



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES Agenda Item I.3
Pacific Islands Regional Office Attachment 2
1845 Wasp Blvd., Bldg 176 March 2020
Honolulu, Hawaii 96818
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January 9, 2020

Mr. Archie Taotasi Soliai, Chair
Western Pacific Fishery Management Council
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400
Honolulu, HI 96813

Mr. Simon Kinneen, Chair
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 West 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99601-2252

Mr. Phil Anderson, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, OR 97220-1384

Dear Chairs Soliai, Kinneen, and Anderson:

I am writing to inform you of the outcomes of the Sixteenth Regular Session of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (Commission), held in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, December 5-11, 2019. This letter also shares National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) initial assessment of the regulatory actions that will be needed to implement the recent decisions of the Commission.

Conservation and Management Measure for Pacific Bluefin Tuna (CMM 2019-02)

The Commission modified the CMM for Pacific bluefin tuna, adopting CMM 2019-02 to replace CMM 2018-02. The modifications: (1) increase the allowable carry-over of unused catch limit, for 2019 and 2020 only, from 5% to 17%; (2) allow for a one-time catch limit transfer in 2020 of 300 metric tons from Taiwan to Japan; and (3) allow Japan to manage some of its Pacific bluefin tuna fisheries using a non-calendar management year. The main provisions of the CMM, including the fishing effort limits and catch limits, remain the same, and no regulatory action is needed to implement the modifications. Because the Pacific bluefin tuna stock is overfished, we encourage the Councils to continue to consider any recommendations necessary to rebuild the stock.



Conservation and Management Measure for North Pacific Albacore (CMM 2019-03)

The Commission adopted a revised CMM for North Pacific albacore, CMM 2019-03, which will replace CMM 2005-03. The revised measure removes a six-month reporting requirement and clarifies the baseline for fishing effort limits (2002-04). The main provisions of the CMM, including fishing effort limits and catch limits, remain the same, and no regulatory action is needed to implement the modifications.

Conservation and Management Measure for Sharks (CMM 2019-04)

The Commission adopted a new CMM for sharks, CMM 2019-04, which combines and replaces the five previous shark CMMs (CMM 2010-07, CMM 2011-04, CMM 2012-04, CMM 2013-08, and CMM 2014-05). Many of the provisions of CMM 2019-04 are identical to the provisions from the previous shark CMMs and have already been implemented by NMFS. However, CMM 2019-04 includes several new and revised provisions. Existing U.S. regulations cover most of the changes to the measure, however, new regulations may be needed to address circumstances in which a shark is unintentionally caught and frozen as part of a purse seine operation. NMFS intends to implement the revised requirements through regulatory action pursuant to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention Implementation Act (WCPFCIA).

Conservation and Management Measure for Mobulid Rays (CMM 2019-05)

The Commission adopted a new CMM for the protection of mobulid rays caught in association with fisheries in the WCPF Convention Area, CMM 2019-05. The new measure prohibits setting on and retention of mobulid rays and includes safe release requirements. The new measure becomes effective January 1, 2021. NMFS intends to implement the new requirements through regulatory action pursuant to the WCPFCIA.

Other decisions

The Commission adopted amendments to a number of other conservation and management measures, none of which are expected to require regulatory action by the United States. These include a revised CMM for a Compliance Monitoring Scheme (CMM 2019-06), a revised CMM for the WCPFC IUU Fishing Vessel List (CMM 2019-07), and a two-year extension of the Charter Notification Scheme (CMM 2019-08).

In addition to adopting the measures described above, the Commission made a number of decisions on other matters that do not require regulatory action. These decisions include adoption of an interim rebuilding plan for North Pacific striped marlin, a harvest strategy for North Pacific swordfish fisheries, an updated workplan for the development of harvest strategies, and safe handling and release guidelines for seabirds as a supplement to CMM 2018-04.

Outcomes and decisions from WCPFC16 and all adopted conservation and management measures are available at www.wcpfc.int. If you have any questions about this information, please contact Tom Graham at 1-808-725-5032 or tom.graham@noaa.gov. We look forward to working with the Councils as we implement the Commission's decisions.

Sincerely,



Michael D. Tosatto
Regional Administrator

cc: Barry Thom, Regional Administrator, West Coast Region
James W. Balsiger, Regional Administrator, Alaska Region
Michael Seki, Director, Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center
Kristen C. Koch, Director, Southwest Fisheries Science Center