

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

**Outcomes of the 91st Meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)
(Extraordinary)**

The 91st Extraordinary Meeting of the IATTC was held February 7-10, 2017, in La Jolla, CA. The purpose of the meeting was to adopt a conservation and management measure for tropical tunas (bigeye, skipjack, and yellowfin) that would apply to 2017 and beyond because the previous resolution¹ expired on December 31, 2016.

Three proposals—sponsored by the United States, Colombia/Ecuador, and Mexico—were considered at the meeting. Each proposal attempted to incorporate the IATTC scientific staff recommendation for an additional 25 closure days needed in 2017 to offset increases in purse seine fishing capacity and prevent overfishing of yellowfin tuna. During the meeting, the IATTC scientific staff presented an evaluation of each proposal and the equivalent conservation value in closure days, and the U.S. proposal was the only proposal consistent with the IATTC scientific staff recommendations. Several of the countries not supportive of the U.S. proposal asked for additional conservation measures to be evaluated by the IATTC scientific staff and to be considered by member nations, however consensus was not reached.

Unable to reach an agreement on measures applicable to 2018 and beyond, the IATTC agreed to Resolution C-17-01 (*Conservation of Tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean During 2017*) for 2017 only, which rolls over four measures of the previous resolution. Resolution C-17-01 also establishes a total allowable catch (TAC) limit for yellowfin and bigeye combined. The TAC for the fishery on floating objects by purse seine vessels of class size 4-6 is 97,711 metric tons (mt) and, for the fishery that sets on dolphins by class size 6 purse seine vessels, the TAC is 162,182 mt.

NMFS anticipates implementing Resolution C-17-01 by final rule, waiving for good cause the general requirement for advance notice and comment. This is necessary because the IATTC adopted Resolution C-17-01 in February of the year the requirements are effective (i.e., 2017) rather than in June or July of the year before, which is the typical timing for adopting resolutions. If this rule were delayed pending publication of a proposed rule and consideration of public comments, U.S. purse seine and longline fisheries could exceed the limits established in Resolution C-17-01. Implementing Resolution C-17-01 before catch limits are exceeded is necessary for the United States to satisfy its obligations as a member of the IATTC. NMFS anticipates that the final rule will publish by the end of March 2017 and become effective 30 days later. The Commission will consider tropical tuna conservation measures for 2018 and beyond at the 91st Annual Meeting of the Commission in July 2017.

Upcoming Priorities for the 91st Meeting of the IATTC (Ordinary)

¹ Resolution C-13-01, *Multiannual Program for the Conservation of Tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean During 2014-2016*

The following is a list of potential U.S. priorities for the upcoming IATTC meeting:

- *Tropical tuna conservation and management*: The IATTC is expected to adopt measures for the conservation and management of tropical tunas for 2018 and beyond. The U.S. will continue to support the advice from the IATTC scientific staff on tropical tuna conservation and intends to work with other IATTC member nations toward a proposal that is consistent with the scientific advice.
- *Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF) rebuilding*: The United States will continue its efforts to promote a rebuilding plan for PBF. The United States will take into consideration the outcomes of the April 2017 PBF stakeholder meeting and the August 2017 Joint IATTC-Northern Committee to the WCPFC Working Group (WG) meeting. Specifically, the WG is likely to discuss a second rebuilding target and an “emergency rule” that is intended to establish more restrictive harvest limits triggered by extremely low recruitment events. The United States will continue to work closely in advance of the Joint WG meeting with IATTC members that fish for PBF including bilateral meetings and coordination with Japan and Mexico.
- *Observer safety at sea*: The United States will continue to pursue the adoption of new observer safety at sea standards and intends to submit a revised proposal at the 91st Meeting. The United States proposed a measure on observer safety at sea at the 2016 Annual IATTC Meeting and again at the Resumed Meeting in October, but the IATTC could not achieve consensus.
- *Sea turtle bycatch*: The IATTC intends to reconvene the Bycatch Working Group (BWG) in May 2017. The BWG is expected to discuss sea turtle bycatch, with a focus on leatherback sea turtles, and possibly shark bycatch concerns as well. The United States is currently engaged with other IATTC members to develop an agenda for the BWG.
- The United States also considers the following as high priorities: increasing observer coverage on longline vessels operating in the eastern Pacific Ocean (sponsored by Mexico), developing a high seas boarding and inspection program (sponsored by the United States), and establishing a port inspection scheme (sponsored by the European Union).

U.S.-Canada Pacific Albacore Treaty Negotiations

Mr. David Hogan, Department of State provided the following update on negotiations on a future fishing regime under the Treaty:

The State Department has authorized negotiations on amendment of the annexes to the U.S.-Canada Pacific Albacore Treaty along the lines of the general positions expressed by the harvesting sector, including at or in advance of the November 2016 Council meeting, i.e. to consider renewal of the previous regime for a new period of 3 years, from 2017-2019 and, as related matters, to seek improvements in Canada’s provision of fishing data and administration of port access for U.S. vessels. In addition, the State Department is formalizing the arrangements on catch/quota attribution at the multilateral level (e.g., IATTC) for catches made pursuant to the Treaty. Procedurally, given the timing budget considerations of both governments and the likely limited number and scope of changes, the governments may negotiate the renewal without in-person meetings.

International Meetings

Below is a list of the 2017 international meetings that the U.S. will track and participate in:

IATTC-related Meetings²

IATTC Scientific Advisory Committee	May 8 - May 12	La Jolla, CA
U.S. Scientific Advisory Subcommittee	May 31	La Jolla, CA
U.S. General Advisory Committee	June 1	La Jolla, CA
IATTC Annual Meeting	Jul 24 - Jul 28	TBD
Joint IATTC-NC to WCPFC Working Group*	Aug 28 - Sep 1	South Korea

WCPFC-related Meetings³

U.S. Permanent Advisory Committee	April 13	Conference Call
Scientific Committee	Aug 9 - Aug 17	Cook Islands
Northern Committee*	Aug 28 - Sep 1	South Korea
Technical & Compliance Committee	Sep 27 - Oct 3	Micronesia
U.S. Permanent Advisory Committee	TBD	TBD
Annual Meeting	Dec 3 - Dec 8	Philippines

ISC-related Meetings⁴

Pacific Bluefin Working Group	Feb 15 - Feb 20	Shimizu, Japan
Shark Working Group	Mar 17 - Mar 24	La Jolla, CA
Albacore Working Group	Apr 10 - Apr 19	La Jolla, CA
Pacific Bluefin Tuna Stakeholder	Apr 25 - Apr 27	Tokyo, Japan
Billfish Working Group	April	Chinese-Taipei
Statistics Working Group	May	Webinar
Plenary (Annual Meeting)	Jul 12 - Jul 17	Vancouver, Canada

*These two meetings will occur concurrently.

² For more information on future meetings, visit: <https://www.iattc.org/MeetingsENG.htm>

³ For more information on future meetings, visit: <https://www.wcpfc.int/meetings>

⁴ For more information on future meetings, visit: http://isc.fra.go.jp/meetings/future_meetings.html