



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Pacific Islands Regional Office
1845 Wasp Blvd., Bldg 176
Honolulu, Hawaii 96818
(808) 725-5000 • Fax: (808) 725-5215

Agenda Item F.4
Attachment 1
March 2016

JAN 13 2016

Mr. Edwin Ebisui, Chair
Western Pacific Fishery Management Council
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400
Honolulu, HI 96813

Mr. Dan Hull, Chair
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 West 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99601-2252

Ms. Dorothy Lowman, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, OR 97220-1384

Dear Chairs Ebisui, Hull, and Lowman:

I am writing to inform you of the outcomes of the Twelfth Regular Session of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (Commission), held in Bali, December 3-8, 2015. This letter also shares NMFS' initial assessment of the regulatory actions that will be needed to implement the recent decisions of the Commission.

Conservation and management measure for tropical tunas

The Commission slightly modified the conservation and management measure for the tropical tunas, adopting Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) 2015-01 to replace CMM 2014-01. The only changes were to replace references to "2015" with "2016" in several paragraphs, and to update references to CMMs. This effectively carries forward most of the CMM's provisions. NMFS intends to implement the outstanding applicable provisions of CMM 2015-01, including the longline bigeye tuna catch limits for 2016 and 2017. We also are evaluating the impacts of Commission-adopted purse seine fishing effort limits on the coastal processing facilities and economy of American Samoa, and we will implement the purse seine provisions of CMM 2015-01 as appropriate after taking into account the results of that study. Because Pacific Ocean bigeye tuna is subject to overfishing, we encourage the Councils to continue to consider recommendations to help end overfishing of the stock, and of course the Councils are welcome to consider actions that might mitigate the adverse impacts of the longline bigeye tuna annual catch limits, to the extent consistent with international obligations and applicable law.

Conservation and management measure for Pacific bluefin tuna

The Commission slightly modified the conservation and management measure for Pacific bluefin tuna, adopting CMM 2015-04 to replace CMM 2014-04. The only change was to insert a provision that calls for the development in 2016 of an "emergency rule" that would be triggered when "drastic drops of recruitment are detected." The main provisions of the new CMM, like



the previous one, call for effort and catch limits in fisheries that target Pacific bluefin tuna. The United States does not have any vessels that target Pacific bluefin tuna in the Convention Area, so NMFS does not intend to take any regulatory action to implement the revised measure. Because Pacific bluefin tuna is overfished, we encourage the Councils to continue to consider any recommendations necessary to address the rebuilding of this stock.

Conservation and management measure for South Pacific albacore

The Commission modified the conservation and management measure for South Pacific albacore, adopting CMM 2015-02 to replace CMM 2010-05. The new measure requires flag States to provide additional historical and current data on South Pacific albacore catches by their vessels, to facilitate the Commission's monitoring of compliance with the measure. NMFS anticipates being able to meet the requirements of CMM 2015-02 based on existing information collections.

Conservation and management measure for seabirds

The Commission modified the conservation and management measure for seabirds, adopting CMM 2015-03 to replace CMM 2012-07. The new measure will require that longline vessels less than 24 meters in length—which up until now have not had to employ any seabird mitigation methods in the North Pacific—use at least one mitigation method in the area north of 23° North latitude. U.S. regulations already satisfy with this new requirement, so no regulatory action is needed.

Other decisions

In addition to adopting the measures described above, the Commission made a number of decisions that dealt with procedural and other matters that require no regulatory action by the United States. These decisions included adopting a target reference point for skipjack tuna (CMM 2015-06); modifying the Commission's compliance monitoring scheme and extending it for two years (CMM 2015-07); extending the vessel charter notification scheme for three years (replacing CMM 2012-05 with CMM 2015-05); adopting a process for observer providers to provide "pre-notifications" of possible violations to vessels' flag States; adopting a work plan to develop harvest strategies for specific stocks and fisheries; modifying the standards, specifications and procedures for the Commission's vessel monitoring system (VMS) with respect to the process for adding and removing VMS unit types from the Commission's list of approved types; and endorsing specific "guidelines for safe release of encircled animals including whale sharks."

Sincerely,



Michael D. Tosatto
Regional Administrator

cc: William W. Stelle, Jr., Administrator, West Coast Region
James W. Balsiger, Administrator, Alaska Region
Michael Seki, Director, Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center
Cisco Werner, Director, Southwest Fisheries Science Center