

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES INCLUDING IATTC MEETING AND NORTH PACIFIC ALBACORE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY EVALUATION

Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee Management Strategy Evaluation

On May 13, 2015, Drs. Gerard DiNardo and Kevin Piner briefed the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) on the development of a management strategy evaluation (MSE) for North Pacific albacore. In 2014, the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) decided to develop MSEs for all species assessed by the ISC. The first MSE is to be conducted for North Pacific albacore. The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee (NC), as the primary international management entity for North Pacific albacore, will decide what management strategies will be evaluated. It is anticipated that the NC will provide potential strategies for the ISC to test at the next NC meeting in September, 2015. However, the MSE will take up to three years to develop, so there will be opportunity for ongoing input on the evaluation.

The Albacore Working Group (ALBWG) plans to develop an “operating model” that represents the “true” stock dynamics. An assessment model, based on the data and assumptions used in the North Pacific albacore assessment will then use outputs from the operating model to project information about stock status with respect to management strategy scenarios. This approach can be used to test what management strategies are most robust in the context of the results a stock assessment provides about stock status. The Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) will take a lead role in model development, given that the SWFSC is in the process of recruiting a scientist to focus on the development of MSEs. A detailed description of the ALBWG’s work plan will be disseminated following the ISC Plenary, July 15-20, 2015.

The HMSMT reviewed past recommendations on North Pacific albacore management to identify management strategies that the U.S. should promote for evaluation through this process. These include the HMSMT Report and Supplemental HMSMT Report 2 under Agenda Item D.5.b, June 2015, and Proposal IATTC-87 J-1 submitted by the U.S. to the 86th IATTC meeting in June 2014. In 2014, the NC adopted a precautionary management framework for North Pacific albacore with a biomass-based limit reference point of 20%SSB_{current F=0}. The management framework states that a target reference point will be adopted based on the results of the ISC MSE; this is anticipated within the next three years. The management framework contains the following decision rule associated with the limit reference point (LRP): “[if] the spawning stock size decreases below the LRP at any time, NC will, at its next regular session or intersessionally if warranted, adopt a reasonable timeline, but no longer than 10 years, for rebuilding the spawning stock to at least the LRP and recommend a CMM that can be expected to achieve such rebuilding within that timeline.”

The HMSMT recommends that the MSE incorporate the following management measures and evaluation criteria.

Management Measures:

- Test target reference points of F10%, F20%, F30%
- Test LRP of 20%SSB_{current F=0} and 14%SSB_{current F=0}
- Test precautionary catch limits based on a proportional reduction in relation to SSB. (Examples of such a precautionary reduction include the “40-10 rule” in section 4.6.1 in the [Groundfish FMP](#) or

Figure 1 on page 4 of the [Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation Biological Opinion RPA Implementation](#) for Sacramento Winter Run Chinook)

- Test stock rebuilding strategies based on harvest rates (and associated catch streams) needed to rebuild to the LRP for target rebuilding years between 5 and 10 years (from “overfished designation”) with probabilities between 40% and 60%
- Test catch control rule using an annual TAC derived from target reference point (TRP); fishery closes for the remainder of the year when TAC is reached; test stock-wide TAC and allocated TAC by regions, time periods, or fleets/country (e.g. separate EPO and WCPO TACs, semiannual TACs, separate TACs for fleets with different age/size selectivity patterns)
- Test alternative levels of fishing effort (defined as fishing days with fleet-specific average CPUEs): “current effort” per current conservation measures (i.e., average fishing effort in 2002-2004), average fleet-specific effort 2010-2012, fleet specific effort in annual time steps based on auto-correlated random draws from historical time series.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Determine projection period (10, 20, 25 years, etc.)
- Frequency/likelihood of “overfishing” ($F_{CUR} > F_{TARGET}$) and/or display annual F_{CUR}/F_{TARGET} for simulation period
- Frequency/likelihood of “overfished” ($SSB_{CUR} < SSB_{LIMIT}$) and/or display annual SSB_{CUR}/SSB_{LIMIT} for simulation period
- Stability in management regime: inter-annual variability in TAC
- Yields: average annual catches, by fishery
- Stability of yields: inter-annual variability in catches, by fishery
- Catch success: catch per unit of effort, by fishery
- Fishing opportunities: average annual fishing effort, by fishery
- Economic criteria

IATTC Annual Meeting

The HMSMT discussed IATTC activities at its May 13-15, 2015, meeting and noted that there is not significant new information since what was provided in Agenda Item H.2.c, NMFS Report, March 2015. The IATTC Scientific Advisory Committee meeting occurred May 12-15, 2015, and the General Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section of the IATTC and its Scientific Advisory Subcommittee will meet June 2-3, 2015. Those meetings will likely provide more information on what proposals the U.S. may focus on at the IATTC meeting. If appropriate, the HMSMT will submit a supplemental report with recommendations for the Council regarding the upcoming IATTC meeting that will be held June 29 to July 3, 2015.

Petition to List Common Thresher Shark under the ESA

In August 2014, NMFS received a petition to list the common thresher shark (*Alopias vulpinus*) under the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA). On March 3, 2015, NMFS announced the 90-day finding for the petition including initiating a status review, as well as a request for scientific or commercial information relevant to whether the common thresher shark is threatened or endangered (80 FR 11379). In the 90-day finding, NMFS indicated that within the eastern Pacific Ocean the current trend suggests “there is rebuilding from historical overexploitation. However, across the rest of its global range,” NMFS found the population to be either stable or continuing to decline. In concluding, NMFS noted that the petition and information available to NMFS at the time do not comprise substantial information to determine that listing may be warranted. To that end, NMFS is seeking scientific or commercial information, as well as information related to management and enforcement and has extended the period for submitting information to July 6, 2015 (80 FR 25272). The HMSMT recommends NMFS pursue collection of information necessary to identify population structure adequate for distinct population segment (DPS) determination.