Preliminary Options for Discussion
Revised IATTC Resolution C-13-01
Prepared by Hawaii Longline Association

Current Situation:

The U.S. longline fishery is subject to limits set in current conservation and management measures (CMMs) of IATTC and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). The latter is especially problematic as the limit has been decreasing over time (and is to decrease further in 2017). This is one of the factors that has led to more fishing effort by Hawaii vessels in the EPO in recent years.

The current IATTC measure expires at the end of 2016. This measure includes a 500 mt bigeye catch limit for U.S. longline vessels larger than 24 meters in length. The bigeye catch by smaller longline vessels is not limited. IATTC will need to adopt a new management measure in 2016 for 2017 and beyond.

The IATTC measure provides limited flexibility for some relief from the catch limit. In IATTC, there is a history of Japan agreeing to transfer a portion of its bigeye limit to China. While some IATTC members have expressed concern that this is not consistent with the CMM, the U.S. is on record as saying that there is nothing in the CMM that prohibits such transfers. The U.S. noted that if there is concern about this, it can be addressed in the new measure. To our knowledge, the U.S. has not discussed the possibility of entering into any such arrangements with other IATTC members.

Preliminary Consideration of Alternatives[1]

1. Increase US longline bigeye quota in EPO

    a) for large vessels alone – under this proposal, the current measure would remain as is with a specific quota for large vessels, but the U.S. would promote a larger quota recognizing that the U.S. fishery is now more dependent on the EPO, that fishing by the U.S. is not having an adverse effect on the stock in the EPO, and that there has been reduced bigeye catch by longline fleets overall; small vessels would remain unlimited

    b) For all U.S. vessels combined - under this proposal, the U.S. would seek to amend the current measure to set a single U.S. quota in the EPO; however, this would have to be larger than the current 500 mt limit for large vessels alone, recognizing that the U.S. fishery overall

[1] A critical issue will be the assessment of the status of bigeye in the EPO. Here, it is assumed that it will not be very different from the most recent assessment, such that critical reductions in fishing mortality will not be needed.

is more dependent on the EPO, that fishing by the U.S. is not having an adverse effect on the stock in the EPO, and that there has been reduced bigeye catch by longline fleets overall; small vessels would no longer remain unlimited

2. Transferable Quotas

   a) Retain national quotas as in current measure but allow unlimited transferability of quotas among members with hard limits (i.e., US and Asian fleets) – under this approach, the U.S. would support maintaining the current hard limits for members and would seek partnership(s) with other nations not using their full quotas such that U.S. vessels could fish against those quotas if the U.S. limit were reached

   b) Retain national quotas but allow limited transferability among members – under this approach, the U.S. would support maintaining the current hard limits and the measure would explicitly allow transfer of some limited portion of a member's limit (not full transferability as that could allow a single fleet to capture most of the available fish); the U.S. would seek to establish a partnership under which some portion of another member's limit would be available to U.S. vessels

3. Establish a cumulative total allowable bigeye catch (TAC) for longline fleets in EPO

   a) Set a TAC for the year equal to (or similar to) the current cumulative limit for fleets with limits; the U.S. would fish until this TAC is reached

   b) Set a TAC for the year equal to the total of the limits for fleets with limits as above (or perhaps some fraction less), but to avoid early closure for all fleets if one fleet fishes far above expected catch levels, provide that any member can allow its fleet to keep fishing up to a certain level. The U.S. would fish all year, or if the TAC were reached, until the reserved threshhold were reached

4. Regional/Spatial Management

   Most longline bigeye catch is made in waters between 20°N and 20°S, and the stock assessment is based on data from fisheries in these waters. It appears that the stock spawns continuously in tropical waters and then a portion of the stock moves to the north but does not return to southern waters to contribute to stock reproduction. It is possible, therefore, that an increase in fishing in northern waters would not result in any risk to the conservation and management program of the IATTC. There are two variations on this approach:

   a) Set national/fleet catch limits only for tropical zone (20N – 20 S) in EPO - limits would be assigned to member nations for fishing in tropical waters, but fishing outside tropical waters would not be limited.

   b) Set a cumulative TAC for all longline fleets in the tropical zone in the EPO with no limit outside the tropical zone - fishing in the tropical zone would be limited to a cumulative catch level (a derby fishery) but fishing outside the tropical zone (north or south) would not be limited either by nation or as a cumulative catch limit

Background Information for consideration of alternatives

EPO Longline Bigeye Fleet Limits in the current IATTC CMM and Recent Catches

	Quotas	Catches			
		2011	2012	2013	2014
JPN	32,372	12,500	12,983	14,254	14,558
KO	11,947	7,049	6,892	8,322	7,584
Ch. Tai	7,555	4,064	4,868	4,502	4,749
CH	2,507	5,451	4,388	5,200	7,465

Other nations (including U.S.) are to limit catch by their vessels larger than 24 meters to 500 mt or the catch by those vessels in 2001

Prelim 2015 catches

JPN (through Nov)	11,880
KO	10,107
Ch. Tai (through Nov)	4,462
CH	8,486

sources: IATTC annual reports on the fisheries and for 2015, IATTC website page with monthly longline catch reports from members with catch limits of more than 500 mt; note that these tables are NOT updated as actual national annual reports are submitted to IATTC, and therefore, these tend to be lower than actual catches for the periods involved

Total bigeye catches and catch by gear type in the EPO 2000 - 2014

	Purse seine	Longline	Total
2000	95,282	47,605	148,557
2001	60,518	68,755	130,546
2002	57,421	74,424	132,806
2003	53,052	59,776	115,175
2004	65,471	43,483	110,722
2005	67,895	41,377	111,197
2006	83,838	33,802	119,360
2007	63,450	29,855	94,239
2008	75,028	26,148	103,290
2009	76,799	31,520	109.353
2010	57,752	37,029	95,347
2011	56,512	32,630	89,773
2012	66,020	36,122	102,623
2013	49,426	33,915	83,631
2014	59,600	35,249	94,932

Note: Total larger than PS + LL because other fisheries take minor amounts of bigeye tuna

The average total was about 93,000 mt/year 2010 - 2014; longline ca 35,000 mt/yr; PS ca 58,000 mt/yr;

Catches are down by significant amounts from peaks (2002 for longline and 2000 for purse seine)

Ecuador dominates purse seine catch of bigeye, accounting for ca 60% of total PS bigeye catch