

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON UPDATE ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) received a report on International Issues from Ms. Celia Barroso and Dr. Kit Dahl. Covered in their review was the 90th meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), the 12th Regular Session of the Northern Committee (NC12), and the closure of the U.S. pelagic longline fishery for bigeye tuna for vessels over 24 meters in overall length in the EPO.

90th Meeting of the IATTC:

The HMSAS is hopeful the IATTC will pass a Resolution for the conservation and management of Pacific bluefin tuna when the meeting resumes in October. We were informed the US will be submitting a proposed Resolution for the resumed IATTC meeting which will be substantially similar to the proposed US Resolution submitted in June. In addition to extending the current catch limits, the proposed Resolution may (1) adopt an initial rebuilding target to align with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), currently 2024; and (2) by 2018, consider developing a second rebuilding target to be achieved by 2030. The HMSAS recommends the Council support the rationale behind this proposed Resolution and support the proposed Resolution, when published, provided it does not differ materially from what was described to the HMSAS.

We also offer strong support for Resolution C-16-03 and highlight the following language contained in that Resolution, “Recognizing also that the impact of the fishery for Pacific bluefin tuna in the WCPO on SSB is proportionally much greater (84 percent) than in the EPO fisheries (16 percent), and that its rate of increase [in the WCPO] in recent years has also been comparatively much greater.”

12th Regular Session of the Northern Committee

The HMSAS is concerned about the lack of any quantifiable progress made at NC12. We are cautiously optimistic the rebuilding strategy scenarios evaluation assigned to the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) will result in meaningful and equitable scenarios which provide the basis for future conservation and management measures.

Closure of the U.S. pelagic longline fishery for bigeye tuna for vessels over 24 meters in overall length in the EPO

The HMSAS learned the closure of this fishery may have been premature. To the extent possible and so long as it can be done without giving rise to conservation concerns, the HMSAS supports a reopening of the fishery to ensure any available quota is harvested. Industry is in consultation with NMFS to expedite catch reporting. We would like to recommend that NMFS continue to work with industry to prioritize developing e-logbooks or other solutions to help avoid this situation in the future.

With respect to providing recommendations to the US Delegations to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), the HMSAS believes it would be prudent to withhold specific recommendations until the November Council meeting. At that time, we will have the benefit of knowing Resolutions adopted during the resumed IATTC meeting in October.

PFMC
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