

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) discussed the attachments and reports under this agenda item and has the following recommendations.

Pacific Bluefin Tuna Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE)

While the HMSMT does not have specific recommendations regarding which entity should make decisions and when, they agreed on the importance of continued stakeholder engagement throughout the MSE process. To achieve this, the HMSMT recommends the Council consider how to provide equitable opportunity for U.S. stakeholder participation (e.g., sufficient number of meetings scheduled to take place in the U.S. and U.S. stakeholder access to meetings scheduled to take place outside the U.S.).

Considerations for Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMO)-related meetings

The HMSMT recognizes the value in having a broader U.S. stakeholder presence at international RFMO meetings, especially when held in the U.S. The next meeting of the Northern Committee (NC) to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission is to be held in Portland, Oregon in September of this year. It provides a unique opportunity to send a symbolic message to other member nations regarding U.S. interests in North Pacific stocks for which the NC makes management recommendations through greater U.S. stakeholder participation. The HMSMT requests the Council send a subset of the HMSMT and the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) to the upcoming NC meeting, so that advisory bodies can better understand the RFMO process and communicate those lessons to the Council.

The HMSMT took note of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) scientific staff's work plan for future assessments. The HMSMT suggests that the Council prioritize tasks to improve the tropical tuna assessment models in order to produce reliable benchmark assessments in 2020. Secondly, the HMSMT suggests recommending to the U.S. Delegation that the IATTC scientific staff prioritize a stock assessment for the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) stock of swordfish. While the International Scientific Committee (ISC) for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean completed an assessment of the Western and Central North Pacific Ocean (WCNPO) stock of swordfish in 2018, an assessment of the EPO stock has not been completed since 2014 when the stock was determined to be subject to overfishing. It is the HMSMT's understanding that the responsibility for assessment of the EPO stock now rests with the IATTC scientific staff, but may require some coordination with the ISC. While catch of swordfish by the U.S. West Coast fleet generally falls within the bounds of the WCNPO stock, some mixing is likely occurring between the two stocks. Given that swordfish is a management unit species in the HMS fishery management plan, the Council may want to see an updated evaluation of stock status (including fishing mortality) of the EPO stock.

Pacific bluefin tuna U.S. Harvest Strategy

Following review of National Marine Fisheries Service Report 3, the HMSMT discussed stakeholder recommendations made during the workshop, and questioned whether some of the recommendations would continue to be of interest if increases in the U.S. allocation were to relieve constraints that the existing level of U.S. allocation places on the U.S. fleets. Given uncertainty regarding changes in U.S. allocation, the HMSMT agreed that it is reasonable to expect U.S. fleets will continue to feel constrained by management measures for 2021, and near-term subsequent years. The HMSMT feels it is necessary to have proactive recommendations from the HMSAS and other stakeholders regarding the need for further consideration of domestic management options. Should the Council wish to consider changes to the existing domestic harvest strategy that might warrant detailed analysis, the HMSMT can propose a schedule for the Council to consider in a report for Agenda Item D.10, Future Agenda and Workload Planning.

PFMC
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