

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) supports the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) resolution C-16-08 adopted for Pacific Bluefin tuna at the October 12-14, 2016 meeting. This resolution basically continues resolution C-14-06, Conservation of Bluefin Tuna 2015-16 into the 2017-18 cycle. The HMSAS also supports continuing the current landing limits, which are 25 metric tons until catch is within 50 metric tons of the annual catch limit (i.e., 425 metric tons), at which time a two-metric ton trip limit will be imposed.

The HMSAS supports the rebuilding of the bluefin population. However, the HMSAS has concerns about the slow progress and the continued high take of the bluefin juvenile population in Japan and the continued harvest of spawning adults. The Western Pacific agreed take reductions of juvenile bluefin are insignificant in that the 2002-2004 catches were used as a base instead of recent catches, therefore no reduction is being required. The HMSAS again recommends time and closures of the spawning grounds and acknowledgement of recreational catches of bluefin tuna in the Western Pacific.

The HMSAS wants to mention that there is new information coming out of the Western Pacific concerning a large recruitment event in 2016 and full-cycle mariculture of bluefin.

Japan's Far Seas Fisheries Agency last year tagged ~3,000 juvenile (young of the year) bluefin in Japan. The average has been 200-400 per year until 2016. It is expected these fish will be off California in summer 2017.

North Pacific Albacore

The HMSAS thanks the Council for funding industry/management team representatives to the management strategy evaluation (MSE) workshop on North Pacific albacore last May in Japan. We found the reports to the Council advisory panels very helpful in understanding the "management objectives" that resulted from the workshop. Also, we wanted to remind the Council that, to make the MSE analysis successful, industry representatives need to be involved. We are asking the Council to set aside funds in the 2017 budget necessary to send two industry representatives to the Albacore MSE workshop that is set for May 2017 in Canada.

South Pacific Albacore

The HMSAS asks that the Council recommend to the United States Section to urge the WCPFC to take into consideration the process undertaken by the Northern Committee for North Pacific albacore as the WCPFC considers development of target reference points, harvest control rules, and levels of risk for South Pacific albacore. The MSE process being undertaken by the Northern Committee is clearly based on science and is progressing in an orderly manner.

The Council should recommend that the U.S. advocate for an assessment of South Pacific albacore throughout its range. This should specifically include that portion of the stock residing outside the Treaty Area of the WCPFC.

The U.S. troll fishery in the South Pacific takes place exclusively on the high seas. This fleet has a negligible impact on the South Pacific albacore population. Therefore, the Council should support access to the high seas by the U.S. troll fishery.

Response to the Petition for Rulemaking on Pacific Bluefin Tuna

The HMSAS repeats its comments on this topic made in September 2016 (Agenda Item J.3.a, Supplemental HMSAS Report, September 2016).

The HMSAS is aware of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) statement that it is referring “the specific requests for rulemaking under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) to the Council for further consideration,” (which was contained in the recent Federal Register notice, 81 F.R. 39213, June 16, 2016), in its denial of the Center for Biological Diversity’s Bluefin petition.

The HMSAS’ understanding of how international HMS stocks are managed under the MSA is that the Council’s role is to recommend domestic regulations to implement those international conservation and management measures which the U.S. has agreed to in a Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO). In addition, it should be noted that in both the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission’s U.S. Section and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission’s (WCPFC) U.S. Section, the Council has a seat at the international table in the form of having one of the Commissioners in each organization. This is a primary avenue for the Council to express its views on international management.

The Council’s regulation in reducing the sport fishing bag limit on Pacific Bluefin is an example of action independent of that recommended by an RFMO. That action, however, was to develop domestic regulations called for and agreed to by the U.S. government in the IATTC’s Pacific Bluefin resolution (C-14-06), which in pertinent part reads:

In 2015, each CPC must take meaningful measures to reduce catches of Pacific bluefin tuna by sportfishing vessels operating under its jurisdiction to levels comparable to the levels of reduction applied under this resolution to the EPO commercial fisheries until such time that the stock is re-built.

Conservation and management decisions should be based on science. The WCPFC-NC, and, therefore the WCPFC, depends on scientific advice given by the International Scientific Committee (ISC). The IATTC depends on scientific advice coming from its scientific staff. The U.S. has scientists who represent the U.S. in the ISC, as well as scientists who attend meetings of the IATTC’s Scientific Committee, which reviews the information presented by the IATTC’s scientific staff. The U.S. through the State Department and NMFS has a decade-old policy of supporting the scientific advice given by these entities in determining maximum sustainable yield, target reference points, limit reference points, harvest control rules, and international stock rebuilding programs. Both the IATTC and the WCPFC have adopted conservation and management measures for Pacific Bluefin.

For the above reasons, HMSAS believes that the Council should continue its long-standing policy of supporting the positions of the U.S. government before the IATTC and the WCPFC.

PBF Tagging Research

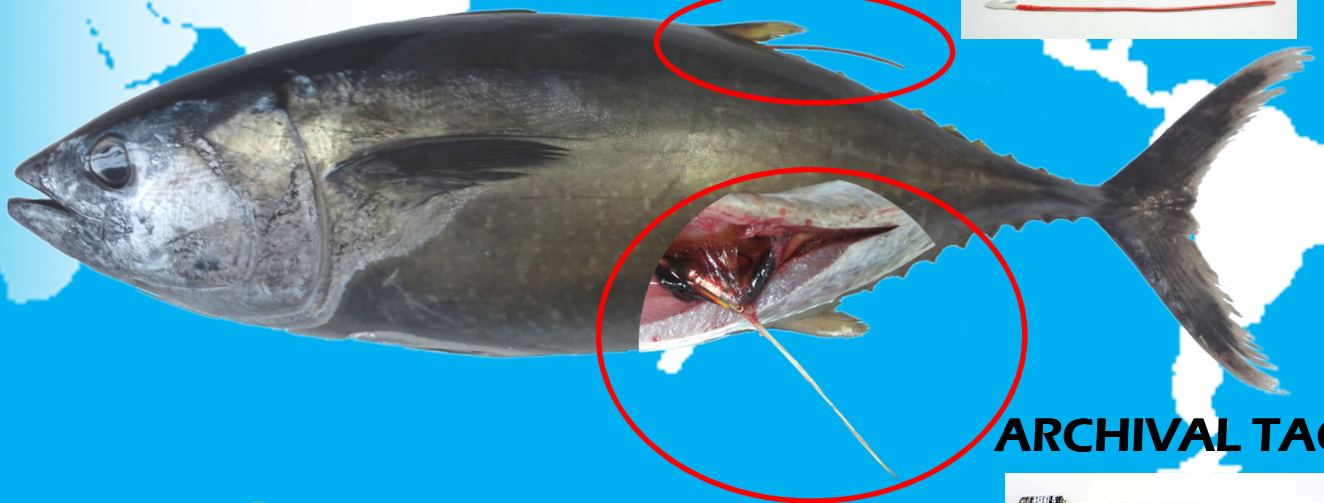
WANTED

Tagged Pacific bluefin tuna

If you catch a tagged fish

Please save below 2 items ;

DART TAG



ARCHIVAL TAG



Please record:

■ Your name and Address

■ Capture date and place

■ Fork length

■ Total weight

**To report a tagged fish,
or for any additional information,
PLEASE CALL:**

IATTC

TEL : 858-546-7100

NOAA

TEL :

NRFSF

TEL : (+81)-54-336-6039

REWARD

DART TAG

\$5

ARCHIVAL TAG

\$250