

## HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON RECOMMEND INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) reviewed Agenda Item J.2, Recommend International Stock Assessments and offers the following thoughts, comments and recommendations.

### North Pacific Albacore Management Strategy Evaluation

The HMSAS last reported in March to the Council on the status of progress of the International Scientific Committee management strategy evaluation (MSE) North Pacific Albacore (NPA) model, which was a few days after the completion of the Yokohama workshop. Since then, the final recommendations from the Workshop have been released and are noted in [Agenda Item J.2, Attachment 1](#) - starting on page 14. Dr. Steve Teo met with the HMSAS and explained the Workshop recommendations. Although some of the recommendations are scientifically technical, many are written in layman's terms and easily understandable. The HMSAS suggests the Council support the recommendations from the Workshop to the U.S. delegations that will be representing the U.S. in forthcoming Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and Northern Committee (NC) meetings.

The HMSAS would like to thank the National Marine Fisheries Service staff from the Southwest Fisheries Science Center and West Coast Region for their patience in helping the industry folks in understanding the extremely complicated MSE model approach to managing the NPA fishery. The HMSAS would also like to thank the Council for supporting stakeholder involvement in the MSE process. This was highly recommended by scientists conducting the workshops. Doug Fricke of the HMSAS will be giving a detailed report of his participation at the workshop.

### North Pacific Albacore Proposed Management Recommendation

The HMSAS recommends the Council forward this Draft Resolution (attached) to the US Commissioners to the IATTC. This measure is urgent and needs to be presented at the July 22-26 Annual Meeting of the IATTC in Bilbao, Spain. Because it was in a preliminary stage of drafting when the IATTC General Advisory Committee (GAC) met in early June, it was not presented there; however, many of the GAC members will be on the U.S. Delegation to the annual meeting. The measure is confined to the IATTC Convention Area and to capping the numbers of longline vessels to the number targeting albacore in 2005 when the first resolution limiting effort was passed in the IATTC. U.S. West Coast longline fishermen have been consulted and have approved the resolution, in concept. Canada will not be impacted because they have no longline fleet. Environmental non-governmental organizations typically do not oppose measures designed to limit fishing. The Eastern Tropical Pacific catch of albacore declined approximately 30 percent in 2017 and 2018.

The key portions of the proposed resolution are paragraphs 1 and 2 of the attachment which read:

- 1) All CPCs<sup>1</sup> shall limit the number of their flag longline vessels fishing for North Pacific albacore to the number of vessels and the amount of effort expended by these vessels to that existed in 2005 North of the Equator.
- 2) The provisions of Paragraph 1 shall apply to those vessels chartered by CPCs and such vessels shall be included in the limitation on longline vessels fishing for North Pacific albacore north of the equator.

To demonstrate our concern, see [Agenda Item J.2, Attachment 2, March 2019](#) (Description of U.S. North Pacific Albacore Fishing Effort Estimates Reported to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Pursuant to Conservation And Management Measure 2005-03), which shows that the country of Fiji went from 0 vessels in 2005 to a range of 8-29 vessels in following years and the country Vanuatu went from 26 vessels in 2005 to a range of 48-87 vessels in following years.

### Items Related to Pacific Bluefin Tuna (PBF)

#### 1. Pacific Bluefin Tuna MSE

Several members of the HMSAS, as well as fishery participants from west coast-based commercial and recreational fisheries, attended the second MSE Workshop for PBF on May 20 and 21 in San Diego, California.

By and large, those who attended felt the workshop could have been better. It missed an opportunity to go into some of the issues observed with the NPA MSE process. We are hopeful that future MSE workshops will be better planned and more informative. We fully agree with Next Steps outlined in [Agenda Item J.2.b, Supplemental NMFS Report 1: ISC Pacific Bluefin MSE Workshop Outcomes](#).

#### 2. Pacific Bluefin Tuna Stakeholder Meeting and Input to Development of Council Harvest Strategy

Several members of the HMSAS, as well as fishery participants from various sectors and gear types in the U.S. fishery for PBF, attended the Stakeholder Meeting on May 2 in Long Beach, California.

We are appreciative of NMFS holding this Stakeholder Meeting and actively listening to the opinions, concerns, and ideas expressed by the attendees. We are hopeful this will be the first in a series of such meetings and hope it will be a model for future Stakeholder-Manager discussions. As the Council, in the future, considers if and/or how to define domestic management objectives and develop tools for implementation of those objectives – stakeholder inputs, observations, and concerns should be reflected in the outcomes from these meetings.

We view the Stakeholder Recommendations as a living document which is revisited and adapted as circumstances change. For example, the idea of ranching wild-caught PBF was discussed. At

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<sup>1</sup> Members and Cooperating non-Members.

present, such an operation would not be financially viable, but as PBF continues to recover, that may change.

We incorporate by reference our comments submitted under Agenda Item J.1 related to domestic management of PBF.

### RFMO-related meetings

The HMSAS provides the following recommendations to the Council in advance of the upcoming IATTC meeting and NC meeting. We hope the Council will communicate these recommendations to the U.S. delegations to the IATTC plenary (July) and the NC meeting (September). In order:

1. We recommend no increases in allowed harvest of PBF, in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) or Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO), unless the initial rebuilding target adopted by the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WCPFC) has been met.
2. Should the NC agree to Japan's stated intention of proposing "a conservation and management measure, including increases in PBF catch limits" for 2020; and further assuming the WCPFC adopts this recommendation during its 16<sup>th</sup> Regular Session (December 2019):
  - Support planning for an extraordinary meeting of the IATTC, after the WCPFC, in order to allow the IATTC to consider a Resolution providing EPO fisheries for PBF a similar opportunity for increased catch.
  - Ensure that any increases in Pacific-wide take are shared equally between the WCPFC and IATTC. For example, if the NC recommends a 250 mt increase in catch in the WCPO, the IATTC could then consider a similar increase for EPO fisheries.
3. Any future increase in PBF catch should be distributed equally between the EPO and WCPO. The intent of this is ultimately returning to the historical split of 60/40 between the WCPO and EPO.
4. A proposal is under consideration in the WCPFC to increase catch of large fish, with a commensurate reduction in catch of small fish under 30 kg (66 pounds). This should not require the IATTC to decrease catch of small fish. Historically, a majority of fish caught in the EPO are less than 30 kg. We note this is not true for the last three years; but we do not know if this is an aberration or a result of changing ocean conditions.
5. The HMSAS suggests the Council support sending four members of the HMSAS to the upcoming September NC meeting in Portland. The HMSAS would consult with the Council on which of its members would most benefit the Council by being in attendance.

See Attachment – Proposal for an IATTC Resolution Concerning Longline Vessels Fishing for North Pacific Albacore in the IATTC Convention Area North of the Equator.