

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE (NMFS) REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES FOR HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES

NMFS is providing the information below on two issues related to North Pacific albacore for the Council's consideration.

Definition of Effort Limit for North Pacific Albacore

At its September 2018 meeting, the Council directed the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) to analyze fishing effort for North Pacific albacore off the U.S. West Coast. The Team's analysis is intended to support the efforts of the U.S. Delegation to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) to define effort in accordance with [Resolution C-05-02](#) (*Resolution on Northern Albacore Tuna*). To facilitate these discussions, NMFS is providing some relevant background information in this report.

The IATTC adopted Resolution C-05-02 in 2005, at the urging of U.S. fishing industry, to limit future increases in fishing pressure on the stock by limiting effort. As noted in the preamble of the Resolution, the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean had indicated that the stock was either fully exploited or experiencing fishing mortality above sustainable levels. At that time, other members of the IATTC located in both the western and eastern Pacific Ocean expressed concern about this Resolution excluding them from entering the fishery even if they had no stated plans at that time to begin fishing for North Pacific albacore.

Since the adoption of Resolution C-05-02, the IATTC recognized uncertainty in its effectiveness, and subsequently adopted [Resolution C-13-03](#) (*Supplemental Resolution on North Pacific Albacore*). Resolution C-13-03 was intended to improve the process for collecting catch and effort data from Members and Cooperating Non-Members for scientific analysis by IATTC staff. At the IATTC annual meeting in 2018, Resolution C-13-03 was amended under [Resolution C-18-03](#) (*Amendment to C-13-03 North Pacific albacore*) to require that catch and effort data be submitted annually in a specific format. Although effort was not defined in C-13-03, or under C-18-03, it should be noted that Annex B in C-18-03 requires the submission of data for average fishing effort from 2002-2004.

The IATTC has not yet made a decision to more specifically define baseline levels of North Pacific albacore fishing effort. If the United States, Canada, or other IATTC Members seek to further define the basis for the effort limit, including in any update to the 2005 Resolution, the IATTC Members have the prerogative to do so - changes to the current Resolution could be initiated by a recommendation from the IATTC scientific staff, the Scientific Advisory Committee, or a proposal by an IATTC Member.

Lastly, NMFS highlights ongoing management strategy evaluation (MSE) work on North Pacific albacore. The MSE is intended to provide scientific support to management decisions. Results of the initial evaluation are expected to be presented at a stakeholder workshop in March 2019.

The MSE provides an analysis of different management scenarios (e.g., use of reference points, harvest control rules), in order to meet the prescribed management objectives. The results of the MSE could be used to inform management decisions within the regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs), including the IATTC, on how best to manage the fishery.

Considering the history and current work on North Pacific albacore management, NMFS seeks clarity on the Council's views on the aforementioned approaches to managing the stock (e.g., defining effort and/or utilizing the results of the MSE).

U.S. - Canada Albacore Treaty (Treaty)

The current three-year (2017-2019) regime under the Treaty will expire at the end of 2019. David Hogan, Department of State, will attend the November 2018 Council meeting to hear the views of the Council and discuss the possibilities of a schedule for potential negotiations to renew the reciprocal fishing and port access regime.

Data availability challenges resulted in the postponement of the 2018 meeting of the bilateral Data Working Group established in association with the Treaty. This then led to postponement of the annual bilateral governmental consultation under the Treaty until later in 2018. It is likely that only partial 2018 data will be available prior to the meeting of Data Working Group in the spring/summer of 2019. Therefore, negotiations will rely on final data through 2017 and preliminary data for 2018.