

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

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) was briefed on the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) report ([Agenda Item G.2.c, Supplemental NMFS Report 1](#)), and by Dr. Gerard DiNardo (Southwest Fisheries Science Center) on management strategy evaluation (MSE) activities and the 2018 Pacific bluefin tuna stock assessment.

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) is expected to renegotiate a resolution on Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF) at its annual meeting in August 2018 located in San Diego, CA. Additionally, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee (NC) will meet in September 2018 and may discuss increases in catch limits consistent with the WCPFC's Conservation and Management Measure on PBF ([CMM 2017-08](#)). The HMSMT does not support increasing the Pacific-wide total allowable catch at this time because the stock remains depleted and it is unknown if the recruitment level in 2016, which resulted in more optimistic projections, continued in 2017 and will continue into the future. However, to promote an equitable balance in the harvest of PBF between the eastern Pacific Ocean and western and central Pacific Ocean, the U.S. should consider supporting a mechanism to proportionally increase catch limits adopted by the IATTC in case the NC adopts an increase in allowable catch in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean.

The HMSMT discussed options to prevent Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council)-managed fisheries from exceeding a future PBF limit. The HMSMT acknowledges that options for reducing the rate of harvest by the small coastal purse seine fishery for PBF may need to be considered. The HMSMT also reviewed the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) report on international activities and discussed the suggestions contained in that report. While the HMSMT does not propose any alternatives in addition to those raised by the HMSAS, we express the following views regarding those suggestions:

1. Adjustment of the current regulations to:
 - Lower the daily trip limit to 15 tons - the HMSMT is concerned that doing so could create incentives for regulatory discards, if vessels encircle schools that push the catch above the limit, then discard a portion of the catch in order to remain within the reduced trip limit.
 - Lower the trigger point to 60 percent of the annual limit - the HMSMT does not feel that it is appropriate to determine a trigger value or level for future PBF management before a catch limit has been established.
2. Allocation by gear: The HMSMT felt it was too early to develop a scheme to allocate PBF to different Council-managed fisheries without first identifying Council long-term objectives for management of PBF fisheries.
3. Restricting fishing effort:
 - The HMSMT is interested in the perspective of enforcement officials regarding enforceability of the HMSAS suggestion to limit the number of trips per week.