic fisheries.

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**STATEMENT ON NORTHERN PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA BY THE
KOREAN DELEGATION**

Korea appreciates efforts made by ISC scientists to make a recommendation on the northern Pacific bluefin tuna and Japanese proposal based on the recommendation made by the Scientific Committee. However, Korea regrets that at this time Korea must express a reservation on the adoption of a proposed WCPFC Conservation and Management Measure on the northern Pacific bluefin tuna. Korea had no time to consult with local fishermen on the Japanese proposal and needs sufficient time to consult with local fishermen before making any formal decision on the northern Pacific bluefin tuna. Korea recognizes the important views of local fishermen, and will have a consultation with stakeholders in Korea as soon as possible. Korea intends to provide the Northern Committee Chairman with comments on the proposed WCPFC Conservation and Management Measure following this consultation.

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AN INTERIM MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE FOR NORTH PACIFIC ALBACORE

At its third regular session, the Northern Committee (NC) considered the concept of an interim management objective for North Pacific albacore that would, in essence, maintain the spawning stock biomass in the range of its historical fluctuation until reference points are established. It is proposed that the following be adopted as an interim management objective for the stock.

For this purpose of formulating, and recommending to the Commission, conservation and management measures for the North Pacific albacore stock, the NC agrees to adopt and achieve an interim management objective for the stock, as described in the following paragraphs.

1. The interim management objective for North Pacific albacore is to maintain the spawning stock biomass (SSB) above the average level of its 10 historically¹ lowest points (hereinafter referred to as “the Level”).
2. In the case that current fishing mortality rate would likely² cause SSB to fall below the Level, the NC shall formulate conservation and management recommendations to reduce the fishing mortality rate as needed to attain the interim objective, taking account of social and economic factors.
3. Achievement of the interim management objective will not preclude the NC from formulating and recommending conservation and management measures that would achieve additional objectives, particularly those stipulated in the Convention or otherwise adopted by the Commission.
4. The NC will develop more permanent objectives for recommendation to the Commission, specifically reference points that fulfill the provisions of Article 6 of the Convention.
5. The ISC is requested to conduct its assessments of the North Pacific albacore stock, and to express the results of its assessments, such that they include the information necessary to achieve this interim management objective.

¹ Here, “historically observed SSB” means the time series of annual SSB levels from 1966 through 2005, as estimated in the latest formal stock assessment of the ISC.

² Here, “likely” means greater than 50% probability.

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**THE US PROPOSAL ON THE AMENDMENT OF
CMM-2005-03 (CMM FOR NP ALBACORE)**

- A. The Northern Committee recommends that Conservation and Management Measure 2005-03, on North Pacific albacore, be amended as follows:

Paragraph 4 is amended to read:

4. All CCMs shall report annually to the WCPF Commission all catches of albacore north of the equator and all fishing effort in fisheries directed at albacore, both north of the equator **and north of the equator within the Convention Area**. The reports for both catch and fishing effort shall be made by gear type. Catches shall be reported in terms of weight. Fishing effort shall be reported in terms of the most relevant measures for a given type, including at a minimum for all gear types, the number of vessel-days fished. **The report for a given calendar year shall be due on April 30 of the subsequent year. Reports for each of the years 2004 through 2008 shall be due on 30 April 2009.**

New paragraphs 11 and 12 are added:

11. For the purpose of evaluating implementation of paragraph 2, CCMs shall report to the Executive Director no later than 30 April 2009 the following information:

- a. a list of their specific fisheries or fleets they have determined to be “fishing for” North Pacific albacore in the Convention Area;
- b. a description of how they have interpreted or defined “current levels” of fishing effort in each of the fisheries or fleets identified above;
- c. a description of the particular controls they have established to ensure that fishing effort in each of the fisheries or fleets does not increase above “current levels”; and
- d. a description of the measures or mechanisms being used to monitor fishing effort and compliance with the established controls.

12. For the purpose of evaluating implementation of paragraphs 2-4, the Secretariat shall compile all the reports submitted under paragraphs 3 and 4 and present the compilation to the fifth regular sessions of the Northern Committee and the Technical and Compliance Committee.

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**WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE NORTHERN COMMITTEE
(AS REVISED BY THE FOURTH REGULAR SESSION)**

Work areas	5-year objectives	1-year tasks				
	2008–2012	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
11. Northern stocks a. Monitor status; consider management action	Review status and take action as needed for: ³ North Pacific albacore	Consider interim management objectives and ISC advice Obtain scientific advice and make recommendations for reference points for NP albacore	Obtain and review ISC advice in light of interim management objective and consider the need for management action.	Obtain and review a full assessment		

³ In the event that the Commission, in accordance with paragraph 5 of Annex I of the Commission Rules of Procedure, adds additional stocks, such as the northern stock of striped marlin, to the list of stocks understood to be “northern stocks”, this work programme will be revised to include periodic status reviews and consideration of management action for such stocks.

Work areas	5-year objectives	1-year tasks				
	2008–2012	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
b. Data	Pacific bluefin tuna	Obtain and review the status of the stock based on provisional stock assessment from ISC. Review reports from CCMs on their domestic management measures, consider advice of IC and consider management action	Review reports from CCMs on their domestic management measures, consider advice of IC and consider the need for management action	.	Obtain and review a full assessment	
	Swordfish		Obtain and review complete assessment (ISC) and consider management action			
	Striped marlin (if agreed by the Scientific Committee and Commission).	WG complete tasks CCMs report on voluntary constraints in relation to fishing mortality rate (i.e. catch or effort)	Review outcomes of the WG to consider alternative management options. CCMs report on voluntary constraints in relation to fishing mortality rate (i.e. catch or effort)			
	Achieve timely submission of complete data needed for assessments, formulation of measures, and review of Commission decisions	CCMs participating in the NC submit complete data on fisheries for northern stocks to the Commission Encourage submission to Commission of PBF data from all CCMs and make available to ISC	CCMs participating in the NC submit complete data on fisheries for northern stocks to the Commission Encourage submission to Commission of PBF data from all CCMs and make available to ISC			

Work areas	5-year objectives	1-year tasks				
	2008–2012	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
2. Non-target, associated, dependent species a. Seabirds b. Sea turtles c. Sharks	Consider systems to validate catch data					
	Consider appropriate implementation of methods to minimize catch and mortality.	Develop recommendation for implementation of mitigation measures adopted by Commission and review implementation of CMM-2006-02 in the northern area.	Review implementation of CMM-2007-04 in the northern area			
	Consider appropriate implementation of methods to minimize catch and mortality.	NC CCMs submit mitigation research results to the Commission, for compilation by Commission	Review mitigation research results and consider management action	Review mitigation research results and consider management action		
	Consider appropriate implementation for CMM-2006-05 in the northern area.	Review implementation for CMM-2006-05 in the northern area.	Review implementation for CMM-2006-05 in the northern area.			

Work areas	5-year objectives	1-year tasks				
	2008–2012	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
3. Review effectiveness of decisions	Annually review effectiveness of conservation and management measures and resolutions applicable to fisheries for northern stocks	Review effectiveness of NP albacore measure (CMM 2005-03)	Review effectiveness of NP albacore measure (CMM 2005-03), including members' reports on their interpretation and implementation of fishing effort controls Review effectiveness of Pacific bluefin tuna measure.			
4. Cooperation with other organisations						
a. ISC	Develop recommendations to Commission for requests to ISC for assessments, analyses, and advice in support of conservation and management measures Facilitate provision of data needed for assessments to ISC		Formulate request to ISC for information needed to achieve NP albacore interim management objective			
b. IATTC	Following Article 22.4, consult to facilitate consistent management measures throughout the respective ranges of the northern stocks		Have consultation to maintain consistent measures for NP albacore and northern Pacific bluefin tuna			

Issued in Washington, DC, on May 18, 2009, by the Commission.
David A. Stawick,
Secretary of the Commission.
[FR Doc. E9-12000 Filed 5-21-09; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE P

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

40 CFR Part 52

[EPA-R05-OAR-2007-1134; FRL-8908-2]

Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Michigan; Consumer Products Rule

AGENCY: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: EPA is proposing to approve a request submitted by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) on October 26, 2007, to revise the Michigan State Implementation Plan (SIP). The State has requested revisions to two rules in Part 6, "Emission Limitations and Prohibitions—Existing Sources of Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) Emissions." The State has revised R 336.1660 by adopting by reference, with some modifications, the amended Ozone Transport Commission Model Rule published on September 13, 2006. The State has amended the definition of VOC in R 336.1661 by adopting the Federal definition from 40 CFR 51.100.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before June 22, 2009.

ADDRESSES: Submit your comments, identified by Docket ID No. EPA-R05-OAR-2007-1134, by one of the following methods:

1. *http://www.regulations.gov*: Follow the on-line instructions for submitting comments.
2. *E-mail*: mooney.john@epa.gov.
3. *Fax*: (312) 692-2551.
4. *Mail*: John M. Mooney, Chief, Criteria Pollutant Section, Air Programs Branch (AR-18J), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 77 West Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois 60604.
5. *Hand Delivery*: John M. Mooney, Chief, Criteria Pollutant Section, Air Programs Branch (AR-18J), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 77 West Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois 60604. Such deliveries are only accepted during the Regional Office normal hours of operation, and special arrangements should be made for deliveries of boxed information. The Regional Office official hours of business are Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., excluding Federal holidays.

Please see the direct final rule which is located in the Final Rules section of this **Federal Register** for detailed instructions on how to submit comments.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Andy Chang, Environmental Engineer, Criteria Pollutant Section, Air Programs Branch (AR-18J), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5, 77 West Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois 60604, (312) 886-0258, chang.andy@epa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In the Final Rules section of this **Federal Register**, EPA is approving the State's SIP submittal as a direct final rule without prior proposal because EPA views this as a noncontroversial submittal and anticipates no adverse comments. A detailed rationale for the approval is set forth in the direct final rule. If no adverse comments are received in response to this rule, no further activity is contemplated. If EPA receives adverse comments, the direct final rule will be withdrawn and all public comments received will be addressed in a subsequent final rule based on this proposed rule. EPA will not institute a second comment period; therefore, any parties interested in commenting on this action should do so at this time. Please note that if EPA receives adverse comment on an amendment, paragraph, or section of this rule and if that provision may be severed from the remainder of the rule, EPA may adopt as final those provisions of the rule that are not the subject of an adverse comment. For additional information, see the direct final rule which is located in the Final Rules section of this **Federal Register**.

Dated: May 6, 2009.

Walter W. Kovalick, Jr.,

Acting Regional Administrator, Region 5.

[FR Doc. E9-11913 Filed 5-21-09; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560-50-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 300

[Docket No. 070717350-7391-01]

RIN 0648-AV63

International Fisheries; Western and Central Pacific Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species; Initial Implementation of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Proposed rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS proposes regulations to implement, in part, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention Implementation Act (Act), which authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to promulgate regulations needed to carry out the obligations of the United States under the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (Convention), including implementing the decisions of the Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPFC). NMFS has determined that this action is necessary for the United States to satisfy its international obligations under the Convention, to which it is a Contracting Party. It would have the effect of requiring that all relevant U.S. fishing vessels are operated in conformance with the provisions of the Convention.

DATES: Comments must be submitted in writing by June 22, 2009.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on this proposed rule, identified by 0648-AV63, and the draft environmental assessment (EA) and the regulatory impact review (RIR) prepared for the proposed rule by any of the following methods:

- Electronic submissions: Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking portal, at <http://www.regulations.gov>.
- Mail: William L. Robinson, Regional Administrator, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO), 1601 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1110, Honolulu, HI 96814. Include the identifier "0648-AV63" in the comments.

Instructions: All comments received are part of the public record and

generally will be posted to <http://www.regulations.gov> without change. All personal identifying information (for example, name and address) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (if submitting comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking portal, enter "N/A" in the relevant required fields if you wish to remain anonymous). Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word or Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

An initial regulatory flexibility analysis (IRFA) prepared under the authority of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) is included in the **CLASSIFICATION** section of the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section of this proposed rule.

Copies of the draft EA and RIR prepared for this proposed rule are available at http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/IFD/ifd_documents_data.html or may be obtained from William L. Robinson (see **ADDRESSES**).

Written comments regarding the burden-hour estimates or other aspects of the collection-of-information requirements contained in this proposed rule may be submitted to William L. Robinson, Regional Administrator, NMFS PIRO (see address above) and by e-mail to David_Rostker@omb.eop.gov or fax to 202-395-7285.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tom Graham, NMFS PIRO, 808-944-2219.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access

This proposed rule is also accessible at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr>.

Background on the Convention

The Convention was opened for signature in Honolulu on September 5, 2000, and entered into force in June 2004. The full text of the Convention can be obtained from the WCPFC website at: <http://www.wcpfc.int/convention.htm>. The area of application of the Convention, or the Convention Area, comprises the majority of the western and central Pacific Ocean. A map showing the exact boundaries of the Convention Area can be found on the WCPFC website at: <http://www.wcpfc.int/pdf/Map.pdf>. The Convention is focused on highly migratory species (HMS) and stocks of HMS. Under the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention Implementation Act (Public Law 109-479, Sec 501, *et seq.*, and codified at 16

U.S.C. 6901 *et seq.*), HMS fish stocks are defined to mean all fish stocks of the species listed in Annex I of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982, except sauries, occurring in the Convention Area, and such other species of fish as the WCPFC may determine. The Convention also provides for the conservation and management of non-target, associated and dependent species.

The WCPFC, established under the Convention, is comprised of the Contracting Parties to the Convention and fishing entities that have agreed to be bound by the regime established by the Convention. Other entities that participate in the WCPFC include Participating Territories and Cooperating Non-Members. Participating Territories participate with the authorization of their respective Contracting Parties. Cooperating Non-Members are admitted by the WCPFC on a year-to-year basis.

The current Contracting Parties to the Convention are: Australia, Canada, China, Cook Islands, European Community, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, Japan, Kiribati, Korea, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America and Vanuatu. Chinese Taipei (Taiwan), as a fishing entity, has agreed to be bound by the regime established by the Convention. The current Participating Territories are: French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna (affiliated with France); Tokelau (affiliated with New Zealand); and the Territory of American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the Territory of Guam (affiliated with the United States of America). The Cooperating Non-Members for 2009 are Belize, El Salvador, Indonesia, Mexico and Senegal.

The Convention was ratified by, and came into force for, the United States in 2007. The United States thereby became a full Member of the WCPFC after having been a Cooperating Non-Member since the WCPFC's establishment in 2004.

International Obligations of the United States under the Convention

The United States will, in general, implement the provisions of the Convention under authority of the Act, and, as appropriate, under authority of the High Seas Fishing Compliance Act of 1995 (HSFCA; 16 U.S.C. 5501 *et seq.*), the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

(MSA; 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*), the South Pacific Tuna Act of 1988 (SPTA; 16 U.S.C. 973-973r), and other applicable law.

The HSFCA implements the Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas, adopted by the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on November 24, 1993, and establishes a system of permitting, reporting, and regulation for U.S. vessels fishing on the high seas. The MSA governs the conduct of U.S. fisheries, primarily through fishery management plans developed by the Regional Fishery Management Councils and approved by the Secretary of Commerce. The SPTA implements the Treaty on Fisheries between the Governments of Certain Pacific Island States and the Government of the United States of America (South Pacific Tuna Treaty), and includes licensing and other requirements and restrictions for U.S. purse seine vessels fishing in the area of application of the South Pacific Tuna Treaty.

Authority to administer and enforce the Act, including the authority to promulgate regulations, is given to the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary). In promulgating regulations, the Secretary is directed to consult with the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Department in which the United States Coast Guard (USCG) is operating.

