HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Pacific Bluefin Tuna (PBF) Management in 2018

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) discussed the recent exceedance of the 2017 PBF catch limit. Per regulation, the commercial PBF catch limit is 600 mt for 2017-2018, combined, of which no more than 425 mt can be caught in the first year. Commercial landings for 2017 are currently estimated at roughly 470 mt, leaving approximately 130 mt for 2018. The remaining portion of the catch limit for the biennium is unlikely to be sufficient for a directed purse seine commercial PBF fishery in 2018.

The HMSMT recommends that the Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) consider revisions to the 2018 regulations to structure the 2018 commercial fishery to allow for only landings in small quantities, such as incidental catch.

The HMSMT discussed the potential for future overages in the commercial PBF fishery. The HMSMT believes the current regulatory framework creates a race to fish as the catch limit is approached. This response makes it difficult for federal regulators to track catch and close the fishery in a manner timely enough to prevent an overage. The HMSMT discussed possible mechanisms to address this challenge in future biennial cycles, including the following: more stringent effort controls in the purse seine fishery; implementation of trip limits other than those currently in place; improved monitoring of PBF catch; and, lowering the threshold at which to implement the 2 mt trip limit (e.g., instead of reducing the trip limit when catch is within 50 mt of the annual limit, reduce the trip limit when catch is within 75 mt of the annual limit).

Albacore Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) Workshop

The International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) will host a third MSE workshop October 17-19, 2017, in Vancouver, Canada. It is anticipated that they will finalize the objectives and performance metrics for the first round of evaluations, as well as develop candidate reference points and candidate harvest control rules. There will be opportunity to revisit these attributes after the first round of evaluations.

During preparations for a Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) and HMSMT webinar on this topic, Council staff prepared a paper that describes a management strategy for evaluation based on the harvest control framework in the HMS Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and previous Council recommendations on North Pacific albacore management. Additionally, Council staff prepared another paper for the consideration of the U.S. Permanent Advisory Committee to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) containing initial concepts for management strategies to be evaluated. During the second workshop held in April 2016, participants developed six objectives and asked the ISC's Albacore Working Group to propose performance metrics to assess the success of those objectives (See Annex 8 of ISC16 Report). The six objectives in Table 3 and related performance metrics of the report all address

biological considerations regarding the albacore stock. Two further economic and social objectives are listed for potential future development. All of these objectives will be reviewed and discussed in the upcoming Management Strategy Evaluations (MSE) workshop. The HMSMT notes that work is underway at NMFS science centers to incorporate human dimensions elements in MSEs.

The HMSMT thanks the Council for sending a representative to the MSE workshop.

Joint Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)-Northern Committee (NC) and NC Meeting Outcomes

The HMSMT views the outcome of the Joint IATTC-NC Working Group meeting, as reflected in the Harvest Strategy for Pacific Bluefin Tuna Fisheries adopted by the NC, as a major step forward for rebuilding the stock. It commits NC members to rebuild the spawning stock biomass (SSB) to 20% of biomass in the absence of fishing ($20\%SSB_{F=0}$) by 2034 or 10 years after the interim target is achieved, whichever is earlier. This target is a more reasonable proxy for SSB_{MSY} compared to the interim target previously adopted by the NC of the median $SSB_{1952\text{-}2014}$ (about $7\%SSB_{F=0}$). This reflects what the U.S. has advocated as a rebuilding target since 2015 (see WCPFC-NC11-2015/DP-03). The U.S. should advocate for the adoption of complementary measures by the IATTC in 2018.

PFMC
09/16/17