

**Recommendations from the Permanent Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commissioners for  
the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission  
Honolulu, Hawaii - October 6-7, 2016**

**Outcomes from the WCPFC Scientific Committee 12**

**Fisheries and Stock Assessment Recommendation:** Several members of the PAC request that the U.S. annually provide the PAC with a simplified analysis of changes in the fisheries from the prior year/years, of the possible reasons for changes, and of the implications for management problems and/or opportunities if those most recent conditions were to continue in the future.

**Fisheries and Stock Assessment Recommendation:** The PAC requests that the U.S. seek an explanation and evaluation of the extent to which the lack of complete and accurate information from the Indonesian and Philippines fisheries may have affected past stock assessments of bigeye tuna and the implications for future stock assessments.

**CCM Catch Analysis Recommendation:** The PAC request that the U.S. provide an analysis of the possible reasons for dramatic changes in catches by various fleets (e.g., China tuna catch dropping from 112,000 mt in 2013 to 73,000 mt in 2015).

**Recommendation:** The PAC recommends that the U.S. urge that the above items be fully discussed and reported on by the SC at future meetings.

**Outcome from the FAD Management Working Group Meeting**

**FADS Research:** The PAC supports the proposed research plan on FADs as proposed in the MRAG consultant's report that will be presented to the Commission.

**Conservation and Management Measure for Tropical Tunas (CMM 2015-01)**

The PAC agrees that U.S. fisheries operating in the WCP-Convention Area meet or exceed numerous safety, monitoring, reporting, environmental, and protected species standards that are not met by the fisheries of any of the other CCMs. When these US fisheries are excessively restricted or closed, domestic demand is satisfied by foreign fleets that fall far short of the rigorous standards applicable to U.S. fleets.

The PAC recognizes that U.S. purse seine vessels need access to the high seas. The high seas, and especially the Eastern high seas, are an important part of the historical fishing operations of US purse seine vessels. The current CMM limiting high seas days is damaging to the US purse seine fleet and the canneries in American Samoa.

The PAC also recognizes that the Hawaii longline fishery principally supplies the Hawaii domestic seafood market and operates in a region where fishing has a low impact to the bigeye stock.

A majority of the PAC recommends that the U.S., at WCPFC13, work to restore the bigeye catch limit applicable to the Hawaii longline fishery to the 2009 level, and also, restore the U.S. high seas purse seine effort limit to historical levels of approximately 3,000 days. A minority of the PAC disagreed. With the increase in catch of bigeye between 2009 and 2014, the minority felt that it would cause significant detriment to efforts to end overfishing of bigeye and rebuild its population.

### **US Draft Proposal for Tropical Tuna**

The PAC acknowledges and appreciates the development of a draft Tropical Tuna measure proposal by the U.S. government, which includes proposed limits on vessel capacity, FAD sets, and spatial longline bigeye catches, but recommends that NMFS not submit the proposal as drafted to WCPFC13.

The PAC recommends that the U.S. government prepare in consultation with the PAC a concept paper on management alternatives (e.g., spatial longline limits) for 2017 and beyond, for potential circulation to the Commission early next year, taking into account the outcomes of WCPFC13, to include explanatory text, scientific rationale and other information.

The PAC recommends that the U.S. government give the PAC members the opportunity to review the proposed concept paper as soon as possible (understanding that it may be next year) and conduct a conference call or meeting in order for the PAC to comment on the management concepts and enclosed information.

The PAC recommends that the U.S. consider preparing a draft CMM for tropical tunas following the stock assessments done in 2017 by the science provider.

The PAC recommends that the U.S. government, recognizing the movement towards Harvest Strategies, look at a 3 year CMM to coincide with the next stock assessments.

The PAC recommends that the U.S. government engage with various Commission members during the next year to explore areas of mutual interest, as well as areas of concern in the hopes of building some support for its draft proposal or concepts.

### **Chair's Draft – Bridging Measure**

The PAC recommends that the U.S. request that South Pacific albacore be removed from consideration in the proposal.

The PAC recommends that the U.S. advocate for including Maximum Sustainable Yield within the management objectives of the three (3) tropical tuna stocks such that consideration be given to ensuring that conservation measures are based on the best scientific evidence available and are designed to maintain or restore stocks at levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield, as qualified by relevant environmental and economic factors.