This proposed rule would implement only those provisions of the Convention that are fully specified; that is, provisions for which no further action is required by the WCPFC prior to implementation. For example, the WCPFC has adopted procedures for boarding and inspection of fishing vessels on the high seas in the Convention Area, as called for in Article 26 of the Convention. Consequently, the Convention's provisions on high seas boarding and inspection, including the procedures adopted by the WCPFC, would be implemented via this proposed rule. Certain Convention provisions will require further elaboration by the WCPFC before they can be implemented. As an example, Article 29 of the Convention calls for the WCPFC to develop procedures to monitor transshipments in the Convention Area. Those procedures have not yet been adopted by the WCPFC; therefore regulations to implement them are not included in this proposed rule.

Description of the Proposed Action

The proposed rule is described below in terms of its 10 main elements.

1. Authorization to fish

Owners or operators of U.S. vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS on the high seas in the Convention Area would be required to obtain a new NMFS-issued fishing authorization, called a "WCPFC Area Endorsement." Fishing would be defined, consistent with its definition under the Act, to specifically include receiving fish from another fishing vessel and bunkering or otherwise supplying or supporting a vessel that engages in fishing. Thus, carriers that receive HMS from another vessel, vessels that bunker vessels used to fish for HMS, and vessels that engage in operations at sea directly in support of, or in preparation for, fishing or transshipping by other vessels would be subject to this and other requirements of the proposed rule. This new authorization would be issued by the Regional Administrator of NMFS, Pacific Islands Region, supplemental to, and as an endorsement on, the permits issued under the authority of the HSFCA (high seas fishing permits; see 50 CFR 300.13). The prerequisites to obtaining a WCPFC Area Endorsement would be: having a valid high seas fishing permit (or simultaneously applying for one), submitting a complete application (see the next item, "vessel information"), and paying the required administrative fee. The application form would be designed as a supplement to the application for a high seas fishing permit. The WCPFC Area Endorsement would become void upon expiration, suspension, or revocation of the underlying high seas fishing permit. The WCPFC Area Endorsement is also subject to suspension or revocation independent to the high seas fishing permit. Holding a WCPFC Area Endorsement would trigger a number of other requirements, as described in the elements that follow.

2. Vessel information

Vessel owners and operators that apply for WCPFC Area Endorsements would be required to submit to NMFS, in their application forms for WCPFC Area Endorsements, specified information about the vessel and its operator (i.e., the master on board and in charge of the vessel) that is not already collected via the high seas fishing permit application. This information includes the name and nationality of the vessel operator (or operators); the communication types used on the vessel (e.g., single sideband

radio, voice Inmarsat, fax Inmarsat, e-mail Inmarsat, telex Inmarsat, or other type of satellite telephone), along with the communication service used and the identifying/contact number for each; the fishing methods used or intended to be used; the vessel's fish hold capacity, expressed in terms of either cubic meters or short tons; and the vessel's refrigeration and freezer capacity, including the types of refrigeration and freezer systems on board, the number of refrigeration and freezer units of each type, and the total refrigerating or freezing capacity of each type of system.

In addition, a bow-to-stern side-view photograph of the vessel in its current form and appearance, and in any case no older than five years, would have to be submitted to NMFS. The photograph could be in either paper or electronic format and must meet certain minimum specifications in terms of its size and resolution and the legibility of the vessel markings. Although the international radio call sign assigned to a given vessel is already collected in high seas fishing permit applications, an indication of whether or not an international radio call sign has been assigned to the vessel and what it is also would have to be submitted to NMFS by applicants for WCPFC Area Endorsements. This is because of the importance under the Convention of a vessel's international radio call sign (e.g., see paragraph below on "vessel identification") and NMFS' need to verify that the collected information is accurate. WCPFC Area Endorsement holders would have to submit to NMFS any subsequent changes to the submitted information within 15 days of the change.

In addition, owners or operators of any U.S. vessel used for fishing for HMS in the Convention Area in areas under the jurisdiction of any nation other than the United States (i.e., vessels for which a WCPFC Area Endorsement would not necessarily be required) would be required to submit to NMFS information about the vessel, its owners and operators and any fishing authorizations issued by such other nations. Specifically, all the information specified in the application for high seas fishing permits and in the application for WCPFC Area Endorsements would be required, as well as, for each fishing authorization issued by a nation or political entity other than the United States, the name of the nation or political entity, the name of the issuing authority, the authorization type, the period of validity, the specific activities authorized, the species for which fishing is authorized, the areas in which fishing is authorized, and any unique

identifiers assigned to the authorization. Copies of any such fishing authorizations also would have to be submitted to NMFS. This information would be collected via a new form (Foreign EEZ Form) designed for this purpose, and vessel owners/operators would be required to submit to NMFS any subsequent changes to the submitted information within 15 days of the change.

The collected information referred to above would be incorporated by NMFS into a record of U.S. fishing vessels authorized to be used for commercial fishing for HMS in the Convention Area beyond areas of U.S. jurisdiction. In accordance with the Convention, NMFS would keep this record updated and share it with the WCPFC, which would combine it with the records of its other Members and Cooperating Non-Members and make it publicly available via its website and other means.

3. Vessel monitoring system

Owners and operators of vessels with WCPFC Area Endorsements would be required to have installed, activate, carry and operate vessel monitoring system (VMS) units (also known as "mobile transmitting units") that are type-approved by NMFS, and authorize the WCPFC and NMFS to receive and relay transmissions (also called "position reports") from the VMS unit to the WCPFC and to NMFS. The WCPFC and NMFS would use the position reports as part of their respective VMS. Activation of a VMS unit would be required any time the unit is installed or reinstalled, any time the mobile communications service provider has changed, and any time directed by NMFS. Activation would involve submitting to NMFS a report via mail, facsimile or email with information about the vessel, its owner or operator, and the VMS unit, as well as receiving confirmation from NMFS that the VMS unit is transmitting position reports properly. The VMS unit would have to be turned on and operating (i.e., transmitting automated position reports) at all times while the vessel is at sea, both inside and outside the Convention Area. The VMS unit may be turned off while the vessel is in port, but only if the vessel operator notifies NMFS via mail, facsimile or email prior to such shut-down. In such cases, NMFS must also be notified when the VMS unit is subsequently turned back on (these two types of notifications are called "on/off reports"), and the vessel operator must receive confirmation from NMFS that the VMS unit is functioning properly prior to leaving port. In the case of failure of the

VMS unit while at sea, the vessel operator would be required to contact NMFS and follow the instructions provided by NMFS, which could include, among other actions: submitting position reports at specified intervals by other means, ceasing fishing, stowing fishing gear, and/or returning to port; and repairing or replacing the VMS unit and ensuring it is operable before starting the next trip. To facilitate communication with management and enforcement authorities about the functioning of the VMS unit and other purposes, operators of vessels with WCPFC Area Endorsements would be required to carry on board and continuously monitor while at sea a two-way communication device capable of real-time communication with NMFS in Honolulu. For the purpose of submitting position reports that might be required in the case of VMS unit failure, vessel operators must also carry on board a communication device capable of transmitting, while the vessel is on the high seas in the Convention Area, communications by telephone, facsimile, email, or radio to the WCPFC in Pohnpei, Micronesia.

The vessel owner and operator would be responsible for all costs associated with the purchase, installation and maintenance of the VMS unit, and for all charges levied by the mobile communications service provider as necessary to ensure the transmission of automatic position reports to NMFS. However, if the VMS unit is being carried and operated in compliance with the requirements in 50 CFR part 300, 50 CFR part 660, or 50 CFR part 665 relating to the installation, carrying, and operation of VMS units, the vessel owner and operator would not be responsible for costs that are the responsibility of NMFS under those regulations. In addition, the vessel owner and operator would not be responsible for the costs of transmitting the automatic position reports to the WCPFC.

NMFS publishes separately type-approval lists of VMS units. The current type-approval lists can be obtained from NMFS, Office of Law Enforcement, 8484 Georgia Avenue, Suite 415, Silver Spring, MD 20910; by telephone at 888-210-9288; or by fax at 301-427-0049.

The proposed rule is worded so as to avoid duplication with other VMS requirements, such as those established under the MSA and the SPTA. Compliance with the existing VMS requirements at 50 CFR part 300, 50 CFR part 660, and 50 CFR part 665 would satisfy this new requirement, provided that the VMS unit is type-

approved by NMFS specifically for fisheries governed under the Act, the VMS unit is operated continuously at all times while the vessel is at sea, the vessel owner and operator have authorized the WCPFC and NMFS to receive and relay transmissions from the VMS unit, and the proposed requirements in case of VMS unit failure are followed.

4. *Vessel observer program*

When in the Convention Area, the operator of a vessel with a WCPFC Area Endorsement or a vessel used in areas under the jurisdiction of another Member of the WCPFC would be required to accept on board and accommodate observers deployed as part of the WCPFC "Regional Observer Programme" (WCPFC ROP). Such observers would include persons designated by the WCPFC Secretariat, by the United States or by other Members of the WCPFC. Persons would be designated as WCPFC observers by the United States or other WCPFC Members only if the national or sub-regional observer program that deploys such observers has been authorized by the WCPFC to be a part of the WCPFC ROP. Once an observer program of NMFS is determined by the WCPFC to meet specified minimum standards and incorporated into the WCPFC ROP, relevant data collected in the NMFS program would be submitted to the WCPFC and maintained and used by the WCPFC as data in its larger WCPFC ROP.

It is anticipated that the NMFS observer program operating out of Honolulu, Hawaii, and Pago Pago, American Samoa, will be among the first national observer programs to be authorized to be part of the WCPFC ROP (it has already received interim authorization until July 1, 2012; full authorization would be granted subsequent to a successful audit of the program). Consequently, there would be little, if any, change in the placement of observers on vessels in the longline fleets based in Hawaii and American Samoa. The WCPFC Secretariat may place an occasional observer as part of an auditing process to ensure that national and sub-regional observer programs are operating up to WCPFC standards. It is also anticipated that U.S. purse seine vessels operating under the SPTA would continue to carry observers from the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) observer program (a sub-regional observer program). If the FFA is unable to provide observers to meet increased coverage levels mandated by the WCPFC, those vessels may make

other arrangements to obtain WCPFC-approved observers.

The responsibilities of vessel operators and crew members with respect to observers would include allowing and assisting observers to: embark and disembark at agreed times and places; have access to and use of all facilities and equipment on board that are necessary to conduct observer duties; remove samples; and carry out all duties safely. The vessel operator also would be responsible for providing observers, while on board the vessel, with food, accommodation and medical facilities of a reasonable standard equivalent to those normally available to an officer on board the vessel. In the case of longline vessels in the Hawaii and American Samoa fleets, however, costs incurred for providing subsistence for NMFS observers would be eligible for reimbursement, as currently provided at 50 CFR 665.28.

5. *Vessel identification*

Vessels with WCPFC Area Endorsements would be required to be marked in accordance with the Convention's requirements, which are based on the FAO Standard Specifications for the Marking and Identification of Fishing Vessels. Specifically, if assigned an international radio call sign (IRCS), the port and starboard sides of a vessel's hull or superstructure, as well as a deck, would have to be marked with the IRCS; if not assigned an IRCS, it would have to be marked with its official number (i.e., USCG documentation number or state or tribal registration number), preceded by the characters "USA" and a hyphen. In both cases, the specified marking would be the only allowable marking on the hull or superstructure apart from the vessel's name and hailing port. The markings would have to be placed so that they are clear, distinct, uncovered, and unobstructed. Any boats, skiffs, or other watercraft that are carried on board the vessel also would have to be marked with the same identifier as the fishing vessel. For some affected vessels, this marking requirement would conflict with other existing vessel marking requirements, such as those at 50 CFR 300.14 (under the HSFCA; applicable to vessels used for fishing on the high seas), 50 CFR 300.173 (under the legislation implementing the U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty; applicable to vessels used for fishing under that treaty), 50 CFR 660.704 (under the MSA; applicable to vessels in West Coast HMS fisheries), and 50 CFR 665.16 (under the MSA; applicable to vessels in western Pacific fisheries). Accordingly, the requirement at 50 CFR 300.14 would be

slightly modified in this proposed rule to make it consistent with this new requirement. The Pacific Fishery Management Council and the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council are evaluating whether there is a need to change the other three sets of regulations in order to remove potential conflicts with this proposed rule, if implemented. If the Councils recommend such changes, their recommendations would be subject to the approval of NMFS and would be implemented by NMFS through the rulemaking process.

6. Transshipment restrictions

Offloading fish from or receiving fish from a purse seine vessel at sea in the Convention Area would be prohibited. Transshipping at sea is already regulated for U.S. purse seine vessels licensed under the SPTA.

7. Reporting and recordkeeping

The owner or operator of any U.S. vessel used for commercial fishing for HMS anywhere in the Pacific Ocean would be required to maintain and submit to NMFS information on fishing effort and catch. The proposed rule would be worded so as to avoid duplication with other effort and catch reporting requirements, particularly those established under the MSA, the HSFCA, the Tuna Conventions Act of 1950 (16 U.S.C. 951–961 *et seq.*), the SPTA, and the implementing legislation for the U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty, as well as relevant State reporting requirements. Specifically, compliance with other existing reporting requirements would satisfy this new Act-mandated reporting requirement. The main effect of these proposed reporting requirements would be to collect fishing effort and catch information under the authority of the Act, which would enable NMFS to meet the reporting requirements of the WCPFC in accordance with the Convention and the decisions of the WCPFC. Confidentiality of information would be protected and handled by NOAA as required under U.S. laws, including the Act and the regulations proposed here (see element 10 below). Once the information is submitted by NOAA to the WCPFC, it would be handled in accordance with policies and procedures adopted by the WCPFC.

8. Compliance with the laws of other nations

A vessel with a WCPFC Area Endorsement would be prohibited from being used for fishing in areas under the jurisdiction of another nation unless it holds any license, permit or

authorization that may be required by such nation to do so. When a vessel with a WCPFC Area Endorsement operates in the Convention Area in areas under the jurisdiction of a Member of the WCPFC other than the United States, it would have to be operated in compliance with the laws of that Member.

Additionally, the owner and operator of any U.S. fishing vessel used in the Convention Area in an area under the jurisdiction of another Member of the WCPFC, if used for fishing for, retaining on board or landing HMS, would be required to comply with the relevant laws of that Member, including any laws related to the use of VMS units.

9. Facilitation of enforcement and inspection

The operator and crew of a vessel with a WCPFC Area Endorsement, when in the Convention Area, would be subject to the following requirements:

- Carry on board any fishing authorizations issued by another nation or political entity, or copies thereof, and make them available to specified authorities, depending on the area of jurisdiction the vessel is in;
- Continuously monitor the international safety and calling radio frequency (156.8 MHz; Channel 16, VHF-FM) and, if equipped to do so, the international distress and calling radio frequency (2.182 MHz);
- Carry on board a copy of the International Code of Signals; and
- When engaged in transshipment, allow and assist transshipment monitors authorized by the WCPFC (if on the high seas) or other Members of the WCPFC (if within their areas of jurisdiction) to inspect the vessel and gather information and samples.

In addition, the operator of any U.S. fishing vessel that is used for commercial fishing for HMS, when present in the Convention Area in an area in which it is not authorized to fish (e.g., on the high seas without a valid WCPFC Area Endorsement or in an area under the jurisdiction of another nation without an authorization from that nation to fish in the area), would be required to stow all fishing gear and equipment so such materials are not readily available for fishing.

