

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

This NMFS Report details current priorities for the upcoming 95th annual meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), to be held from August 10-15, 2020, in La Jolla, California. This report also includes a list of stakeholder meetings related to these priorities or to domestic implementation of anticipated IATTC resolutions, and a regulatory update on Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF).

IATTC 2020 Priorities

Tropical tunas: The IATTC scientific staff determined that the previous stock assessment results for bigeye and yellowfin tuna in the eastern Pacific Ocean in 2018 and 2019, respectively, were not reliable due to concerns with the stock assessment models. NMFS similarly determined the bigeye tuna assessment in 2018 did not represent the best scientific information available (BSIA) and the yellowfin tuna assessment in 2019 also likely did not represent BSIA (see [June 2019 Agenda Item J.3.a NMFS Report 1](#)). IATTC scientific staff are expected to present new stock assessments and management recommendations for tropical tuna at the upcoming Scientific Advisory Committee meeting in May 2020 in La Jolla, CA. These recommendations will be considered at the upcoming IATTC meeting, where negotiations for tropical tuna are expected to be a central issue. IATTC Resolution C-17-02 on tropical tunas (i.e., yellowfin, bigeye, and skipjack tuna) expires at the end of the 2020 calendar year, and the IATTC will need to adopt a new resolution.

PBF: The current resolution on PBF expires at the end of 2020. Consequently, the IATTC needs to adopt a new resolution. The Joint IATTC-Western and Central Pacific Northern Committee Working Group is expected to convene July 28-31, 2020, in Fukuoka, Japan, to make recommendations on future management of PBF. The IATTC will then consider these recommendations at its upcoming annual meeting.

Selection of an IATTC Executive Director: The current IATTC Director's term expires on August 26, 2020. The IATTC announced the job vacancy on their website and are accepting applications through March 10, 2020. The IATTC is expected to select an Executive Director at its upcoming annual meeting.

U.S. stakeholder call on IATTC tropical tuna

NMFS will host a conference call for stakeholders on May 22, 2020, to discuss tropical tuna management issues in the eastern Pacific Ocean. This call will provide NMFS an opportunity to hear public input on tropical tuna management after new stock assessment information is presented at the IATTC Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) in May 2020, and in advance of the General Advisory Committee (GAC) meeting on June 18, 2020. NMFS expects to publish the Federal Register notice announcing the meeting by early March.

PBF Stakeholder Meeting

NMFS is hosting a PBF stakeholder meeting on April 23, 2020, in Long Beach, California. This meeting will follow up on the first meeting held in May 2019 (see [June 2019 J.2.b Supplemental](#)

[NMFS Report](#)), and allow stakeholders to discuss options for domestic implementation of an anticipated IATTC resolution on PBF applicable to 2021-2022. NMFS intends to provide a summary of the meeting for Council consideration in the June 2020 briefing book. Additionally, the Council may consider options for domestic implementation at the September 2020 meeting after the IATTC likely adopts a new PBF resolution. NMFS expects to publish the Federal Register notice announcing this meeting by early March.

PBF 2019 Inseason Actions and 2020 Catch Limit

On February 4, 2020, NMFS published a Federal Register notice ([85 FR 6101](#)) describing two inseason actions taken for the commercial PBF fishery in 2019. These actions were previously reported in the September 2019 Council Briefing Book (see [Agenda Item I.1.a NMFS Report 1](#)). NMFS took these actions in accordance with the 2019 final rule implementing IATTC Resolutions [C-18-01](#) (*Measures for the Conservation and Management of Pacific Bluefin Tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, 2019-2020*) and [C-18-02](#) (*Amendment to Resolution C-16-08 on a Long-term Management Framework for the Conservation and Management of Pacific Bluefin Tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean*). This notice also informs the public that the 2020 U.S. commercial PBF catch limit in the eastern Pacific Ocean is 356 metric tons (mt). The commercial PBF trip limit is 15 mt until NMFS anticipates reaching 306 mt, at which time the trip limit will be reduced to 2 mt.