

## HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ISSUES

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) offers the following recommendations, comments and/or advice on items raised under Agenda Item J2 - Recommend International Management Activities.

### Pacific Bluefin tuna

The HMSAS appreciates that the National Marine Fisheries Service extended the Public Comment period on the proposed rule to implement annual limits on commercial catch of Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF) in the eastern Pacific Ocean for 2019 and 2020. On March 4, 2019 the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) distributed Memorandum number 0072-410 (which is attached to this Report) which revised catch limits for 2019-2020 in accordance with Paragraph 12 of Resolution C-18-01. The revised catch limit for U.S. vessels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) for 2019 – 2020 is 630 metric tons (mt).

In our September 2018 report, we recommended a 300 mt annual catch limit, which if exceeded “fishing can continue on a two-ton limit until 425 mt is reached.” Given the increase in the U.S. biennial catch limit, we recommend a catch limit of 425 mt for 2019.

- Our fishery is opportunistic which necessitates the ability to harvest fish when they are present and available to us;
- Because we are capped at 425 mt ton in any year, this full amount should be available in the first year of the biennial period so that we do not artificially constrain ourselves during times when PBF are plentiful and within our range.

Regarding the upcoming U.S. Stakeholder Meeting on PBF, the HMSAS looks forward to participating in this meeting and the upcoming PBF Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) workshop. It is imperative that the Council remain engaged in these efforts and we recommend that the Council support allowing the HMSAS to send one member of the HMSAS to the MSE Workshop(s) for PBF. Given the large biomass that has been available to fisheries in the EPO in recent years- and it is likely there will be a push for increased harvest in the Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs) for 2021 and 2022- we ask the Council support the notion that any future increases in allowable harvest should benefit the U.S., keeping in mind the historic and significant participation by the U.S. in PBF fisheries. Currently, the fisheries in the EPO are allocated roughly 25% of the Pacific-wide catch. As opportunities for harvest expand in the future, we would like to see the EPO relative share of Pacific-wide catch increase to 40%. Increased harvests may also provide grounds for increasing the recreational bag limit for the 2020 season and beyond.

## Albacore Fishing Effort

The HMSAS reviewed the description of the U.S. North Pacific albacore fishing effort estimates (Agenda Item J.2, Attachment 2) and note that the definition of “current levels” used in the two RFMO albacore corresponds to the 2002-2004 timeframe for gauging a baseline. While member nations of RFMOs are required to report effort in both number of vessels and vessel days, Table 1 in that document shows that if U.S. vessel days was used, the U.S. effort would be 13,331 vessel days. The HMSAS believes that “current level” was always considered to be a “living” value and notes that the U.S. fishing effort in vessel days has hovered around 13,064, similar to the 13,331 level.

The HMSAS remains concerned that the effort, as currently used in the North Pacific albacore fishery, may disadvantage the U.S. fleet in the future. Every effort should be made to ensure U.S. harvesters, dependent on access to the fishery, are not negatively impacted in the future.

## North Pacific Albacore MSE

HMSAS representatives participated in both the February 13 webinar and follow-up call on February 28. Additionally, Mr. Doug Fricke attended the recently completed MSE workshop in Japan last week. We appreciate the time and work of Drs. Desiree Tommasi and Steve Teo, Ms. Celia Barroso, and Ms. Heidi Taylor in presenting and explaining the initial model run results to us. Mr. Doug Fricke will be presenting an overview of the MSE model and process following these comments.

All indications are that neither RFMO will be considering management measures this year. This affords us the following:

- Time: The next stock assessment is scheduled to be released next year. Given that the MSE effort and preparation of the stock assessment may use the same resources, we recommend the stock assessment take priority.
- A better understanding of the operating model: We are unclear about assumptions and variables included in the model; especially as it pertains to effort. For example - how does the model harmonize effort in the longline fisheries which incidentally harvests North Pacific albacore (based on number of hooks) with effort in surface fisheries (pole & line) which target North Pacific albacore (currently based on vessel days but could be number of vessels)?

U.S. industry stakeholders appreciate the Council’s support and will continue to participate in the MSE process with an eye towards development of future management measures which do not result in disparate impact to U.S. harvesters, processors, and dependent fishing communities.

PFMC  
03/11/19

# COMISION INTERAMERICANA DEL ATUN TROPICAL INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMISSION

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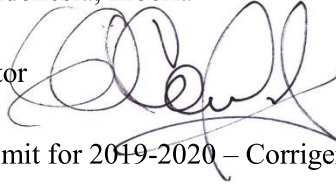
04 March 2019

Ref.: 0072-410

To: Commissioners

cc: Bolivia, Chile, Honduras, Indonesia, Liberia

From: Guillermo Compeán, Director



Re: Pacific bluefin tuna catch limit for 2019-2020 – Corrigendum (\*)

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Resolution C- 18-01 on *Measures for the conservation and management of Pacific bluefin tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, 2019 and 2020* establishes in its paragraph 3 a total catch limit of 6200 metric tons of Pacific bluefin tuna for that biennium. This represents a downward adjustment of 400 metric tons compared to the limit recommended by the IATTC scientific staff and expressly mentioned in footnote 1 of this paragraph, which had already been adopted for the previous biennium. The purpose of this adjustment was to take into account the approximate amount of excess catch observed during the 2017-2018 biennium.

Footnote 1 of paragraph 3 of the Resolution stipulates:

*“The catch limit for 2019-2020 is subject to final data on commercial catches of Pacific bluefin tuna in 2018 and does not prejudice the outcome of relevant domestic legal issues in affected CPCs, the consideration of which does not create a precedent for compliance with catch limits in this or future resolutions. Pursuant to Paragraph 10, the Director will notify the possible change to the catch limit for approval by the Commission subject to the Commission’s rules for intersessional decision-making (Rules of Procedure, Section VIII). The catch limit for 2019-2020 shall not exceed 6,600 metric tons, consistent with IATTC Scientific Staff recommendations.”*

In compliance with these provisions, please be notified that the catch limit of Pacific bluefin tuna for 2019-2020 should be changed to 6147 metric tons, comprising an adjusted total catch limit for Mexico of 5517 metric tons and a total catch limit of 630 metric tons for the exclusive use of the other CPC participating in the fishery.

This change reflects the overage of 483 metric tons recorded in Mexican catches during 2018-2019 (400 of which were already accounted for in the done would adjustment of the total catch limit from 6600 to 6200 metric tons as described above) and the underage of 30 metric tons recorded in US catches during that period.

Finally, please be reminded the provisions of the Rules of Procedure for approval by the Commission of that change, including those related to the deadlines for registering if a consensus has been reached or not.

In this respect, I wish to draw your attention more particularly on the following provision of paragraph 29 of these rules, which stipulates that:

*“29. Members shall respond within thirty (30) days of the date of the initial transmittal if they do not agree with the proposal, or if they require additional time to consider the matter. (...)”*

Accordingly, as of 4 April 2019, the absence of any manifestation of disagreement shall be understood as a consensus on the change to the total Pacific bluefin tuna catch limit for 2019-2020 as notified by this memorandum.

(\*) Amends and replaces the previous memorandum