Further, the operator of any U.S. fishing vessel (regardless of the species for which it is used to fish), when on the high seas in the Convention Area, would be required to accept and assist boarding and inspection by authorized inspectors of other Contracting Parties to the Convention and, if agreed to by the United States, authorized inspectors of fishing entities that have agreed to be

bound by the regime established by the Convention, such as Chinese Taipei (Taiwan), provided that such boarding and inspection is undertaken in conformance with the WCPFC's adopted procedures.

10. Confidentiality of information

As mandated by the Act, the proposed rule would include procedures designed to preserve the confidentiality of information submitted in compliance with the Act and its implementing regulations. In accordance with the Convention, the proposed procedures would allow for the disclosure of confidential information to the WCPFC. Once such information is held by the WCPFC, access to the information would be governed by the policies and procedures adopted by the WCPFC.

Classification

The NMFS Assistant Administrator has determined that this proposed rule is consistent with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention Implementation Act and other applicable laws, subject to further consideration after public comment.

National Environmental Policy Act

NMFS has prepared a draft EA that discusses the expected impacts that implementation of this proposed rule would have on the environment. A copy of the draft EA is available from NMFS and NMFS invites public comments on the draft EA (see **ADDRESSES**).

Executive Order 12866

This proposed rule has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

An IRFA was prepared, as required by section 603 of the RFA. The IRFA describes the economic impact this proposed rule, if adopted, would have on small entities. A description of the action, why it is being considered, and the legal basis for this action are contained at the beginning of this section in the preamble and in the **SUMMARY** section of the preamble. The analysis follows:

There would be no disproportionate economic impacts between small and large entities operating vessels resulting from this rule. Furthermore, there would be no disproportionate economic impacts based on vessel size, gear, or homeport.

The proposed rule would apply to owners and operators of U.S. vessels used for fishing in the Pacific Ocean. Most elements of the proposed rule would apply to smaller subsets of that

pool of vessels, as shown in Table 1. The numbering of the elements in Table 1 corresponds to the numbering used in the descriptions earlier in this section of the preamble. Table 1 also shows estimates of the numbers of vessels, broken down by vessel type where possible, to which each element of the proposed rule would apply. Based on (limited) financial information about the

affected fishing fleets, NMFS believes that with the exception of most vessels in the purse seine and carrier and support vessel fleets, virtually all the affected vessels are owned by small business entities (i.e., they have gross annual receipts of no more than \$4.0 million). In the purse seine fleet, NMFS believes that as many as 10 of the affected vessels are owned by small

entities. In the carrier and support vessel fleet, NMFS believes that no vessels are owned by small entities. The estimated numbers of small entities that would be affected by each element of the proposed rule are shown in parentheses in the last column of Table 1.

TABLE 1. DESCRIPTIONS AND NUMBERS OF VESSELS AND SMALL ENTITIES TO WHICH THE PROPOSED RULE WOULD APPLY

Element of proposed rule	Description of vessels to which element would apply	Estimated number of vessels (and small entities) to which element would apply
1. Authorization to fish	Vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS on high seas in Convention Area.	Longline 139 (139) Purse seine 40 (10) Troll 69 (69) Support 5 (0) Total 253 (218)
2a. Vessel information high seas	Vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS on high seas in Convention Area.	Longline 139 (139) Purse seine 40 (10) Troll 69 (69) Support 5 (0) Total 253 (218)
2b. Vessel information foreign jurisdictions	Vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS in foreign jurisdictions in Convention Area.	Longline, troll, support 20 (20) Purse seine 40 (10) Total 60 (30)
3. VMS	Vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS on high seas in Convention Area.	Longline 139 (139) Purse seine 40 (10) Troll 69 (69) Support 5 (0) Total 253 (218)
4a. Vessel observer program high seas	Vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS on high seas in Convention Area.	Longline 139 (139) Purse seine 40 (10) Troll 69 (69) Support 5 (0) Total 253 (218)
4b. Vessel observer program foreign jurisdictions	Vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS in areas under jurisdiction of other WCPFC members in Convention Area.	Longline, troll, support 20 (20) Purse seine 40 (10) Total 60 (30)
5. Vessel identification	Vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS on high seas in Convention Area.	Longline 139 (139) Purse seine 40 (10) Troll 69 (69) Support 5 (0) Total 253 (218)
6. Transshipment restrictions	Purse seine vessels used for fishing in Convention Area and vessels used to receive fish in Convention Area.	Longline 0 (0) Purse seine 40 (10) Troll 0 (0) Support 5 (0) Total 45 (10)
7. Reporting and recordkeeping	Vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS in Pacific Ocean.	Total 5,000 (5,000)
8a. Compliance with the laws of other nations high seas	Vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS on high seas in Convention Area.	Longline 139 (139) Purse seine 40 (10) Troll 69 (69) Support 5 (0) Total 253 (218)
8b. Compliance with the laws of other nations jurisdictions of other WCPFC members	Vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS in areas under the jurisdiction of other WCPFC members.	Longline, troll, support 20 (20) Purse seine 40 (10) Total 60 (30)
9a. Facilitation of enforcement and inspection HMS fishing	Vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS in the Convention Area on high seas or in areas under the jurisdiction of other nations.	Longline 139 (139) Purse seine 40 (10) Troll 69 (69) Support 5 (0) Total 253 (218)
9b. Facilitation of enforcement and inspection—all fishing	Fishing vessels used on high seas in Convention Area.	Longline 139 (139) Purse seine 40 (10) Troll 69 (69) Support 5 (0) Total 253 (218)

TABLE 1. DESCRIPTIONS AND NUMBERS OF VESSELS AND SMALL ENTITIES TO WHICH THE PROPOSED RULE WOULD APPLY—
Continued

Element of proposed rule	Description of vessels to which element would apply	Estimated number of vessels (and small entities) to which element would apply
10. Confidentiality of information	None	Longline 0 (0) Purse seine 0 (0) Troll 0 (0) Support 0 (0) Total 0 (0)

The reporting, recordkeeping and other compliance requirements of this proposed rule are described earlier in the preamble. The classes of small entities subject to the requirements and the types of professional skills necessary to fulfill the requirements are as follows:

(1) Authorization to fish: This requirement would not impose any new reporting or recordkeeping requirements (within the meaning of the Paperwork Reduction Act, or PRA), but in order to obtain the authorization vessel owners/operators would have to pay a fee calculated to cover NMFS' administrative costs incurred to issue the authorization, projected to be about \$25 per five-year period. Approximately 218 small business entities would be subject to the requirement. Obtaining the authorization would be accomplished through completion and submission of an application form, as described in element (2) on vessel information.

(2) Vessel information: This requirement is part of a proposed collection of information subject to approval by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the PRA. It would require a vessel owner or operator to complete one or both of two forms (one for vessels used on the high seas in the Convention Area and the other for vessels used in foreign jurisdictions in the Convention Area) designed to collect information about the subject vessel and its owner and operator. Approximately 218 small business entities would be subject to the high seas component of the requirement, and about 30 to the foreign jurisdictions component. A total of about 238 small business entities would be subject to one or the other component (i.e., about 10 would be subject to both). For an entity subject to both the high seas component and the foreign jurisdictions component, it is estimated that about 90 minutes of labor and \$1 in mailing costs would be required twice every five years. If the value of the required labor were \$50 per hour, the annual cost of compliance would therefore be about \$30 per affected entity. The labor requirements

and associated costs would be slightly less for entities subject to just one or the other of the two components. Fulfillment of this requirement is not expected to require any professional skills that the vessel owners and operators do not already possess.

(3) VMS: This requirement is part of a proposed collection of information subject to approval by the OMB under the PRA. It would apply to about 218 small business entities. Most of these entities, however, are subject to similar existing VMS requirements and would thus be already in compliance with most aspects of this requirement. It is estimated that about 73 of the estimated 218 affected small entities would have to purchase, install and activate a new VMS. The 73 include the business entities involved in the albacore longline fleet (69) and those operating longline vessels that are not based in either Hawaii or American Samoa (4). Compliance for each of these approximately 73 small entities would involve the following approximate annualized costs: \$1,000 for the purchase and installation of VMS units (based on \$4,000 per unit and a lifespan of 4 years per unit), \$250 for VMS unit maintenance, and \$375 to \$525 for VMS unit operation (i.e., the transmission of automatic vessel position reports to NMFS), for a total of about \$1,625 to \$1,775 per year. In addition, about 2.5 person-minutes of labor for VMS unit activation reports, 25 person-minutes of labor for VMS unit on/off reports, 1 person-hour of labor for VMS unit purchase installation, and 1 person-hour of labor for VMS unit maintenance, on average, would be needed to comply.

The compliance cost of obtaining, carrying on board, and monitoring the required communication devices is expected to be zero, as it is believed that all affected small entities already carry and monitor such devices. The 145 affected small entities that are already subject to VMS requirements would not bear any compliance costs as a result of these new requirements. Fulfillment of this requirement is not expected to require any professional skills that the

vessel owners and operators do not already possess.

(4) Vessel observer program: This requirement would not impose any new reporting or recordkeeping requirements (within the meaning of the PRA). Approximately 218 small business entities would be subject to the high seas component of the requirement, and about 30 to the foreign jurisdictions component. A total of about 238 small business entities would be subject to one or the other component (i.e., about 10 would be subject to both). Affected small entities would be responsible for the costs associated with providing WCPFC observers with food, accommodations, and medical facilities.

Assuming that the observer programs administered by NMFS are authorized by the WCPFC to be part of the WCPFC ROP (again, the NMFS observer program has already received interim authorization valid until July 1, 2012), observers deployed by NMFS pursuant to regulations issued under other statutory authorities would be deemed to be WCPFC observers deployed in accordance with this new requirement. As such, vessel owners and operators would be subject to the costs and burdens associated with those other regulatory requirements. For example, in the case of longline vessels in the Hawaii and American Samoa fleets, costs incurred for providing subsistence for NMFS observers would be eligible for reimbursement, as currently provided at 50 CFR 665.28.

The frequency of deployment of WCPFC observers would be determined by the WCPFC, so it is not possible to accurately predict how often a given business entity would be required to accommodate a WCPFC observer. For the purpose of this analysis, it is assumed that observer coverage rates will be equal to the current target observer coverage levels established by the WCPFC for its ROP, which is 5 percent for all fleets except purse seine fleets, as described further below.

The recent coverage rates in the Hawaii and American Samoa fleets (at least 20 percent and about 10 percent, respectively) are in excess of the

WCPFC target coverage rate of 5 percent, so NMFS does not anticipate any substantial changes in the deployment rates to affected small entities in those fisheries, or any associated costs. Longline vessels not operating under Hawaii or American Samoa longline permits (e.g., vessels based in the Mariana Islands or on the U.S. west coast) are not currently subject to observer requirements, so entities that operate such vessels would bear new compliance costs, including the cost of providing food, accommodation, and medical facilities to observers (termed here "observer accommodation costs"). These costs are expected to be about \$20 per day (this is consistent with the amounts reimbursed by NMFS to owners of longline vessels for observer subsistence costs pursuant to 50 CFR 665.28(i)(1)). Assuming that an affected longline vessel spends 250 days at sea each year in the Convention Area on the high seas or in areas under foreign jurisdiction, its annual observer accommodation costs, at a 5 percent coverage rate, would be about \$250.

Recent observer coverage rates in the purse seine fleet are about 20 percent. However, a recent WCPFC decision (in Conservation and Management Measure 2008-01) requires 100 percent coverage in 2010 and 2011. For the purpose of this analysis, it is assumed that a 100 percent coverage rate would be required indefinitely. Assuming, based on logbook data, that an affected purse seine vessel spends 330 days at sea each year, and, as described above for longline vessels, \$20 per observed-sea-day in observer accommodation costs, annual observer accommodation costs at 100 percent coverage would be about \$6,600 per vessel. Of these estimated costs, 80 percent, or \$5,280 per vessel, would be "new" annual costs associated with this proposed requirement. Pursuant to the terms of the SPTT, entities in the purse seine fleet bear not only the costs of feeding and accommodating observers on board, but also certain costs imposed by the FFA for the operation of its observer program as it is applied to the U.S. purse seine fleet. Based on the budget for the FFA observer program for the 2008-2009 SPTT licensing period, which is based on a 20 percent coverage rate, the annual cost per vessel is approximately \$8,630. According to the budget, about 28 percent of those costs are fixed costs (as opposed to per-trip costs). It is not known how the fixed component of costs would change with an increase in coverage to 100 percent. Assuming that fixed costs do not change at all, the annual cost per vessel at 100 percent

coverage would be about \$33,440. If, on the other hand, fixed costs increase in proportion to the level of observer coverage, the annual cost per vessel at 100 percent coverage would be about \$43,150. Of these estimated per-vessel costs, 80 percent, or \$26,750 to \$34,520, would be new annual costs associated with this proposed requirement. Together with observer accommodation costs (\$5,280), the total per-vessel costs would be \$32,000 to \$39,800 per purse seine vessel.

Although the WCPFC target coverage rate for troll vessels is 5 percent, the WCPFC has not established a firm implementation schedule for troll vessels, so 5 percent coverage is not expected to be sought or attained for at least a few years. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this analysis, estimated compliance costs are based on a 5-percent coverage rate. There are currently no observer requirements for the albacore troll fleet (but observers are occasionally taken on a voluntary basis), so small entities that operate albacore troll vessels could be subject to an increase in deployment rates from zero to approximately one per 20 trips in the Convention Area. Affected entities would be responsible for observer accommodation costs, which, as described above for longline vessels, are expected to be about \$20 per day. Assuming, based on logbook information, that an affected albacore troll vessel spends 170 to 350 days at sea each year on trips in the Convention Area on the high seas or in areas under foreign jurisdiction, annual observer accommodation costs would be \$170 to \$350.

NMFS does not anticipate any small entities to operate support vessels, so no further analysis of observer-related costs for support vessels is provided here.

Fulfillment of this requirement is not expected to require any professional skills that the vessel owners and operators do not already possess.

(5) Vessel identification: This requirement is part of collections of information approved by the OMB under the PRA (OMB control numbers 0648-0348, 0648-0360, 0648-0361, and 0648-0492). Approximately 218 small business entities would be subject to the requirement. All of these entities, however, are already subject to similar vessel marking requirements. Because vessels and their markings are periodically repainted, the proposed rule would not impose any new continuing burden on any entity; it would change (for all affected entities except those associated with the purse seine vessels) only the specifications of the markings that are required.

However, all the affected entities, with the exception of those associated with the purse seine vessels, would have to immediately change their vessel markings. The cost of doing so is approximately \$250 per vessel, including labor and materials; these costs would be borne by each of the approximately 208 affected small entities. Fulfillment of this requirement is not expected to require any professional skills that the vessel owners and operators do not already possess.

(6) Transshipment restrictions: This requirement would not impose any new reporting or recordkeeping requirements (within the meaning of the PRA). Approximately 10 small business entities would be subject to the requirement. Complying would require that owners and operators of purse seine vessels and receiving vessels refrain from engaging in transshipments from purse seine vessels at sea in the Convention Area. Purse seine vessels are already subject to substantial restrictions on at-sea transshipments under the SPTA, and purse seine vessels consequently do not, in practice, transship at sea. Accordingly, this requirement would impose essentially no compliance burden on affected entities. Fulfillment of this requirement is not expected to require any professional skills that the vessel owners and operators do not already possess.

(7) Reporting and recordkeeping: This requirement is part of a collection of information approved by the OMB under the PRA (OMB control numbers 0648-0214, 0648-0218, 0648-0223, 0648-0349, 0648-0492, and 0648-0498). The number of affected small entities is roughly estimated at 5,000. However, all of the affected entities are subject to existing similar (Federal and/or State) recordkeeping and reporting requirements and would thus be in compliance with this requirement and would not bear any additional reporting or recordkeeping burden as a result of this proposed rule.

