

**NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE (NMFS) REPORT  
 ON THE INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES**

This report provides a schedule of 2016 international meetings, preliminary 2015 data from the U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty, and an update on the ratification of the Antigua Convention. Additionally, information for Council consideration ahead of the 2016 regional fisheries management organization (RFMO) meetings is provided.

**International Meetings**

The following RFMO-related meetings are occurring in 2016 (listed below). The June Council meeting coincides with the annual IATTC meeting and the Northern Committee (NC) meets in late August, before the September Council meeting. Therefore, the Council may want to discuss any recommendations to the U.S. Section of the IATTC during its March meeting and to the U.S. Section of the NC during its June Council meeting. Please note that although proposals for the NC are not likely to be ready for review prior to the June Council meeting, the work program in the [2015 meeting report](#) (see page 38) provides a list of tasks for 2016.

IATTC-related Meetings

Scientific Advisory Committee	May 9 - 13	La Jolla, CA
U.S. Delegation (GAC and SAS)	May 26 - 27	La Jolla, CA
Annual Meeting	June 22 - July 1	La Jolla, CA

WCPFC-related Meetings

Scientific Committee	August 3 - 11	Bali, Indonesia
Northern Committee		
Technical Compliance Committee	September 21 - 27	Pohnpei, FSM
U.S. Delegation (PAC)	TBD	Honolulu, HI
Annual Meeting	December 5 - 9	Fiji

ISC-related Meetings\*

PBFWG Stock Assessment (SA)	February 29 - March 11	La Jolla, CA
BILWG Blue Marlin SA	March 22 - 30	Busan, Korea
SHARKWG	Spring	TBD
2nd MSE Workshop	May 24 - 25	Yokohama, Japan
ALBWG	May 26 - 28, 30	Shizuoka, Japan
Annual Meeting	July 13 - 18	Japan
SHARKWG	Fall	TBD
ALBWG	November	Nanaimo, Canada

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\* Updates may be found at [http://isc.fra.go.jp/meetings/future\\_meetings.html](http://isc.fra.go.jp/meetings/future_meetings.html)

## Abbreviations

ALBWG = Albacore Working Group  
BILWG = Billfish Working Group  
FSM = Federated States of Micronesia  
GAC = General Advisory Committee  
MSE = Management Strategy Evaluation  
PAC = Permanent Advisory Committee  
PBFWG = Pacific Bluefin Tuna Working Group  
SAS = Scientific Advisory Subcommittee  
SHARKWG = Shark Working Group

### **U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty Data Update**

Please see the NMFS Supplemental Report (Agenda Item F.4, Supplemental NMFS Report 1) with data updates through 2015. This preliminary data contains the number of vessels, quantity of landings, and revenue for both U.S. and Canadian vessels landing in U.S. West Coast ports. The annual data working group will meet in spring 2016.

### **U.S. Ratification of Antigua Convention Update**

NMFS reported ([NMFS Report, Agenda Item F.1.a](#)) that the President signed into law the Antigua Convention Implementing Act of 2015. Since then, the United States has ratified the Convention for the Strengthening of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission Established by the 1949 Convention Between the United States of America and the Republic of Costa Rica (Antigua Convention). See the Supplemental Attachment (Agenda Item F.4, Supplemental Attachment 4) for the letter from Mr. David Hogan, U.S. Department of State, to Dr. Guillermo Compean of the IATTC.

### **Potential U.S. Proposals to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)**

#### Pacific Bluefin Tuna (PBF) Conservation and Management

The current resolution ([Resolution C-14-06](#)) on the conservation and management of PBF is expiring at the end of 2016. Therefore, it is important that the IATTC adopt a new measure for 2017 and, possibly, beyond. The IATTC will convene in June/July 2016, which is prior to when the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) is expected to finalize a new PBF stock assessment (July 2016). NMFS does not anticipate improvements in the stock status that will warrant an increase in catch limits in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO). Therefore, the Council may want to submit guidance to the U.S. section of the IATTC on components of a new PBF Resolution.

#### Tropical Tuna Conservation and Management

The current resolution ([Resolution C-13-01](#)) on the conservation and management of tropical tunas (i.e., bigeye, skipjack, and yellowfin) in the EPO is expiring at the end of 2016, and it is anticipated that the IATTC will adopt a new measure at its 2016 meeting. In recent history, the IATTC made only minor adjustments to its tropical tuna resolution. During this time, the U.S.

has had a 500 metric ton catch limit of bigeye tuna (BET) applicable to longline vessels greater than 24 meters in length (i.e., large longline vessels). The U.S. exceeded this catch limit in years 2013 - 2015.

Per the [most recent stock assessment](#) conducted by IATTC scientific staff, BET are being fished at or very close to maximum sustainable yield. Some stakeholders have expressed interest in increasing the catch limit for BET by large longline vessels in light of the decreasing catch limit in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. In response, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council has presented NMFS with potential management options (Agenda Item F.4, Supplemental Attachment 5) that range from a Pacific-wide total allowable catch to a spatial management structure (i.e., unrestricted fishing on a sink population). NMFS is currently analyzing these ideas further and will be attending two meetings in March (La Jolla) and April (Honolulu) to listen to stakeholder issues and ideas for a potential amended Resolution C-13-01. The Council may want to consider submitting its perspectives on a modified catch limit in the EPO for large longline vessels and/or its perspective on managing said catch limit to the U.S. Section of the IATTC.

#### Observer Safety At Sea

The United States is considering developing an IATTC proposal that would improve existing practices for observer safety at sea. Observer programs are important tools for fisheries management, and a safe environment for observers is necessary to help ensure that reliable and accurate information is collected. The United States is taking into consideration the minimum safety standards adopted by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) in 2015 (see [WCPFC Meeting Report](#); Page 152), as well as other methods to improve observer safety as a starting point for a potential U.S. proposal. The Council may want to consider providing its perspective on methods to improve observer safety at sea to the U.S. Section of the IATTC.

#### High Seas Boarding and Inspection Program

The [Presidential Task Force on Combating IUU Fishing and Seafood Fraud](#) (Task Force) provided recommendations to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and seafood fraud that included developing best practices for monitoring, control, and surveillance measures in RFMOs. The Task Force specifically identified high seas boarding and inspection (HSBI) programs as a measure for which best practices are needed. HSBI programs are a tool that can be used to increase compliance with conservation and management measures in RFMOs. The United States is considering a long-term strategy for advancing an HSBI proposal within the IATTC. The Council may want to provide input to the U.S. Section of the IATTC on the approach for HSBI in the IATTC.

#### Sharks and Seabirds

The United States continues to support measures within the IATTC to reduce catch of non-target species in the EPO. In 2015, the United States sponsored proposals to reduce incidental catch of [hammerhead sharks](#) and [seabirds](#) ([Resolution C-11-02](#)). Although the IATTC did not adopt

either proposal, the United States continues to support conservation efforts for sharks and seabirds within the IATTC.