The PAC recommends that additional principles be included within the Chair's draft including compliance standards, sharing of data, and maintained access to the high seas.

#### **Regarding the 2017 High Seas FAD closure:**

The PAC recommends that the U.S. strongly oppose the exemption of the countries from the 2017 High Seas FAD closure.

A majority of the PAC members recommend that if there is not agreement that the exemption will not be implemented for any fleets, the U.S. should strongly pursue a position in which the 2017 HS FAD closure would not apply to any fleets, since the FAD set limits already place a limit on FAD effort, and the HS FAD closure is acting only to redistribute effort into PNA countries and has no conservation merit or scientific basis. A minority of the PAC members did not agree with this recommendation.

#### **Conservation and Management Measures and issues for PAC advice**

##### **Harvest Strategies**

- **Recording management objectives**
- **Acceptable levels of risk**
- **Bigeye tuna rebuilding timeframe**

The PAC recommends the U.S. develop broad management objectives that are consistent with the Convention text. The PAC recognizes that if the Commission is recording more specific management objectives, that the U.S. put forward management objectives that recognize the interests and aspirations of US Territories, U.S. longline fisheries that provide fish for domestic markets, and U.S. purse seine, longline, and troll fleets that have a long-history of responsible operation within the Convention Area.

The PAC is concerned about the ambiguity of the meaning of "recording" management objectives.

A majority of PAC members recommend the acceptable levels of risk of breaching the bigeye limit reference point be associated with levels of  $SB_{MSY}$  and ensure that the risk levels for other key tuna stocks be within the range of 20% to 50% given that the Limit Reference Points (LRF) are conservative in relation to tropical tuna reference points in the IATTC and under U.S. domestic control rules. A minority of the PAC members

disagree with this recommendation and support the 5% and 10% risk levels proposed by Australia.

The PAC notes the Commission's adopted limit reference point for bigeye is not consistent with the U.S. domestic management framework, but absent any reconsideration of the appropriateness of the LRP, the PAC recommends that the Commission adopt management measures that ensure bigeye fishing mortality levels rebuild the bigeye stock to the LRP within 10 years.

### **Pacific Bluefin Tuna**

The PAC accepts the interim rebuilding target<sup>1</sup> for Pacific bluefin tuna, agreed to at the First Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee – IATTC Joint Working Group meeting, as a first step in recovering the stock. But at about 6 percent of current unfished Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) this target is unlikely to produce maximum sustainable yield in the long run, a central objective in our domestic fishery management framework. At the 2015 and 2016 Northern Committee meetings, the U.S. proposed a rebuilding target of SSB 20 percent of current unfished biomass as a likely approximation of the SSB that would produce maximum sustainable yield.

The PAC supports this as a proxy for SSB associated with MSY and recommends the Joint Working Group consider it for adoption as a second rebuilding target, to be achieved by 2030. Adoption of this target should occur at its second meeting in 2017, with future action by the Commission as needed. As important, management measures sufficient to achieve rebuilding should be adopted sooner rather than later since delay will require the adoption of more drastic cuts later in order to achieve the target biomass by 2030. The results of projections requested by the Joint Working Group (as specified in Attachment D, Annex 2 of the Report of the Twelfth Northern Committee Meeting) can inform the choice of the second rebuilding target but continued analyses should not be used as an excuse to delay additional action.

The PAC recommends that the U.S. continues to make strong statements in support of a science-based rebuilding plan for PBF that explicitly calls for an ultimate rebuilding goal of MSY (or an appropriate proxy), noting that a stepwise rebuilding approach needs to accelerate progress toward this ultimate goal of rebuilding to a biomass that can produce MSY, and requesting that all CCMs work with NC members to ensure that the Commission meets its mandates.

The PAC recommends that the US make strong statements noting the lack of any progress in meeting the workplan goals for PBF, particularly setting a long term management (harvest strategy) framework and limit reference point in accordance with the six elements of the harvest strategy, and call on all CCMs to commit to working with the U.S. so that a proposal can be adopted at the 2017 NC/ Joint meeting with IATTC.

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<sup>1</sup> SSB<sub>MED</sub>- 1952-2014 to be achieved by 2024 with at least 60 percent probability.