(8) Compliance with the laws of other nations: This requirement would not impose any new reporting or recordkeeping requirements (within the meaning of the PRA). Approximately 218 small business entities would be subject to the high seas component of the requirement, and about 30 to the foreign jurisdictions component. A total of about 238 small business entities would be subject to one or the other component (i.e., about 10 would be subject to both). Fulfillment of this requirement is not expected to require any professional skills that the vessel

owners and operators do not already possess.

(9) Facilitation of enforcement and inspection: This requirement would not impose any new reporting or recordkeeping requirements (within the meaning of the PRA). Approximately 218 small business entities would be subject to the requirement. Fulfillment of this requirement is not expected to require any professional skills that the vessel owners and operators and crew members do not already possess.

(10) Confidentiality of information: This requirement would not impose any new reporting or recordkeeping requirements (within the meaning of the PRA), and it would not apply to any small entities (it would prescribe procedures for NOAA to follow in protecting and disseminating confidential information, including information submitted by owners and operators of fishing vessels and information collected by vessel observers).

A number of Federal rules overlap or conflict with the proposed rule, as described below for each of the 10 elements of the proposed rule:

(1) Authorization to fish: The existing requirement under the HSFCFA to obtain a high seas fishing permit (50 CFR 300.13) overlaps with the proposed authorization requirement in that both require a NMFS-issued authorization in order to use a vessel for commercial fishing for HMS on the high seas in the Convention Area. The existing high seas permit requirement has a broader scope, applying to the use of a vessel for commercial fishing for any species on the high seas anywhere in the world. The proposed authorization (the WCPFC Area Endorsement) would be required in addition to the high seas fishing permit.

(2) Vessel information: Some of the information that would be required from owners or operators of vessels used to fish commercially for HMS in the Convention Area on the high seas or in foreign jurisdictions overlaps with information collected under existing regulations. This includes information required for vessels using longline or troll fishing gear in the area of competence of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (50 CFR 300.22) and information required to obtain the following fishing authorizations: high seas fishing permits (50 CFR 300.13), licenses issued under the SPTA (50 CFR 300.32), permits for West Coast HMS fishing vessels (50 CFR 660.707), and permits for Western Pacific pelagic fishing vessels (50 CFR 665.21).

(3) VMS: The proposed requirement for owners and operators of vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS on the high seas in the Convention Area to install, activate and operate VMS units would be similar to existing VMS requirements at 50 CFR Part 300, 50 CFR Part 660 and 50 CFR Part 665. However, the proposed requirement would be consistent with the aforementioned existing requirements, such that vessels operating in accordance with relevant elements of the applicable existing regulations would also be operating in accordance with the relevant elements of the new requirements (the proposed requirements also include elements that do not overlap with any existing requirements). Thus, there would be no duplication in the compliance burden.

(4) Vessel observer program: The proposed requirement that operators of vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS in the Convention Area (either on the high seas or in areas under the jurisdiction of other WCPFC members) accept and accommodate observers deployed as part of the WCPFC ROP would overlap with existing requirements at 50 CFR 300.43 (South Pacific tuna fisheries) 50 CFR 660.719 (West Coast HMS fisheries) and 50 CFR 665.28 (Western Pacific pelagic fisheries), which require that vessel owners and operators accept and accommodate observers under various authorities. In general, the new requirement would supplement the existing requirements. However, the WCPFC ROP will incorporate existing sub-regional and national observer programs that the WCPFC determines to meet certain standards. It is likely that the sub-regional program implemented under the South Pacific Tuna Treaty (in the case of 50 CFR 300.43) and the national programs implemented by NMFS (in the cases of 50 CFR 660.719 and 50 CFR 665.28) will be incorporated into the WCPFC ROP. It is anticipated that once these programs are incorporated and the WCPFC relies on the information that is collected through them, the new requirement would not impose an additional compliance burden.

(5) Vessel identification: The proposed vessel identification requirement would conflict in certain respects with existing requirements at 50 CFR 300.173, 50 CFR 660.704, and 50 CFR 665.16 for any vessel that is both subject to any of the latter three requirements and that is used to fish commercially for HMS on the high seas in the Convention Area. NMFS intends to modify the three sets of existing requirements to make them compatible

with the proposed new requirement. The new requirement would be made effective only if and when the conflicts (for a given set of vessels) are removed.

The proposed requirement overlaps with the existing vessel identification requirement under the HSFCFA (50 CFR 300.14) in that both prescribe vessel marking requirements for vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS on the high seas in the Convention Area. The existing requirement under the HSFCFA has a broader scope, applying to the use of a vessel for commercial fishing for any species on the high seas anywhere in the world.

The proposed requirement would overlap with 50 CFR 300.35, which applies to purse seine vessels licensed under the SPTA and to the South Pacific Tuna Treaty Area.

The proposed requirement under the Act conflicts in certain respects with 50 CFR 300.14 in its current form, but the proposed rule would modify 50 CFR 300.14 to make it compatible with the proposed requirement.

(6) Transshipment restrictions: The proposed prohibition on transshipments that involve fish offloaded from purse seiners at sea in the Convention Area overlaps with the existing requirement under the SPTA (50 CFR 300.46), which prohibits purse seine vessels licensed under the SPTA from being used to transship at sea in the South Pacific Tuna Treaty Area except when done in accordance with such terms and conditions as may be agreed between the vessel operator and the State in whose jurisdiction the transshipment would take place.

(7) Reporting and recordkeeping: The proposed requirement for owners and operators of vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS anywhere in the Pacific Ocean to maintain and submit to NMFS information about their fishing effort and catch would overlap with existing reporting requirements at 50 CFR 300.17 (high seas fisheries), 50 CFR 300.22 (Pacific tuna fisheries), 50 CFR 300.174 (Canada albacore fisheries), 50 CFR 300.34 (South Pacific tuna fisheries), 50 CFR 660.708 (West Coast HMS fisheries) and 50 CFR 665.14 (western Pacific pelagic fisheries). The proposed requirement would be satisfied by complying with the applicable existing requirements; thus, there would be no duplication in the reporting or compliance burden. The reason for the overlapping requirement is that the information must be collected under the authority of the Act in order for NMFS to be able to provide it to the WCPFC, as NMFS is obligated to do under the Convention.

(8) Compliance with the laws of other nations: No duplicating, overlapping or conflicting Federal regulations have been identified.

(9) Facilitation of enforcement and inspection: The proposed requirement for operators of vessels that are used for commercial fishing for HMS on the high seas in the Convention Area to continuously monitor the international safety and calling frequency (156.8 MHz; Channel 16, VHF-FM) and, if equipped to do so, the international distress and calling frequency (2.182 MHz) overlaps with 50 CFR 300.37, which requires operators of purse seine vessels licensed under the SPTA to continuously monitor both frequencies. The proposed requirement for operators of vessels that are used for commercial fishing for HMS on the high seas in the Convention Area to carry on board and make accessible a copy of the International Code of Signals overlaps with 50 CFR 300.35, which requires operators of purse seine vessels licensed under the SPTA to do the same. The proposed requirement for operators of vessels that are used for commercial fishing for HMS on the high seas in the Convention Area to accept and accommodate the transshipment monitors authorized by other members of the WCPFC when conducting transshipments in areas under the jurisdiction of such members would overlap with 50 CFR 300.46, which applies to purse seine vessels licensed under the SPTA and to the South Pacific Tuna Treaty Area. The proposed requirement for operators of vessels that are used for commercial fishing for HMS in the Convention Area on the high seas or in areas under the jurisdiction of other nations, when in areas in which the vessel is not authorized to be used for fishing, to stow all fishing gear and equipment so as to not be readily available for fishing overlaps with 50 CFR 300.36, which requires operators of purse seine vessels licensed under the SPTA to do the same when in a Closed Area pursuant to the SPTA.

(10) Confidentiality of information: The proposed procedures to preserve the confidentiality of information submitted in compliance with the Act would overlap with similar procedures established under the MSA (50 CFR Subpart E), the HSFCA (50 CFR 300.17(c)), and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (50 CFR 229.11) in that the different sets of procedures would in some cases apply to the same information. The proposed procedures differ in some respects from the other sets of procedures (particularly in that the proposed procedures would allow the disclosure of confidential

information to the WCPFC), but they would not conflict with them.

NMFS has identified alternatives that would accomplish the objectives of the Act and minimize any significant economic impact of the proposed rule on small entities. The alternative of taking no action at all was rejected because it would fail to accomplish the objectives of the Act. As a Contracting Party to the Convention, the United States is required to implement the provisions of the Convention and the decisions of the WCPFC. Consequently, NMFS has limited discretion as to how to implement those provisions and decisions. Nonetheless, NMFS has identified for four of the elements of the proposed rule several alternatives that would satisfy the Convention's provisions and thus fulfill the objectives of the Act.

With respect to element (1), authorization to fish, one alternative would be to rely on the existing high seas fishing permit requirement under the HSFCA (that requirement applies to the high seas globally, not just the high seas in the Convention Area), rather than establishing an additional authorization requirement. Although this would be less costly to affected small entities than the proposed action, this alternative would fail to identify the pool of vessel owners and operators interested in fishing on the high seas in the Convention Area and subject to all the other Convention-related requirements. As a consequence, it would be difficult to conduct effective outreach and enforcement activities to achieve a high level of compliance with those requirements. A second alternative would be to create a new stand-alone permit (WCPFC Area Permit) that would be required for any vessel used for commercial fishing for HMS on the high seas in the Convention Area but which, unlike the proposed WCPFC Area Endorsement (which would be an endorsement on a high seas fishing permit), would not be related in any way to the high seas fishing permit. This would be slightly more costly to affected small entities than the WCPFC Area Endorsement.

With respect to element (2), vessel information, one alternative would be to collect the needed information separately from any permit requirement; that is, as a stand-alone requirement for vessel owners to submit specified information to NMFS. The cost to affected small entities would be about the same as that of the proposed action, but because it would not be tied to obtaining a fishing authorization, compliance with this alternative would likely be poorer than for the proposed

action. A second alternative would be to collect the needed information via the application for a WCPFC Area Permit. The cost to affected small entities under this alternative would be about the same as that of the proposed action.

With respect to element (3), VMS, one alternative would be to require that VMS units be carried and operated on vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS on the high seas in the Convention Area, but only when the subject vessel is actually on the high seas in the Convention Area. This could be slightly less costly to affected small entities because they would be allowed to disable the VMS unit when not on the high seas in the Convention Area, but because vessel operators would be allowed to operate in many areas with their VMS units disabled, compliance with this alternative while on the high seas in the Convention Area would be lower than under the proposed action. A second alternative would be to require that VMS units be carried and operated on vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS during the entirety of any trip that includes the high seas in the Convention Area. Like the previous alternative, this could be slightly less costly to affected small entities than the proposed action, but for the same reasons cited for the previous alternative, compliance with this alternative would likely be poorer than for the proposed action. A third alternative would be to require that a VMS unit be carried and operated at all times on any vessel with a WCPFC Area Permit. The costs to affected small entities under this alternative would be slightly more than under the proposed action.

With respect to the high seas boarding and inspection component of element (9), facilitation of enforcement and inspection, one alternative would be to require that only operators of vessels used to fish for HMS (rather than for any species, as being proposed) on the high seas in the Convention Area accept and facilitate boarding and inspection by authorized inspectors of other members of the WCPFC. The number of affected small entities would be smaller than under the proposed action. However, since the inspectors of other members of the WCPFC may not be able to readily distinguish U.S. vessels used for fishing for HMS (which the WCPFC's boarding and inspection regime is designed to target) from other U.S. fishing vessels, an effective boarding regime may require that U.S. fishing vessels in the latter category accept boarding from inspection vessels of other members of the WCPFC in order to verify the fishing vessel's status. By applying this

requirement to all U.S. fishing vessels, not just those used for fishing for HMS, non-HMS U.S. fishing vessels would be more prepared for the prospect of being boarded and inspected. As a consequence of such preparation, any boardings and inspections of non-HMS U.S. fishing vessels would be more likely to be completed quickly and without misunderstandings and conflict. NMFS believes that the proposed action would be safer and less costly to small entities than the alternative of applying the requirement only to operators of vessels used to fish for HMS.

Paperwork Reduction Act

This proposed rule contains collection-of-information requirements subject to review and approval by OMB under the PRA. These requirements have been submitted to OMB for approval. The public reporting burden for the vessel information requirements is estimated to average 60 minutes to complete an application for a WCPFC Area Endorsement and 90 minutes to complete a Foreign EEZ Form. The public reporting burden for the VMS requirement is estimated to average 5 minutes per activation report, 5 minutes per on/off report, 4 hours per VMS unit installation, and 1 hour per year for VMS unit maintenance. These estimates include the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

Public comment is sought regarding: whether these collection-of-information requirements are necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; the accuracy of the burden estimates; ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Send comments on these or any other aspects of the collection-of-information requirements to William L. Robinson, Regional Administrator, NMFS PIRO (see **ADDRESSES**) and by e-mail to David_Rostker@omb.eop.gov or fax to 202-395-7285.

Notwithstanding any other provision of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the PRA, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number.

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 300

Administrative practice and procedure, Fish, Fisheries, Fishing, Marine resources, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Treaties.

Dated: May 19, 2009

John Oliver,

Deputy Assistant Administrator For Operations, National Marine Fisheries Service.

For the reasons set out in the preamble, 50 CFR part 300 is proposed to be amended as follows:

PART 300—INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES REGULATIONS

Subpart B—High Seas Fisheries

1. The authority citation for 50 CFR part 300, subpart B continues to read as follows:

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 5501 *et seq.*

2. In § 300.14, paragraph (b)(2)(i) is revised to read as follows:

§ 300.14 Vessel identification.

* * * * *

(b) * * *

(2) * * *

(i) A vessel must be marked with its IRCS if it has been assigned an IRCS. If an IRCS has not been assigned to the vessel, it must be marked (in order of priority) with its Federal, State, or other documentation number appearing on its high seas fishing permit and if a WCPFC Area Endorsement has been issued for the vessel under § 300.212, that documentation number must be preceded by the characters "USA" and a hyphen (that is, "USA-").

* * * * *

3. Subpart O, consisting of §§ 300.210 through 300.222, is added to part 300 to read as follows:

Subpart O—Western and Central Pacific Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species

Sec.

- 300.210 Purpose and scope.
- 300.211 Definitions.
- 300.212 Vessel permit endorsements.
- 300.213 Vessel information.
- 300.214 Compliance with laws of other nations.
- 300.215 Observers.
- 300.216 Transshipment.
- 300.217 Vessel identification.
- 300.218 Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.
- 300.219 Vessel monitoring system.
- 300.220 Confidentiality of information.
- 300.221 Facilitation of enforcement and inspection.
- 300.222 Prohibitions.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 6901 *et seq.*

Subpart O—Western and Central Pacific Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species

§ 300.210 Purpose and scope.

This subpart implements provisions of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention Implementation Act (Act) and applies to persons and vessels subject to the jurisdiction of the United States.

§ 300.211 Definitions.

In addition to the terms defined in § 300.2 and those in the Act and in the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, with Annexes (WCPFC Convention), which was adopted at Honolulu, Hawaii, on September 5, 2000, by the Multilateral High-Level Conference on Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, the terms used in this subpart have the following meanings. *1982 Convention* means the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982.

Aggregate or summary form means information structured in such a way which does not directly or indirectly disclose the identity or business of any person who submits such information.

