

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

Final Rule on Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) Import Restrictions

On Monday, August 15, 2016, NMFS published a final rule ([81 FR 54389](#)) to implement provisions of the MMPA that aim to reduce marine mammal bycatch associated with international commercial fishing operations by requiring nations exporting fish and fish products to the United States to be held to the same standards as U.S. commercial fishing operations. The rule also establishes the criteria for evaluating a harvesting nation's regulatory program for reducing marine mammal bycatch and the procedures required to receive authorization to import fish and fish products into the United States. To ensure effective implementation, the rule establishes a 5 year exemption period to allow foreign harvesting nations time to develop regulatory programs comparable in effectiveness to U.S. programs.

Outcomes from the Northern Committee (NC) Meeting

The 12th Regular Session of the NC (NC12) met from August 29 - September 2, 2016, in Fukuoka, Japan to discuss, among other things, conservation and management measures for highly migratory stocks. The U.S. Delegation included representatives of the NMFS West Coast Region and Pacific Islands Regional Office, as well as the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Commissioner, Ms. Dorothy Lowman, and representatives of fishing associations and environmental organizations.

A joint working group of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and NC to the WCPFC also met concurrently with NC12 to discuss management of Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF). In addition to members of the NC, the European Union and Mexico attended the joint working group. Mr. Barry Thom, U.S. Commissioner to the IATTC, represented the United States during the joint working group meeting. Ms. Lowman Co-chaired the joint working group meeting with Mr. Masanori Miyahara of Japan. The majority of the work and discussion on PBF occurred during the joint working group meeting.

As reflected in the NC12 Summary Report¹, the working group agreed to the following statement: "Recognizing that the management objectives of WCPFC and IATTC are to maintain or restore fish stocks at levels capable of producing MSY, to rebuild the Pacific bluefin tuna stock by adopting and achieving step-wise rebuilding targets." Prompted by the U.S. proposal², the joint working group agreed to request that the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) evaluate a suite of harvest scenarios and performance measures reflecting different catch/effort limits and rebuilding targets (e.g., candidate step-wise rebuilding targets) (Attachment D, Annex 2 in the Summary Report). It is expected that the ISC will host a stakeholder meeting to review the results of the analysis (see Attachment D, Annex 3 in the Summary Report). The working group also agreed to adopt a

¹ <https://www.wcpfc.int/meetings/12th-regular-session-northern-committee>

² <https://www.wcpfc.int/node/27586>

second rebuilding target in 2017, to be achieved by 2030. The 2nd meeting of the joint IATTC-WCPFC NC working group will meet concurrently with the NC meeting in 2017.