The PAC recommends that the U.S. request to Japan and all other NC members for substantive comments on U.S. proposals that will set a stepwise plan to achieve the long-term rebuilding goal of MSY (or appropriate proxy) and long term management (harvest strategy) framework for PBF, and extend an offer to have intersessional meetings to discuss the US proposals so we can reach a meaningful and appropriate agreement in advance of the next NC/ Joint meeting with IATTC.

### **South Pacific Albacore**

The PAC recommends that the U.S. urge the WCPFC to take into consideration the process undertaken for NP albacore as it considers development of target reference points, harvest control rules, and levels of risk for South Pacific Albacore. This MSE process is clearly based on science and is progressing in an orderly manner.

The PAC recommends that the U.S. advocate for an assessment of the South Pacific albacore stock throughout its range, and collaborate with the IATTC to complete that work.

The PAC recommends that the U.S. continue to oppose:

- a. Including South Pacific Albacore in any tropical tuna CMM so as to be consistent with IATTC practice.
- b. Possible loss of access to the high seas. Our South Pacific troll fishery takes place exclusively on the high seas and as shown in WCPFC-2012-IP11 has negligible impact on the albacore population.

### **Observer Safety Proposal**

The PAC supports the submission of the observer harassment measure proposal to the WCPFC13 and recommends that the U.S. ensure that the provisions of the measure ensure that allegations of observer harassment, without supporting information, should not mandate that vessels return to port.

### **Compliance Monitoring Scheme**

The PAC agrees that there are serious concerns of an uneven playing field with regards to compliance and monitoring within the WCPFC, recommends that the U.S. significantly increase its efforts to gain improvements in enforcement and monitoring of fisheries of other CCMs to a level that is comparable to the U.S. Most of the PAC members agree to urge the U.S. to not agree to any further reductions in effort or catch for U.S. purse seine, US longline, and U.S. troll fisheries until there is a high-level of confidence that other CCMs are enforcing and monitoring their fisheries to the same standard as the United States. Other members of the PAC disagree expressing concern of the potential impact of the effort to reduce bigeye mortality.

**Improve compliance monitoring:** The PAC recommends that the U.S. continue to advocate for a stronger WCPFC compliance monitoring structure to enable the Commission to evaluate the fisheries operations of its members. Such a structure should include a transparent system for reporting and documenting possible violations of CMMs (including the PNA as a group of CCMs), calling for investigations, and following up on the status of investigations. The role of the Secretariat in compliance monitoring should be enhanced, including examining observer reports and reporting alleged violations. The PAC notes that that current system relies heavily on CCM self-reporting, which is hampering the credibility of the Commission and encouraging non-compliance. The PAC further recommends that the U.S. develop proposals to improve the CMR process that includes mechanisms to appropriately sanction CCM non-compliance.

The PAC recommends that the U.S. continue to support that the Commission's Compliance Monitoring Review process be conducted in open session and be as transparent as practicable to provide greater credibility with the process.

While the PAC appreciates the improved reporting from this year's compliance review, the PAC recommends that the U.S. continue to support requirements that all CCMs fully comply with operational data requirements in accordance with Commission rules.

#### **American Samoa, CNMI, and Guam Issues**

The PAC recognizes the importance of the participation of the U.S. territories within the Commission. Specifically, American Samoa's economy is tuna dependent and it has a tuna fishery which includes the PS, LL and alias that are based there. Those boats need access to the fishing grounds in and around the AS EEZ. This includes the high seas, U.S. EEZ's and the EEZ's of PNA countries and several non-PNA countries. The US needs to advocate for its tuna fishery based in American Samoa. Therefore, the PAC requests that the U.S. Government ensure that the US participating territories, including fishing industry representatives from the territories participate as appropriate in discussions that relate to their interests.

#### **Other Issues**

**At-sea longline transshipment:** The PAC recommends that the U.S. support WCPFC decisions to ban transshipment of frozen bigeye on the high seas, or at least that the US promote actions to tighten control of at-sea transshipment by longline vessels.

The PAC recommends that the U.S. support work within the WCPFC to develop clear and simple guidelines for determining the impracticability of operating without transshipment on the high seas. In the case of continued transshipment being allowed, a formal monitoring processes (that could include observers) should be developed that are based on standardized forms and protocols that ensure that all transshipments are reported to the Commission.