Commercial, with respect to commercial fishing, means fishing in which the fish harvested, either in whole or in part, are intended to enter commerce through sale, barter or trade.

Commission means the Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean established in accordance with the WCPFC Convention, including its employees and contractors.

Confidential information means any observer information or any information submitted to the Secretary, a State fishery management agency, or a Marine Fisheries Commission by any person in compliance with any requirement or regulation under the Act or under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

Conservation and management measure means those conservation and management measures adopted by the Commission pursuant to Article 10 of the WCPFC Convention.

Convention Area means all waters of the Pacific Ocean bounded to the south and to the east by the following line: From the south coast of Australia due south along the 141st meridian of east longitude to its intersection with the 55th parallel of south latitude; thence due east along the 55th parallel of south latitude to its intersection with the

150th meridian of east longitude; thence due south along the 150th meridian of east longitude to its intersection with the 60th parallel of south latitude; thence due east along the 60th parallel of south latitude to its intersection with the 130th meridian of west longitude; thence due north along the 130th meridian of west longitude to its intersection with the 4th parallel of south latitude; thence due west along the 4th parallel of south latitude to its intersection with the 150th meridian of west longitude; thence due north along the 150th meridian of west longitude.

Fishing means using any vessel, vehicle, aircraft or hovercraft for any of the following activities, or attempting to do so:

(1) Searching for, catching, taking, or harvesting fish;

(2) Engaging in any other activity which can reasonably be expected to result in the locating, catching, taking, or harvesting of fish for any purpose;

(3) Placing, searching for, or recovering fish aggregating devices or associated electronic equipment such as radio beacons;

(4) Engaging in any operations at sea directly in support of, or in preparation for, any of the activities previously described in paragraphs (1) through (3) of this definition, including, but not limited to, bunkering;

(5) Engaging in transshipment, either unloading or loading fish.

Fishing vessel means any vessel used or intended for use for the purpose of fishing, including bunkering and other support vessels, carrier vessels and other vessels that unload or load fish in a transshipment, and any other vessel directly involved in fishing.

High seas means the waters beyond the territorial sea or exclusive economic zone (or the equivalent) of any nation, to the extent that such territorial sea or exclusive economic zone (or the equivalent) is recognized by the United States.

High seas fishing permit means a permit issued under § 300.13.

Highly migratory species (or HMS) means any of the following species:

Common name	Scientific name
Albacore Pacific bluefin tuna Southern bluefin tuna Bigeye tuna Skipjack tuna Yellowfin tuna Little tuna Frigate mackerel Pomfrets Marlins	<i>Thunnus alalunga.</i> <i>Thunnus orientalis.</i> <i>Thunnus maccoyii.</i> <i>Thunnus obesus.</i> <i>Katsuwonus pelamis.</i> <i>Thunnus albacares.</i> <i>Euthynnus affinis.</i> <i>Auxis thazard; Auxis rochei.</i> Family <i>Bramidae.</i> <i>Tetrapturus angustirostris; Tetrapturus audax; Makaira mazara;</i> <i>Makaira indica; Makaira nigricans.</i>
Sail-fishes Swordfish Dolphinfish Oceanic sharks	<i>Istiophorus platypterus.</i> <i>Xiphias gladius.</i> <i>Coryphaena hippurus; Coryphaena equiselis.</i> <i>Hexanchus griseus; Cetorhinus maximus; Family Alopiidae; Rhincodon typus; Family Carcharhinidae; Family Sphyrnidae; Family Isuridae (or Lamnidae).</i>

Marine Fisheries Commission means the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, or the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Member of the Commission means any Contracting Party to the WCPF Convention, and, unless otherwise stated in context, any territory that has been authorized by an appropriate Contracting Party to participate in the Commission and its subsidiary bodies pursuant to Article 43 of the WCPF Convention and any fishing entity that has agreed to be bound by the regime established by the WCPF Convention pursuant to Annex I of the WCPF Convention.

NOAA means the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce.

Observer employer/observer provider means any person that provides observers to fishing vessels, shoreside processors, or stationary floating processors under a requirement of the Act or the Magnuson-Stevens Conservation and Management Act.

Observer information means any information collected, observed, retrieved, or created by an observer or electronic monitoring system pursuant to authorization by the Secretary, or collected as part of a cooperative research initiative, including fish harvest or processing observations, fish sampling or weighing data, vessel logbook data, vessel or processor-specific information (including any safety, location, or operating condition observations), and video, audio, photographic, or written documents.

Pacific Islands Regional Administrator means the Regional Administrator, Pacific Islands Region, NMFS, or a designee (1601 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1110, Honolulu, HI 96814).

Person means any individual (whether or not a citizen or national of the United States), any corporation, partnership, association, or other entity (whether or not organized or existing under the laws of any State), and any Federal, State, local, or foreign government or any entity of any such government.

Special Agent-In-Charge (or SAC) means the Special-Agent-In-Charge, NMFS Office of Law Enforcement, Pacific Islands Division, or a designee (1601 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 950, Honolulu, HI 96814; tel: (808) 203-2500; facsimile: (808) 203-2599; email: pidvms@noaa.gov).

State means each of the several States of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and any other commonwealth, territory, or possession of the United States.

Transshipment means the unloading of fish from one fishing vessel and its direct transfer to, and loading on, another fishing vessel, either at sea or in port.

Vessel monitoring system (or VMS) means an automated, remote system that provides information about a vessel's identity, location and activity, for the purposes of routine monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement of area and time restrictions and other fishery management measures.

VMS unit, sometimes known as a "mobile transmitting unit," means a transceiver or communications device, including all hardware and software, that is carried and operated on a vessel as part of a VMS.

WCPFC Area Endorsement means the authorization issued by NMFS under § 300.212, supplementary to a valid high seas fishing permit and expressed as an endorsement to such permit, for a fishing vessel used for commercial fishing for highly migratory species on the high seas in the Convention Area.

WCPFC Convention means the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (including any annexes, amendments, or protocols that are in force, or have come into force, for the United States) that was adopted at Honolulu, Hawaii, on September 5, 2000, by the Multilateral High-Level Conference on Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean.

WCPFC inspection vessel means any vessel that is:

(1) authorized by a member of the Commission to be used to undertake boarding and inspection fishing vessels on the high seas pursuant to, and in accordance with, Article 26 of the WCPFC Convention and procedures established by the Commission pursuant thereto;

(2) included in the Commission's register of authorized inspection vessels and authorities or inspectors, established by the Commission in procedures pursuant to Article 26 of the WCPFC Convention; and

(3) flying the WCPFC inspection flag established by the Commission.

WCPFC inspector means a person that is authorized by a member of the Commission to undertake boarding and inspection of fishing vessels on the high seas pursuant to, and in accordance with, the boarding and inspection procedures adopted by the Commission under Article 26 of the WCPFC Convention, and referred to therein as a "duly authorized inspector" or "authorized inspector."

WCPFC observer means a person authorized by the Commission in accordance with any procedures established by the Commission to undertake vessel observer duties as part of the Commission's Regional Observer Programme, including an observer deployed as part of a NMFS-administered observer program or as part of another national or sub-regional observer program, provided that such program is authorized by the Commission to be part of the

Commission's Regional Observer Programme.

WCPFC transshipment monitor means, with respect to transshipments that take place on the high seas, a person authorized by the Commission to conduct transshipment monitoring on the high seas, and with respect to transshipments that take place in areas under the jurisdiction of a member of the Commission other than the United States, a person authorized by such member of the Commission to conduct transshipment monitoring.

§ 300.212 Vessel permit endorsements.

(a) Any fishing vessel of the United States used for commercial fishing for HMS on the high seas in the Convention Area must have on board a valid high seas fishing permit, or a copy thereof, that has a valid WCPFC Area Endorsement, or a copy thereof.

(b) *Eligibility.* Only a fishing vessel that has a valid high seas fishing permit is eligible to receive a WCPFC Area Endorsement.

(c) *Application.* (1) A WCPFC Area Endorsement may be applied for at the same time the underlying high seas permit is applied for, or at any time thereafter.

(2) The owner or operator of a high seas fishing vessel may apply for a WCPFC Area Endorsement by completing an application form, available from the Pacific Islands Regional Administrator, and submitting the complete and accurate application, signed by the applicant, to the Pacific Islands Regional Administrator, along with the required fees.

(3) The application must be accompanied by a bow-to-stern side-view photograph of the vessel in its current form and appearance. The photograph must meet the specifications prescribed on the application form and clearly show that the vessel is marked in accordance with the vessel identification requirements of § 300.217. A vessel photograph submitted as part of an application for a high seas fishing permit will be deemed to satisfy the requirement under this section, provided that it clearly shows that the vessel is marked in accordance with the vessel identification requirements of § 300.217 and it meets the specifications prescribed on the WCPFC Area Endorsement application form.

(d) *Fees.* NMFS will charge a fee to recover the administrative expenses of issuance of a WCPFC Area Endorsement. The amount of the fee will be determined in accordance with the procedures of the NOAA Finance Handbook, available from the Pacific Islands Regional Administrator, for

determining administrative costs of each special product or service. The fee is specified in the application form. The appropriate fee must accompany each application. Failure to pay the fee will preclude issuance of the WCPFC Area Endorsement. Payment by a commercial instrument later determined to be insufficiently funded is grounds for invalidating the WCPFC Area Endorsement.

(e) *Issuance.* (1) The Pacific Islands Regional Administrator will issue a WCPFC Area Endorsement within 30 days of receipt of a complete application that meets the requirements of this section and upon payment of the appropriate fee.

(2) If an incomplete or improperly completed application is submitted, the Pacific Islands Regional Administrator will notify the applicant of such deficiency within 30 days of the date of receipt of the application. If the applicant fails to correct the deficiency and send a complete and accurate application to the Pacific Islands Regional Administrator within 30 days of the date of the notification of deficiency, the application will be considered withdrawn and no further action will be taken to process the application. Following withdrawal, the applicant may at any time submit a new application for consideration.

(f) *Validity.* A WCPFC Area Endorsement issued under this subpart expires upon the expiration of the underlying high seas fishing permit, and shall be void whenever the underlying high seas fishing permit is void. Renewal of a WCPFC Area Endorsement prior to its expiration is the responsibility of the WCPFC Area Endorsement holder.

(g) *Change in application information.* Any change in the required information provided in an approved or pending application for a WCPFC Area Endorsement must be reported by the vessel owner or operator to the Pacific Islands Regional Administrator in writing within 15 days of such change.

(h) *Transfer.* A WCPFC Area Endorsement issued under this subpart is valid only for the vessel, owner, and high seas fishing permit to which it is issued and is not transferable or assignable to another high seas fishing permit or to another vessel.

(i) *Display.* A valid WCPFC Area Endorsement, or a photocopy or facsimile copy thereof, issued under this subpart must be on board the vessel and available for inspection by any authorized officer while the vessel is at sea and must be available for inspection by any WCPFC inspector while the

vessel is on the high seas in the Convention Area.

§ 300.213 Vessel information.

(a) The owner or operator of any fishing vessel of the United States that is used for fishing for HMS in the Convention Area in waters under the jurisdiction of any nation other than the United States must, prior to the commencement of such fishing, submit to the Pacific Islands Regional Administrator information about the vessel and its ownership and operation, and the authorized fishing activities, including copies of any permits, licenses, or authorizations issued for such activities, as specified on forms available from the Pacific Islands Regional Administrator. The owner or operator of such a fishing vessel must also submit to the Pacific Islands Regional Administrator a bow-to-stern side-view photograph of the vessel in its current form and appearance, and the photograph must meet the specifications prescribed on the application form. If any of the submitted information changes, the vessel owner or operator must report the updated information to the Pacific Islands Regional Administrator in writing within 15 days of the change.

(b) If any of the information or the vessel photograph required under paragraph (a) of this section has been submitted for the subject vessel on an application for a high seas fishing permit or an application for a WCPFC Area Endorsement, then the requirements of paragraph (a) of this section will be deemed satisfied. However, in order to satisfy this requirement, the high seas fishing permit or WCPFC Area Endorsement must be valid, the information provided must be true, accurate and complete, and in the case of a vessel photograph, it must meet the specifications prescribed on the form used for the purpose of submitting the photograph under this section.

§ 300.214 Compliance with laws of other nations.

(a) The owner and operator of a fishing vessel of the United States with a WCPFC Area Endorsement or for which a WCPFC Area Endorsement is required:

(1) May not use the vessel for fishing, retaining fish on board, or landing fish in areas under the jurisdiction of a nation other than the United States unless any license, permit, or other authorization that may be required by such other nation for such activity has been issued with respect to the vessel.

(2) Shall, when the vessel is in the Convention Area in areas under the jurisdiction of a member of the Commission other than the United States, operate the vessel in compliance with, and ensure its crew complies with, the applicable national laws of such member.

(b) The owner and operator of a fishing vessel of the United States shall ensure that:

(1) The vessel is not used for fishing for HMS, retaining HMS on board, or landing HMS in the Convention Area in areas under the jurisdiction of a nation other than the United States unless any license, permit, or other authorization that may be required by such other nation for such activity has been issued with respect to the vessel.

(2) If the vessel is used for commercial fishing for HMS, including transshipment of HMS, in the Convention Area in areas under the jurisdiction of a member of the Commission other than the United States, the vessel is operated in compliance with, and the vessel crew complies with, the applicable laws of such member, including any laws related to carrying vessel observers or the operation of VMS units.

(c) For the purpose of this section, the meaning of transshipment does not include transfers that exclusively involve fish that have been previously landed and processed.

§ 300.215 Observers.

(a) *Applicability.* This section applies to any fishing vessel of the United States with a WCPFC Area Endorsement or for which a WCPFC Area Endorsement is required.

(b) *Notifications.* [Reserved]

(c) *Accommodating observers.* All fishing vessels subject to this section must carry a WCPFC observer when directed to do so by NMFS. The operator and each member of the crew of the fishing vessel shall act in accordance with this paragraph with respect to any WCPFC observer.

(1) The operator and crew shall allow and assist WCPFC observers to:

(i) Embark at a place and time determined by NMFS or otherwise agreed to by NMFS and the vessel operator;

(ii) Have access to and use of all facilities and equipment on board as necessary to conduct observer duties, including, but not limited to: full access to the bridge, the fish on board, and areas which may be used to hold, process, weigh and store fish; full access to the vessel's records, including its logs and documentation, for the purpose of inspection and copying; access to, and

use of, navigational equipment, charts and radios; and access to other information relating to fishing;

(iii) Remove samples;

(iv) Disembark at a place and time determined by NMFS or otherwise agreed to by NMFS and the vessel operator; and

(v) Carry out all duties safely.

(2) The operator shall provide the WCPFC observer, while on board the vessel, with food, accommodation and medical facilities of a reasonable standard equivalent to those normally available to an officer on board the vessel, at no expense to the WCPFC observer.

(3) The operator and crew shall not assault, obstruct, resist, delay, refuse boarding to, intimidate, harass or interfere with WCPFC observers in the performance of their duties, or attempt to do any of the same. (d) Related observer requirements. Observers deployed by NMFS pursuant to regulations issued under other statutory authorities on vessels used for commercial fishing for HMS in the Convention Area will be deemed by NMFS to have been deployed pursuant to this section.

§ 300.216 Transshipment.

(a) *Transshipment monitoring.* [Reserved]

(b) *Transshipment restrictions.* Fish may not be transshipped from a purse seine vessel at sea in the Convention Area, and a fishing vessel may not be used to receive a transshipment of fish from a purse seine vessel at sea in the Convention Area.

§ 300.217 Vessel identification.

