

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE (NMFS) REPORT
ON INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Regulatory Updates

NMFS published a notice in the Federal Register announcing the closure of the U.S. pelagic longline fishery for bigeye tuna, effective August 12, 2015, through December 31, 2015 ([80 FR 46515, August 5, 2015](#)). The closure applies to U.S. longline vessels greater than 24 meters in overall length in the eastern Pacific Ocean. The fishery was closed because the 2015 catch limit of 500 metric tons, as agreed to in Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) [Resolution C-13-01](#), was expected to be reached.

89th Meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission

The IATTC met in Guayaquil, Ecuador from June 29 to July 3, 2015. The U.S. delegation was led by U.S. Commissioner and NMFS West Coast Region (WCR) Deputy Regional Administrator Barry Thom, and David Hogan from the U.S. Department of State. Other U.S. Commissioners and members of the delegation representing the U.S. Government, conservation, and fishing industry were also present.

The following seven proposals were adopted:

- [Resolution C-15-01](#) (Amendment to Resolution C-05-07 on Establishing a List of Vessels Presumed to Have Carried Out Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Activities in the Eastern Pacific Ocean) was proposed by the United States. This revised resolution helps clarify the procedures associated with gathering and distributing information regarding suspected instances of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing; clarifies standards for listing and removing vessels from the IUU list; and ensures due process for all members and cooperating non-members (CPCs). Furthermore, this amendment better harmonizes the IATTC IUU vessel list resolution with those currently in force in other regional fisheries management organizations.
- [Resolution C-15-02](#) (Resolution on the Deadline Applicable to Revisions of Well Volume in Paragraph 6 of Resolution C-02-03) establishes that the well volume listed on the regional vessel register (RVR) as of January 1, 2017, will be considered confirmed. Additionally, when a new vessel is added to the RVR, the reported well volume at the time of its addition will be considered confirmed.
- [Resolution C-15-03](#) (Collection and Analyses of Data on Fish-Aggregating Devices), proposed by the United States, amends Resolution C-13-04 to specify the identification and data collection requirements. The identification and data collection provisions are effective January 1, 2017. This resolution also establishes an *ad hoc* working group and included terms of reference for the working group.

- [Resolution C-15-04](#) (Resolution on the Conservation of Mobulid Rays Caught in Association with Fisheries in the IATTC Convention Area) prohibits the sale of, and establishes safe-release guidelines for, mobulid rays. The resolution does allow for the incidental capture of rays, but those caught incidentally must be surrendered to the responsible governmental authorities upon landing. Though the rays may not be sold, they may be donated for human consumption. CPCs must report to the IATTC Director any discards and releases of mobulid rays documented in any available information, such as observer reports. This resolution is effective August 1, 2016.
- The IATTC also adopted the following three administrative proposals on financing and strengthening data confidentiality standards: (1) [Resolution C-15-05](#) (Amendment of Resolution C-12-04 on *ad hoc* Financing for Fiscal Years 2013-2017 and Beyond) revises the current financing resolution to adjust the formula by which member contributions are calculated; (2) [Resolution C-15-06](#) (Financing for Fiscal Year 2016) is the budget of approximately 6.77 million USD, compared to the 6.55 USD for 2015. The U.S. contribution is approximately 25% of the overall budget, at 1.7 million USD; and (3) [Resolution C-15-07](#) (Amendment to Resolution C-13-05 on Data Confidentiality Policy and Procedures) amends Resolution C-13-05 on data confidentiality to ensure that data submitted to, and later published by, the IATTC does not identify a single individual company or person (previously, Resolution C-13-05 only protected the confidentiality of individual vessel data).

The U.S. proposal for a Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF) rebuilding plan did not achieve consensus. However, these discussions at the IATTC meeting were very useful, and insights were incorporated into the U.S. proposal on a PBF rebuilding plan submitted in advance of the upcoming Northern Committee meeting.

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

The ISC and its working groups met July 9 to 13 and July 15 to 20, 2015. Reports from the [Albacore](#), [Billfish](#), [Shark](#), and [Pacific Bluefin Tuna](#) Working Group workshops that met earlier in 2015 were presented. NMFS will provide the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) with an update when the results of the ISC plenary become available.

11th Meeting of the Northern Committee (NC)

The NC to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission will meet August 31 to September 3, 2015, in Sapporo, Japan. Barry Thom will represent the NMFS WCR at this meeting. A summary of the NC meeting will be provided by NMFS for inclusion in the Council's November 2015 meeting briefing book.

Presidential Task Force on Combating IUU Fishing and Seafood Fraud

The National Ocean Council Committee on IUU Fishing and Seafood Fraud is seeking public comment on draft principles that may be used to identify species at risk of IUU fishing and seafood fraud, as well as a draft list of species at risk ([80 FR 45955](#), August 3, 2015). The public comment period ends September 2, 2015.

High Seas Fishing Compliance Act (HSFCA) Final Rule Update

The NMFS Office of International Affairs and Seafood Inspection published a proposed rule to improve the administration of the HSFCA program and the monitoring of U.S. fishing vessels operating on the high seas ([80 FR 19611, April 13, 2015](#); comment period closed on May 13, 2015). The proposed rule includes vessel monitoring system requirements. The WCR does not have an anticipated date of publication for the final rule.