(a) *General.* (1) A fishing vessel must be marked in accordance with the requirements of this section in order for a WCPFC Area Endorsement to be issued for the fishing vessel.

(2) Any fishing vessel of the United States with a WCPFC Area Endorsement or for which a WCPFC Area Endorsement is required shall be marked for identification purposes in accordance with this section, and all parts of such markings shall be clear, distinct, uncovered, and unobstructed.

(3) Any boat, skiff, or other watercraft carried on board the fishing vessel shall be marked with the same identification markings as required under this section for the fishing vessel and shall be marked in accordance with this section.

(b) *Marking.* (1) Vessels shall be marked in accordance with the identification requirements of § 300.14(b)(2), and if an IRCS has not been assigned to the vessel, then the Federal, State, or other documentation

number used in lieu of the IRCS must be preceded by the characters "USA" and a hyphen (that is, "USA-").

(2) With the exception of the vessel's name and hailing port, the marking required in this section shall be the only vessel identification mark consisting of letters and numbers to be displayed on the hull and superstructure.

§ 300.218 Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

(a) *Fishing reports*—(1) *General*. The owner or operator of any fishing vessel used for commercial fishing for HMS in the Pacific Ocean must maintain and report to NMFS catch and effort and other operational information for all such fishing activities. The reports must include at a minimum: identification information for the vessel; description of fishing gear used; dates, times and locations of fishing; and species and amounts of fish retained and discarded.

(2) *Reporting options*. Vessel owners and operators shall be deemed to meet the recordkeeping and reporting requirements of paragraph (a)(1) of this section by satisfying all applicable catch and effort reporting requirements as listed below:

(i) *Western Pacific pelagic fisheries*. Fishing activities subject to the reporting requirements of § 665.14(a) of this title must be maintained and reported in the manner specified in that section.

(ii) *West Coast HMS fisheries*. Fishing activities subject to the reporting requirements of § 660.708(a) of this title must be maintained and reported in the manner specified in that section.

(iii) *Pacific tuna fisheries*. Fishing activities subject to the reporting requirements of § 300.22 must be maintained and reported in the manner specified in that section.

(iv) *South Pacific tuna fisheries*. Fishing activities subject to the reporting requirements of § 300.34(c)(1) must be maintained and reported in the manner specified in that section.

(v) *High seas fisheries*. Fishing activities subject to the reporting requirements of § 300.17(a) must be maintained and reported in the manner specified in § 300.17(a) and (b).

(vi) *Canada albacore fisheries*. Fishing activities subject to the reporting requirements of § 300.174 must be maintained and reported in the manner specified in that section.

(vii) *State-regulated fisheries*. Catch and effort information for fishing activities for which reporting of effort, catch, and/or landings is required under State law must be maintained and reported in the manner specified under such State law.

(viii) *Other fisheries*. All other fishing activities subject to the requirement of paragraph (a)(1) of this section must be recorded on paper or electronic forms specified or provided by the Pacific Islands Regional Administrator. Such forms will specify the information required, which may include: identification information for the vessel; description of fishing gear used; dates, times and locations of fishing; and species and amounts of fish retained and discarded. All information specified by the Pacific Islands Regional Administrator on such forms must be recorded on paper or electronically within 24 hours of the completion of each fishing day. The information recorded must, for each fishing day, include a dated signature of the vessel operator or other type of authentication as specified by the Pacific Islands Regional Administrator. The vessel operator must, unless otherwise specified by the Pacific Islands Regional Administrator, submit the information for each fishing day to the Pacific Islands Regional Administrator within 72 hours of the first landing or port call after the fishing day, and must submit the information in the manner specified by the Pacific Islands Regional Administrator.

(3) *Exceptions*. (i) Catch and effort information for fishing activities that take place in waters under State jurisdiction must be maintained and reported only in cases where the reporting of such activity is required under State law or under Federal regulations at §§ 300.22 and 300.34, and §§ 660.708 and 665.14 of this title.

(ii) Catch and effort information for fishing activities that take place in waters under Federal jurisdiction around American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands need not be reported under this section unless reporting of such activity is required under regulations in chapter VI of this title.

(b) *Transshipment reports*. [Reserved]

§ 300.219 Vessel monitoring system.

(a) *SAC contact information and business hours*. The contact information for the SAC for the purpose of this section is: 1601 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 950, Honolulu, HI 96814; telephone: (808) 203-2500; facsimile: (808) 203-2599; email: pidvms@noaa.gov. The business hours of the SAC for the purpose of this section are: Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

(b) *Applicability*. This section applies to any fishing vessel of the United States with a WCPFC Area Endorsement or for

which a WCPFC Area Endorsement is required.

(c) *Provision of vessel position information*—(1) *VMS unit installation*. The vessel owner and operator shall obtain and have installed on the fishing vessel, in accordance with instructions provided by NMFS and the VMS unit manufacturer, a VMS unit that is type-approved by NMFS for fisheries governed under the Act. The vessel owner and operator shall authorize the Commission and NMFS to receive and relay transmissions from the VMS unit. The vessel owner and operator shall arrange for a NMFS-approved mobile communications service provider to receive and relay transmissions from the VMS unit to NMFS. NMFS makes available lists of type-approved VMS units and approved mobile communications service providers.

(2) *VMS unit activation*. If the VMS unit has not yet been activated as described in this paragraph, or if the VMS unit has been newly installed or reinstalled, or if the mobile communications service provider has changed since the previous activation, or if directed by NMFS, the vessel owner and operator shall, prior to the vessel leaving port:

(i) Turn on the VMS unit to make it operational;

(ii) Submit a written activation report, via mail, facsimile or email, to the SAC that includes: the vessel's name; the vessel's official number; the VMS unit manufacturer and identification number; and telephone, facsimile or email contact information for the vessel owner or operator; and

(iii) Receive verbal or written confirmation from NMFS that proper transmissions are being received from the VMS unit.

(3) *VMS unit operation*. The vessel owner and operator shall continuously operate the VMS unit at all times, except that the VMS unit may be shut down while the vessel is at port or otherwise not at sea, provided that the owner and operator:

(i) Prior to shutting down the VMS unit, report to the SAC, via facsimile or email, the following information: the intent to shut down the VMS unit, the vessel's name; the vessel's official number; and telephone, facsimile or email contact information for the vessel owner or operator; and

(ii) When turning the VMS unit back on, report to the SAC, via mail, facsimile or email, the following information: that the VMS unit has been turned on, the vessel's name; the vessel's official number; and telephone, facsimile or email contact information for the vessel owner or operator; and

(iii) Prior to leaving port, receive verbal or written confirmation from NMFS that proper transmissions are being received from the VMS unit.

(4) *Failure of VMS unit.* If the vessel owner or operator becomes aware that the VMS unit has become inoperable or that transmission of automatic position reports from the VMS unit has been interrupted, or if notified by NMFS or the USCG that automatic position reports are not being received from the VMS unit or that an inspection of the VMS unit has revealed a problem with the performance of the VMS unit, the vessel owner and operator shall comply with the following requirements:

(i) If the vessel is at port: The vessel owner or operator shall repair or replace the VMS unit and ensure it is operable before the vessel leaves port.

(ii) If the vessel is at sea: The vessel owner, operator, or designee shall contact the SAC by telephone, facsimile, or email at the earliest opportunity during the SAC's business hours and identify the caller and vessel. The vessel operator shall follow the instructions provided by the SAC, which could include, but are not limited to: ceasing fishing, stowing fishing gear, returning to port, and/or submitting periodic position reports at specified intervals by other means; and, repair or replace the VMS unit and ensure it is operable before starting the next trip.

(5) *Related VMS requirements.* Installing, carrying and operating a VMS unit in compliance with the requirements in part 300 of this title, part 660 of this title, or part 665 of this title relating to the installation, carrying, and operation of VMS units shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements of paragraph (c) of this section, provided that the VMS unit is operated continuously and at all times while the vessel is at sea, the VMS unit is type-approved by NMFS for fisheries governed under the Act, the owner and operator have authorized the Commission and NMFS to receive and relay transmissions from the VMS unit, and the specific requirements of paragraph (c)(4) of this section are complied with. If the VMS unit is owned by NMFS, the requirement under paragraph (c)(4) of this section to repair or replace the VMS unit will be the responsibility of NMFS, but the vessel owner and operator shall be responsible for ensuring that the VMS unit is operable before leaving port or starting the next trip.

(d) *Costs.* The vessel owner and operator shall be responsible for all costs associated with the purchase, installation and maintenance of the VMS unit, and for all charges levied by

the mobile communications service provider as necessary to ensure the transmission of automatic position reports to NMFS as required in paragraph (c) of this section. However, if the VMS unit is being carried and operated in compliance with the requirements in part 300 of this title, part 660 of this title, or part 665 of this title relating to the installation, carrying, and operation of VMS units, the vessel owner and operator shall not be responsible for costs that are the responsibility of NMFS under those regulations.

(e) *Tampering.* The vessel owner and operator shall ensure that the VMS unit is not tampered with, disabled, destroyed, damaged or operated improperly, and that its operation is not impeded or interfered with.

(f) *Inspection.* The vessel owner and operator shall make the VMS unit, including its antenna, connectors and antenna cable, available for inspection by authorized officers, by employees of the Commission, by persons appointed by the Executive Director of the Commission for this purpose, and, when the vessel is on the high seas in the Convention Area, by WCPFC inspectors.

(g) *Access to data.* The vessel owner and operator shall make the vessel's position data obtained from the VMS unit or other means immediately and always available for inspection by NOAA personnel, USCG personnel, and authorized officers, and shall make the vessel's position data for positions on the high seas in the Convention Area immediately and always available to WCPFC inspectors and the Commission.

(h) *Communication devices.* (1) To facilitate communication with management and enforcement authorities regarding the functioning of the VMS unit and other purposes, the vessel operator shall, while the vessel is at sea, carry on board and continuously monitor a two-way communication device that is capable of real-time communication with the SAC. The VMS unit used to fulfill the requirements of paragraph (c) of this section may not be used to satisfy this requirement. If the device is anything other than a radio, the contact number for the device must be provided to the Pacific Islands Regional Administrator on the application form for the WCPFC Area Endorsement in accordance with the requirements of § 300.212.

(2) For the purpose of submitting the position reports that might be required in cases of VMS unit failure under paragraph (c)(4)(ii) of this section, the vessel operator shall, while the vessel is at sea, carry on board a communication device capable of transmitting, while

the vessel is on the high seas in the Convention Area, communications by telephone, facsimile, email, or radio to the Commission, in Pohnpei, Micronesia. The VMS unit used to fulfill the requirements of paragraph (c) of this section may not be used to satisfy this requirement. The same communication device may be able to satisfy the requirements of both this paragraph and paragraph (h)(1) of this section.

§ 300.220 Confidentiality of information.

(a) *Types of information covered.* NOAA is authorized under the Act and other statutes to collect and maintain information. This section applies to confidential information collected under authority of the Act.

(b) Collection and maintenance of information—(1) *General.*(i) Any information required to be submitted to the Secretary, a State fishery management agency, or a Marine Fisheries Commission under the Act shall be provided to the Assistant Administrator.

(ii) Any observer information collected under the Act shall be provided to the Assistant Administrator.

(iii) Appropriate safeguards as specified by NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 216–100 or other NOAA/NMFS internal procedures, apply to the collection and maintenance of any information collected pursuant to paragraphs (b)(1) or (b)(2) of this section, whether separated from identifying particulars or not, so as to ensure their confidentiality. Information submitted to the Secretary in compliance with this subpart shall not be disclosed except as authorized herein or by other law or regulation.

(2) Collection agreements with States or Marine Fisheries Commissions—(i) The Assistant Administrator may enter into an agreement with a State or a Marine Fisheries Commission authorizing the State or Marine Fisheries Commission to collect information on behalf of the Secretary.

(ii) To enter into a cooperative collection agreement with a State or a Marine Fisheries Commission, NMFS must ensure that:

(A) The State has authority to protect the information from disclosure in a manner at least as protective as these regulations.

(B) The Marine Fisheries Commission has enacted policies and procedures to protect the information from public disclosure.

(3) Collection services by observer employer / observer provider. The Assistant Administrator shall make the following determinations before issuing a permit or letting a contract or grant to

an organization that provides observer services:

(i) That the observer employer / observer provider has enacted policies and procedures to protect the information from public disclosure;

(ii) That the observer employer / observer provider has entered into an agreement with the Assistant Administrator that prohibits public disclosure and specifies penalties for such disclosure; and

(iii) That the observer employer / observer provider requires each observer to sign an agreement with NOAA/NMFS that prohibits public disclosure of observer information and specifies penalties for such disclosure.

(c) *Access to information*—(1) *General*. This section establishes procedures intended to manage, preserve, and protect the confidentiality of information submitted in compliance with the Act and its implementing regulations. This section applies to those persons and organizations deemed eligible to access confidential information subject to the terms and conditions described in this section and the Act. All other persons requesting access to confidential information should follow the procedures set forth in the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552, 15 CFR parts 15 and 903, NAO 205–14, and Department of Commerce Administrative Orders 205–12 and 205–14, as applicable. Persons eligible to access confidential information under this section shall submit to NMFS a written request with the following information:

(i) The specific types of information requested;

(ii) The relevance of the information to requirements of the Act;

(iii) The duration of time that access will be required: continuous, infrequent, or one-time; and

(iv) An explanation of why the availability of information in aggregate or summary form from other sources would not satisfy the requested needs.

(2) *Federal employees*. Confidential information will only be accessible to the following:

(i) Federal employees who are responsible for administering, implementing, or enforcing the Act. Such persons are exempt from the provisions of paragraph (c)(1) of this section.

(ii) NMFS employees responsible for the collection, processing, and storage of the information or performing research that requires access to confidential information. Such persons are exempt from the provisions of paragraph (c)(1) of this section.

(iii) Other NOAA employees on a demonstrable need-to-know basis.

(iv) Persons that need access to confidential information to perform functions authorized under a Federal contract, cooperative agreement, or grant awarded by NOAA/NMFS.

(3) *Commission*. (i) Confidential information will be subject to disclosure to the Commission, but only if:

(A) The information is required to be submitted to the Commission under the requirements of the WCPF Convention or the decisions of the Commission;

(B) The provision of such information is in accord with the requirements of the Act, the WCPF Convention, and the decisions of the Commission, including any procedures, policies, or practices adopted by the Commission relating to the receipt, maintenance, protection or dissemination of information by the Commission; and

(C) The provision of such information is in accord with any agreement between the United States and the Commission that includes provisions to prevent public disclosure of the identity or business of any person.

(ii) The provisions of paragraph (c)(1) of this section do not apply to the release of confidential information to the Commission.

(4) *State employees*. Confidential information may be made accessible to a State employee only by written request and only upon the determination by NMFS that at least one of the following conditions is met:

(i) The employee has a need for confidential information to further the Department of Commerce's mission, and the State has entered into a written agreement between the Assistant Administrator and the head of the State's agency that manages marine and/or anadromous fisheries. The agreement shall contain a finding by the Assistant Administrator that the State has confidentiality protection authority comparable to the Act and that the State will exercise this authority to prohibit public disclosure of the identity or business of any person.

(ii) The employee enforces the Act or fishery management plans prepared under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Conservation and Management Act, and the State for which the employee works has entered into a fishery enforcement agreement with the Secretary and the agreement is in effect.

(5) *Marine Fisheries Commission employees*. Confidential information may be made accessible to Marine Fisheries Commission employees only upon written request of the Marine Fisheries Commission and only if the request demonstrates a need for

confidential information to further the Department of Commerce's mission, and the executive director of the Marine Fisheries Commission has entered into a written agreement with the Assistant Administrator. The agreement shall contain a finding by the Assistant Administrator that the Marine Fisheries Commission has confidentiality protection policies and procedures to protect from public disclosure information that would reveal the identity or business of any person.

(6) *Homeland and national security activities*. Confidential information may be made accessible to Federal employees for purposes of promoting homeland security or national security at the request of another Federal agency only if:

(i) Providing the information promotes homeland security or national security purposes including the USCG's homeland security missions as defined in section 888(a)(2) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 468(a)(2)); and

(ii) The requesting agency has entered into a written agreement with the Assistant Administrator. The agreement shall contain a finding by the Assistant Administrator that the requesting agency has confidentiality policies and procedures to protect the information from public disclosure.

(7) *Observer and observer employer / observer provider*. Confidential information used for purposes other than those contained in this subpart or in part 600 of this title may only be used by observers and observer employers / observer providers in order:

(i) To adjudicate observer certifications;

(ii) To allow the sharing of observer information among the observers and between observers and observer employers / observer providers as necessary to train and prepare observers for deployments on specific vessels; or

(iii) To validate the accuracy of the observer information collected.

(8) Persons having access to confidential information may be subject to criminal and civil penalties for unauthorized use or disclosure of confidential information. See 18 U.S.C. 1905, 16 U.S.C. 1857, and NOAA/NMFS internal procedures, including NAO 216–100.

(d) *Control system*. (1) The Assistant Administrator maintains a control system to protect the identity or business of any person who submits information in compliance with any requirement or regulation under the Act. The control system:

(i) Identifies those persons who have access to the information;

(ii) Contains procedures to limit access to confidential information to authorized users; and

(iii) Provides handling and physical storage protocols for safeguarding of the information.

(2) This system requires that all persons who have authorized access to the information be informed of the confidentiality of the information. These persons, with the exception of employees and contractors of the Commission, are required to sign a statement that they:

(i) Have been informed that the information is confidential; and

(ii) Have reviewed and are familiar with the procedures to protect confidential information.

(e) *Release of information.* (1) The Assistant Administrator will not disclose to the public any confidential information, except:

(i) When the Secretary has obtained from the person who submitted the information an authorization to release the information to persons for reasons not otherwise provided for in this subpart. In situations where a person provides information through a second party, both parties are considered joint submitters of information and either party may request a release. The authorization to release such information will require:

(A) A written statement from the person(s) who submitted the information authorizing the release of the submitted information; and

(B) A finding by the Secretary that such release does not violate other requirements of the Act or other applicable laws.

(ii) Observer information as authorized by a fishery management plan (prepared under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act) or regulations under the authority of the North Pacific Council to allow disclosure of observer information to the public of weekly summary bycatch information identified by vessel or for haul-specific bycatch information without vessel identification.

(iii) When such information is required to be submitted for any determination under a limited access program.

(iv) When required by a court order.

(2) All requests from the public for confidential information will be processed in accordance with the requirements of 5 U.S.C. 552a, 15 CFR parts 4 and 903, NAO 205-14, and Department of Commerce Administrative Orders DAO 205-12 and DAO 205-14. Nothing in this section is intended to confer any right, claim, or

entitlement to obtain access to confidential information not already established by law.

(3) NMFS does not release or allow access to confidential information in its possession to members of advisory groups of the Regional Fishery Management Councils established under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, except as provided by law.

§ 300.221 Facilitation of enforcement and inspection.

In addition to the facilitation of enforcement provisions of § 300.5, the following requirements apply to this subpart.

(a) A fishing vessel of the United States with a WCPFC Area Endorsement or for which a WCPFC Area Endorsement is required, including the vessel's operator and each member of the vessel's crew shall, when in the Convention Area, be subject to the following requirements:

(1) The Federal Certificate of Documentation or State or other documentation for the vessel, or a copy thereof, shall be carried on board the vessel. Any license, permit or other authorization to use the vessel to fish, retain fish, transship fish, or land fish issued by a nation or political entity other than the United States, or a copy thereof, shall be carried on board the vessel. These documents shall be made available for inspection by any authorized officer. If the vessel is on the high seas, the above-mentioned licenses, permits, and authorizations shall also be made available for inspection by any WCPFC inspector. If the vessel is in an area under the jurisdiction of a member of the Commission other than the United States, they shall be made available for inspection by any authorized enforcement official of that member.

(2) For the purpose of facilitating communication with the fisheries management, surveillance and enforcement authorities of the members of the Commission, the operator shall ensure the continuous monitoring of the international safety and calling radio frequency 156.8 MHz (Channel 16, VHF-FM) and, if the vessel is equipped to do so, the international distress and calling radio frequency 2.182 MHz (HF).

(3) The operator shall ensure that an up-to-date copy of the International Code of Signals (INTERCO) is on board and accessible at all times.

(4) When engaged in transshipment on the high seas or in an area under the jurisdiction of a member of the Commission other than the United States, the operator and crew shall:

(i) Provide any WCPFC transshipment monitor with full access to, and use of, facilities and equipment which such authorized person may determine is necessary to carry out his or her duties to monitor transshipment activities, including full access to the bridge, fish on board, and all areas which may be used to hold, process, weigh and store fish, and full access to the vessel's records, including its log and documentation for the purpose of inspection and photocopying;

(ii) Allow and assist any WCPFC transshipment monitor to collect and remove samples and gather any other information required to fully monitor transshipment activities.

(iii) Not assault, obstruct, resist, delay, refuse boarding to, intimidate, harass, interfere with, unduly obstruct or delay any WCPFC transshipment monitor in the performance of such person's duties, or attempt to do any of the same.

(b) The operator and crew of a fishing vessel of the United States, when on the high seas in the Convention Area, shall be subject to the following requirements:

(1) The operator and crew shall immediately comply with instructions given by an officer on board a WCPFC inspection vessel to move the vessel to a safe location and/or to stop the vessel, provided that the officer has, prior to the issuance of such instructions:

(i) Provided information identifying his or her vessel as a WCPFC inspection vessel, including its name, registration number, IRCS and contact frequency; and

(ii) Communicated to the vessel operator his or her intention to board and inspect the vessel under the authority of the Commission and pursuant to the boarding and inspection procedures adopted by the Commission.

(2) The operator and crew shall accept and facilitate prompt and safe boarding by any WCPFC inspector, provided that an officer on board the WCPFC inspection vessel has, prior to such boarding:

(i) Provided information identifying his or her vessel as a WCPFC inspection vessel, including its name, registration number, IRCS and contact frequency; and

(ii) Communicated to the vessel operator an intention to board and inspect the vessel under the authority of the Commission and pursuant to the boarding and inspection procedures adopted by the Commission.

(3) Provided that the WCPFC inspector has presented to the vessel operator his or her identity card identifying him or her as an inspector authorized to carry out boarding and

inspection procedures under the auspices of the Commission, and a copy of the text of the relevant conservation and management measures in force pursuant to the WCPF Convention in the relevant area of the high seas, the operator and crew shall:

(i) Cooperate with and assist any WCPFC inspector in the inspection of the vessel, including its authorizations to fish, gear, equipment, records, facilities, fish and fish products and any relevant documents necessary to verify compliance with the conservation and management measures in force pursuant to the WCPF Convention;

(ii) Allow any WCPFC inspector to communicate with the crew of the WCPFC inspection vessel, the authorities of the WCPFC inspection vessel and the authorities of the vessel being inspected;

(iii) Provide any WCPFC inspector with reasonable facilities, including, where appropriate, food and accommodation; and

(iv) Facilitate safe disembarkation by any WCPFC inspector.

(4) If the operator or crew refuses to allow a WCPFC inspector to board and inspect the vessel in the manner described in this paragraph, they shall offer to the WCPFC inspector an explanation of the reason for such refusal.

(5) The operator and crew shall not assault, obstruct, resist, delay, refuse boarding to, intimidate, harass, interfere with, unduly obstruct or delay any WCPFC inspector in the performance of such person's duties, or attempt to do any of the same.

(c) When a fishing vessel of the United States that is used for commercial fishing for HMS is in the Convention Area and is either on the high seas without a valid WCPFC Area Endorsement or is in an area under the jurisdiction of a nation other than the United States without an authorization by that nation to fish in that area, all the fishing gear and fishing equipment on the fishing vessel shall be stowed in a manner so as not to be readily available for fishing, specifically:

(1) If the fishing vessel is used for purse seining and equipped with purse seine gear, the boom must be lowered as far as possible so that the vessel cannot be used for fishing but so that the skiff is accessible for use in emergency situations; the helicopter, if any, must be tied down; and the launches must be secured.

(2) If the fishing vessel is used for longlining and equipped with longline gear, the branch or dropper lines and

floats used to buoy the mainline must be stowed and not available for immediate use, and any power-operated mainline hauler on deck must be covered in such a manner that it is not readily available for use.

(3) If the fishing vessel is used for trolling and equipped with troll gear, no lines or hooks may be placed in the water; if outriggers are present on the vessel, they must be secured in a vertical position; if any power-operated haulers are located on deck they must be covered in such a manner that they are not readily available for use.

(4) If the fishing vessel is used for pole-and-line fishing and equipped with pole-and-line gear, any poles rigged with lines and hooks must be stowed in such a manner that they are not readily available for use.

(5) For any other type of fishing vessel, all the fishing gear and equipment on the vessel must be stowed in a manner so as not to be readily available for use.

(d) For the purpose of this section, the meaning of transshipment does not include transfers that exclusively involve fish that have been previously landed and processed.

§ 300.222 Prohibitions.

In addition to the prohibitions in § 300.4, it is unlawful for any person to:

(a) Fail to obtain and have on board a fishing vessel a valid WCPFC Area Endorsement as required in § 300.212.

(b) Fail to report a change in the information required in an application for a WCPFC Area Endorsement as required in § 300.212(g).

(c) Fail to provide information on vessels and fishing authorizations or fail to report changes in such information as required in § 300.213.

(d) Fish for, retain on board, or land fish, including HMS, in areas under the jurisdiction of a nation other than the United States without authorization by such nation to do so, as provided in § 300.214(a)(1) and (b)(1).

(e) Operate a fishing vessel in violation of, or fail to ensure the vessel crew complies with, the applicable national laws of a member of the Commission other than the United States, including any laws related to carrying vessel observers or the operation of VMS units, as provided in § 300.214(a)(2) and (b)(2).

(f) Fail to carry, allow on board, or assist a WCPFC observer as required in § 300.215.

(g) Assault, obstruct, resist, delay, refuse boarding to, intimidate, harass, or interfere with a WCPFC observer, or

attempt to do any of the same, or fail to provide a WCPFC observer with food, accommodation or medical facilities, as required in § 300.215.

(h) Offload, receive, or load fish from a purse seine vessel at sea in the Convention Area, in contravention of § 300.216.

(i) Fail to mark a fishing vessel or a boat, skiff, or other watercraft on board the fishing vessel as required in § 300.217, or remove, obscure, or obstruct such markings, or attempt to do so.

(j) Fail to maintain and report catch and effort information or transshipment information as required in § 300.218.

(k) Fail to install, activate, or operate a VMS unit as required in § 300.219(c).

(l) In the event of VMS unit failure or interruption, fail to repair or replace a VMS unit, fail to notify the SAC and follow the instructions provided, or otherwise fail to act as provided in § 300.219(c)(4).

(m) Disable, destroy, damage or operate improperly a VMS unit installed under § 300.219, or attempt to do any of the same, or fail to ensure that its operation is not impeded or interfered with, as provided in § 300.219(e).

(n) Fail to make a VMS unit installed under § 300.219 or the position data obtained from it available for inspection, as provided in § 300.219(f) and (g).

(o) Fail to carry on board and monitor communication devices as required in § 300.219(h).

(p) Fail to carry on board and make available the required vessel documentation and authorizations as required in § 300.221(a)(1).

(q) Fail to continuously monitor the specified radio frequencies as required in § 300.221(a)(2).

(r) Fail to carry on board, and keep accessible, an up-to-date copy of the International Code of Signals as required in § 300.221(a)(3).

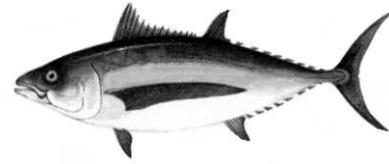
(s) Fail to provide access to, or fail to allow and assist, a WCPFC transshipment monitor as required in § 300.221(a)(4).

(t) Fail to comply with the instructions of, or fail to accept and facilitate prompt and safe boarding by, a WCPFC inspector, or fail to cooperate and assist a WCPFC inspector in the inspection of a fishing vessel, as provided in § 300.221(b).

(u) Fail to stow fishing gear or fishing equipment as required in § 300.221(c).

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WESTERN FISHBOAT OWNERS ASSOCIATION®

P.O. Box 992723
Redding, CA 96099

Ph. (530) 229-1097
Fax (530) 229-0973

e-mail <wfoa@charter.net>
website: <<http://www.wfoa-tuna.org>>

June 1, 2009

William L. Robinson
Regional Administrator, NMFS Pacific
Islands Regional Office (PIRO), 1601
Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1110, Honolulu,
HI 96814

Re: Proposed Rule for WCPFC - Identifier # 0648-AV63

Dear Mr. Robinson:

Western Fishboat Owners Association (WFOA) would like to make the following comments on the proposed Rules for the WCPFC. I have selected the most pertinent sections and include comments within. Since the regulations will apply to albacore troll and baitboats fishing for albacore west of 150°W, North of the equator and it will apply to all fishing for albacore tuna south of the equator we are very concerned with following three points.

VMS: Vessels will have to have NMFS approved VMS units which will transmit signals to the WCPFC Commission and NMFS which run about \$4,000 and have a useful life of four years. There will be an estimated \$250 for annual maintenance and \$525 for transmissions on an annual basis. The VMS unit is required to be on at all times, whether in or out of the WCPFC Area. If a unit fails while at sea, NMFS can require radio reporting of positions, or end the trip.

Our vessels are small with very little problems with by-catch, enforcement issues, or gear conflicts. Occasionally we have a fleet of 10-50 vessels that fish albacore by troll methods west of 150°W. Nearly all of the fish are returned to the west coast for landing and all is documented in logbooks. Therefore, we ask the following:

- How effective and useful is the VMS data collected now for management? As far as I can tell the only application so far has been to issue citations to vessels who have gone into "protected areas." There are very few MPA's in the offshore regions thus would be highly unlikely such a situation would involve a U.S. albacore troller.
- Why do the units have to be on 365 days a year? There have been fishermen who have receive

tickets for turning it off while in the ship yard doing repairs! It seems a declaration of departure and a check to see if the unit is on should serve the purpose.

- If the US is requiring it as part of WCPFC convention then NOAA should pay for installation as in other fisheries. The US albacore fleet is in economic distress and an important component of the coastal rural economy. Any new fees at this time would be detrimental to the family owned U.S. albacore fleet and community at this time.

Observers: *Vessels may be required to carry observers and it is the WCPFC's intention to have 5% observer coverage. Carrying an observer is estimated to cost \$20/day, or \$350 a trip depending on the length of the trip.*

Again to state the obvious, any albacore vessel operating in the region west of 150°W would be at sea anywhere from 25 -100 days. If they were required to pay observer rates of \$20/day it would run more like \$400 - \$2000 per trip. This needs clarification and a possible cap of no more than \$350 per trip. Also, for consideration:

- Most of these vessels are smaller in nature especially when compared to longliners and purse seiners. A typical albacore vessels that may operate in the region west of 150°W would be between 50 -100 feet in length with a crew of 2-3 persons. Most of the boats in the 50-65 foot range have limited space for observers especially for extended trips.
- Considering albacore trollers in the area may be at sea for 25 -100 days, how practical is it to have to carry an observer for the length of time in a fishery that has virtually no environmental or regulatory impact compared to other gear types.
- The vessels operate at least 7-10 days from any harbor and travel only 7-9 knots. To have to abort a trip because of a health or other problem with an observer would be problematic. WFOA questions who would reimburse the vessel for potential two to three weeks of lost time?

Vessel Identification: Vessels would be identified with, in this order of use, the international radio call sign, USCG documentation number, or State registration number, preceded by the letters "USA."

- Since under the U.S./Canadian albacore treaty U.S. vessels are already required to put a "U" in back of their documentation number, an addition to changing the whole format, another couple letters may be a problem for some smaller vessels because of space.

WFOA reminds you that the U.S. troll fleet is a small vessel fleet that fishes in far from shore. Vessels range from 35 -120 feet with an average of about 55 – 60 feet. Most are family owned and operated, with small crews, and very eco friendly gear. Many of these boats fish far offshore weeks from nearest harbors. When compared to high seas purse seiners and longliners our vessels are far from equal both in size, capacity, crew size, and economics.

Sincerely,



Wayne Heikkila
Executive Director

cc: Senator Dianne Feinstein (CA)
Senator Barbara Boxer (CA)
Senator Ron Wyden (OR)
Senator Jeff Merkley (OR)
Senator Patty Murray (WA)
Senator Maria Cantwell (WA)
Senator Daniel Inouye (HI)
Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (CA)
Representative Mike Thompson (CA)
Representative Wally Herger (CA)
Representative Sam Farr (CA)
Representative Peter Defazio (OR)
Representative David Wu (OR)
Representative Brian Baird (WA)
Representative Jay Inslee (WA)
Representative Norm Dicks (WA)
Mr. Donald McIsaac – PFMC
Ms. Kitty Simonds – WPFMC



**NORTHERN COMMITTEE
FIFTH REGULAR SESSION**
7-10 September 2009
Nagasaki, Japan

PROVISIONAL ANNOTATED AGENDA

**WCPFC/NC5/04
5th June 2009**

AGENDA ITEM 1. OPENING OF MEETING

1.1 Welcome

The Chair (Mr Masanori Miyahara, Japan) will open the Fifth Regular Session of the Northern Committee (NC5) of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), 7-10 September 2009. He will welcome delegations of WCPFC members, cooperating non-members and participating territories (CCMs), the WCPFC Secretariat and observers.

1.2 Adoption of agenda

The Chair will introduce the Provisional Agenda, WCPFC-NC5/03. The Rules of Procedure of the Commission will apply *mutatus mutandis* until such time as the Northern Committee adopts its own Rules of Procedure (Rule 31).

According to the Rules of Procedure, the Committee will be asked how it wishes to deal with any supplementary items that were circulated by any member of the Commission, the Chairman, or the Executive Director at least thirty days before the opening of the meeting.

1.3 Meeting arrangements

The Chair will invite NC5 to review the Indicative Schedule (WCPFC-NC5/05) noting logistical arrangements in place to support the meeting, proposed meeting times and any social engagements.

AGENDA ITEM 2. CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

2.1 Report from the 9th ISC

The NC5 will review the meeting report of the 9th Meeting of the International Scientific Committee (ISC), especially the status of stocks of highly migratory species in the North Pacific Ocean. The NC5 will consider relevant issues arising from the ISC9 and make recommendations as appropriate to the Commission on conservation and management measures with respect to the following:

- Northern Pacific bluefin

- North Pacific albacore
- North Pacific swordfish

2.2 Report of the Fourth Regular Session of the Scientific Committee (SC5)

The NC5 will review the meeting report and issues arising from the Fifth Regular Session of the Scientific Committee (SC5), Port Vila, Vanuatu, 10-21 August 2009 as they relate to the Northern Committee.

2.3 Conservation and management measures for the northern stocks

2.3.1 Northern Pacific bluefin

The NC4 and WCPFC5 could not reach agreement with draft CMM for Pacific bluefin tuna (Attachment H of the Report of the NC4) with one CCM registering a reservation in respect of the draft measure drafted during NC4. The Committee will review stock assessment and other information relating to the conservation and management action of members with respect to effort controls and data collection. WCPFC5 agreed that CCMs are requested not to increase the level of fishing mortality on Pacific bluefin in 2009 on a voluntary basis and tasked the NC to work toward developing a draft CMM for Pacific bluefin for consideration at WCPFC6.

2.3.2 North Pacific albacore (CCM-2005-03)

The Committee will review the actions and/or considerations made by members in relation to effort control and biological reference points including maintaining spawning stock biomass (SSB) within the range of its historical fluctuation (Attachments K and J of the Report of the NC4). NC4 had proposed an interim management objective for North Pacific albacore which states that spawning stock biomass should be maintained above the level represented by the average of the lowest 10 years in the stock's 40-year data history. The NC5 will consider the need for management action in 2009 recalling that, during NC4, the Committee was advised that the ISC plans a new assessment in 2010.

2.3.3 North Pacific swordfish (CMM-2008-05)

At WCPFC5, the Commission adopted a revised measure for swordfish (CMM 2008-05) which retains provisions of CMM 2006-03 relating to no transfer of fishing effort for swordfish from the South Pacific to the areas north of 20°N in the Convention Area). The ISC has scheduled an assessment of the North Pacific swordfish stock that will be available to support NC5 discussion of the status of the fishery and conservation and management considerations.

2.4 Conservation and management measures for other species

2.4.1 Bigeye and yellowfin tuna (CMM-2008-01)

WCPFC5 adopted Conservation and Management Measure (CMM-2008-01) for bigeye and yellowfin tuna. 'Other commercial fisheries' referred to in the Measure are identified as fisheries other than longline and tropical (20°N-20°S) purse seine and which include: hand-line, pole and line, purse seine fisheries north of 20°N or south of 20°S, ring net, troll and unclassified fisheries, but excluding artisanal fisheries and those fisheries taking

less than 2,000 tons of bigeye and yellowfin. NC5 is invited to review the implementation of the provisions of paragraph 39 of CMM-2008-01 in the area north of 20°N and make further recommendations to the Commission, if necessary, on conservation and management matters for yellowfin and bigeye stocks in the Pacific Ocean north of 20°N.

2.4.2 Sharks (CMM-2008-06)

WCPFC5 revised CMM-2006-05 to extend the measure to all vessels and encourages CCMs to implement the IPOA-Sharks, report annual catch and fishing effort for key shark species identified by the Scientific Committee and fully utilize retained catches including a requirement to have on board fins that total no more than 5% of the weight of sharks on board. . NC5 will receive reports from CCMs on the implementation of CMM-2008-06 in the Convention Area north of 20°N and consider issues associated with its full implementation from 10th February 2009.

2.4.3 Seabirds (CMM- 2007-04)

NC5 will receive reports from NC CCMs on the implementation of CMM 2007-04, as well as the status of introducing the mitigation measures to their fleets as required at paragraph 10 of the Measure for the area north of 23°N.

2.5 Working Group on Striped Marlin

On the basis of a recommendation from NC3, WCPFC4 at Guam in December 2007, tasked the NC with convening a Working Group to examine a range of issues relating to, *inter alia*, fisheries for striped marlin and means to reduce its incidental by-catch. This was established with a view to developing a draft Conservation and Management Measure for striped marlin for consideration at SC4. Pending resolution of on-going discussion concerning the status of striped marlin as a northern stock SC4 advised that the fishing mortality rate should be reduced from the current level (to 2003 or before) (SC4 Summary Report, para 188). In reviewing the progress of the working group, NC4 acknowledged that little progress had been made. This issue will be further considered by informal working groups and ISC9 and the outcomes reported to NC5 to support discussion on future work priorities in relation to striped marlin.

AGENDA ITEM 3. REGIONAL OBSERVER PROGRAMME (CMM-2007-01)

WCPFC4 adopted a revised Conservation and Management Measure for the Regional Observer Programme (CMM-2007--01). Annex C of CMM 2007-01 provides that fishing vessels used exclusively to fish for fresh fish in the area north of 20 degrees North shall be accorded the following considerations, *inter alia*:

- i) At its 2008 annual session, the Northern Committee shall consider the implementation of the ROP adopted by the Commission by vessels fishing for fresh fish in the area north of 20 degrees North.

The Fourth Regular Session of the Northern Committee agreed to establish an intercessional email working group, under the convener (Japan) of the group to seek an applicable measure in implementing the ROP in the area. NC5 will receive a report from the informal working group and discuss the implementation of the ROP for fishing vessels fishing fresh fish in the area north of 20°N.

AGENDA ITEM 4. DATA

4.1 Review of the status of data and data gaps for northern stocks

The NC4 discussed issues relating to the coverage and quality of data for fisheries in the North Pacific Ocean. Information gaps in biology and vital statistics such as abundance index were noted during the NC4. Those gaps will be discussed in the ISC9 and NC5 will review developments in relation to data coverage for individual fisheries and stocks as well as biological gaps and discuss means to address data gaps that have been identified.

AGENDA ITEM 5. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

5.1 Work Programme for 2010-2013

The Committee will review its proposed Work Programme adopted at NC4. The Work Programme will be revised to describe activities and funding requirements for the period 2010-2013 so that it aligns with the Work Programme of the Commission.

AGENDA ITEM 6. COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

6.1 ISC

NC4 noted a number of issues raised by the SC4 related to data and coordination between the ISC and the SC. The NC4 requested that the ISC develop, in consultation with the WCPFC Secretariat, a process to address the issues as follows:

- 1) explore the potential benefits of improving both northern and southern albacore stock assessments through exchange of stock assessment experiences for Pacific albacore and through collaboration between scientists currently working on the assessments;
- 2) explore procedures for coordinating efforts to close data gaps and for data access to reduce uncertainties in assessments; and
- 3) consider ways to align its data standards and processes with those adopted for the Commission.

6.2 IATTC

Noting that WCPFC and the IATTC have had a Memorandum of Understanding in place since December 2006, the Committee will consider means to further strengthen cooperation with the IATTC in respect of northern stocks. The outcomes of the 80th Session of IATTC, San Diego, USA, 8-12 June, as they relate to Northern Committee matters, including the proposed Agreement on the Exchange of Data and any relevant conservation and management measures in effect in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, will be the focus of NC4 discussion.

6.3 Review of interim arrangements for scientific structure and function

The Commission selected the Marine Resources Assessment Group Ltd (MRAG) in April 2008 to conduct an independent review of the Commission's interim arrangements for science structure and function. MRAG attended the NC4, presented a progress report and consulted with the NC participants on arrangements to support science in the WCPFC. The NC5 will review the final report from the MRAG as it relates to the structure and function of the Northern Committee and the relationship between the Northern Committee and other subsidiary bodies of the Commission.

AGENDA ITEM 7. OTHER MATTERS

7.1 Administrative arrangements for the Committee

7.1.1 Secretariat functions and costs

NC1 agreed to use the catch of the northern stocks for the calculation of Northern Committee members' contributions to the work of the Northern Committee. NC2, while generally welcoming continued efforts for effective functioning of NC, could not reach consensus on a revised proposal by Japan's on Secretariat functions for the Northern Committee. The proposal by Japan to establish secretariat services for the NC was deferred to the NC5. NC5 is invited to review the outcome and discuss two specific funding requests for northern species research to WCPFC5 and voluntary contribution from NC members.

7.1.2 Rules of Procedure

Rule 31 of the Rules of Procedure provide that, subject to the provisions of the Convention, each subsidiary body of the Commission may formulate and submit to the Commission for approval such rules as may be necessary for the efficient conduct of its functions. NC2 considered two papers relating to this item (WCPFC/NC2/14 and WCPFC/NC2/15). It was agreed that Appendix A of the WCPFC/NC2/15 would serve as a basis for further discussion. Each Committee member was requested to submit its comments on this item to the Secretariat by 31 October 2006. It was not possible to complete work in respect of this item at WCPFC3. As NC4 deferred discussion to a future session, NC5 is invited to further consider this matter.

7.2 Next meeting

The date and place for the Sixth Regular Session of the NC will be agreed.

7.2 Other business

The NC will discuss any other business.

AGENDA ITEM 8. REPORT TO THE COMMISSION

8.1 Adoption of the Summary Report of the Fifth Regular Session of the Northern Committee and recommendations to the Commission

The Northern Committee will adopt a Summary Report of its Fifth Regular Session. It will make every effort to adopt its Summary Report by consensus. If every effort to achieve consensus has failed, the Summary Report will indicate the majority and minority views and may include the differing views of the representatives of the members on all or any part of the Summary Report.

AGENDA ITEM 9. CLOSE OF MEETING

9.1 Closing of the meeting

The meeting is scheduled to close in 10 September 2009.

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS TO INTERNATIONAL REGIONAL FISHERY
MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS (RFMO)

A. The HMSAS suggests that the Council makes the following recommendations to the US delegation to the Northern Committee of the Western Central Pacific Commission:

- Improve communications between the US delegations to the IATTC and WCPFC to ensure continuity and consistency.
- An ad hoc committee is suggested within the two US delegations (see above) to consider definition of effort control for North Pacific albacore.
- Northern Committee assessments of striped marlin should continue in order to make conservation and management recommendations.
- Pending completion of the 2010 North Pacific albacore assessment there are no additional recommendations for North Pacific albacore management.
- Pending the completion of the 2009 stock assessment for swordfish there are no additional recommendations for swordfish management.
- Pending further information from the ISC on the most recent stock assessment, we have no additional advice on North Pacific bluefin tuna. We are concerned with the most recent assessment and recommend it be re-assessed as soon as possible.

B. In consideration of the proposed rule for WCPFC – Identifier #0648-AV63, it has been pointed out that there are different requirements for US vessels fishing east of 150°W in the IATTC area, and west of 150°W of the WCPFC area. These regulations pertain to the requirement for VMS, observers, and different vessel markings. We have been advised that these regulations were designed for larger industrial class type fishing vessels rather than the typical smaller pole and line and troll albacore vessels.

- The HMSAS strongly recommends exempting the US North Pacific albacore pole and line and troll fleets from these proposed regulations and advise the US Northern Committee delegation to pursue an exemption for the entire pole and line and troll North Pacific albacore fishery from these regulations.
- The HMSAS strongly recommends that the Council submit comments to the proposed rule, WCPFC – Identifier #0648-AV63, supporting the letter of comments from the Western Fishboat Owners Association letter of June 1, 2009 (Agenda Item F.1.a, Supplemental Attachment 3). The comment deadline is June 22, 2009.

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS TO INTERNATIONAL
REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) discussed potential conservation and management recommendations to the U.S. delegations to the Northern Committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

Regarding North Pacific albacore, the HMSMT recommends the following:

1. Maintain progress toward establishing biological reference points for effective management.
2. Request that all parties to the WCPFC Convention report fishing effort information to comply with the resolution to not increase fishing effort above current levels.
3. Request that a member of WCPFC be invited to participate in the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) working group to define compatible measures of “current” fishing effort for the two resolutions from these commissions.

Regarding striped marlin, the HMSMT recommends the following:

1. Resolve issues about stock structure within the Pacific and the North Pacific Ocean. Upon resolution of stock structure, a stock assessment should be conducted for all stocks in the North Pacific Ocean.
2. Since evidence indicates a northern stock exists primarily above 20°N latitude, request the Northern Committee to seek management authority for this northern stock.

Regarding northern bluefin tuna, the HMSMT recommends that a new assessment be conducted as soon as possible to resolve uncertainties on the northern bluefin tuna assessment.