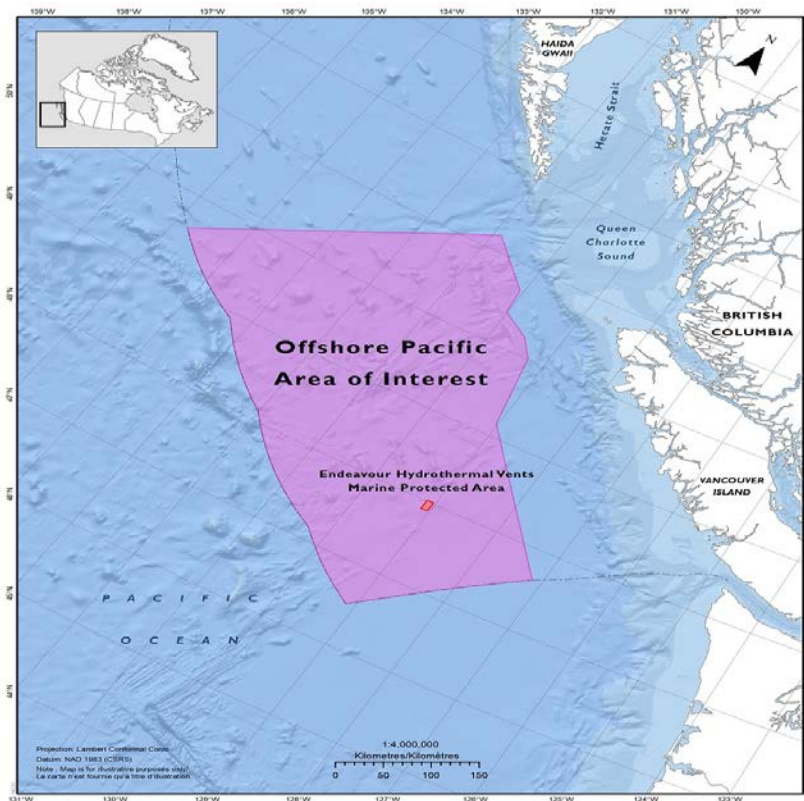


HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES; INCLUDING
U.S./CANADA ALBACORE TREATY

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) discussed the US-Canada Albacore Tuna Treaty (“Treaty”). We are concerned that many important questions remain unanswered; as such, we are unable to provide recommendations about a future regime or the terms thereof. U.S. albacore fishery participants and their representatives, over the last 9 months, have asked for the following:

- Fishery information for the 2019 season.
- Clarification(s) on data presented during last May’s Data Working Group (“DWG”) call.
- Clarification from Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) on the Offshore Pacific Area of Interest. The area shown below is under consideration to be designated as a Marine Protected Area:



We understand the Canadian Government plans to act on this proposal by the end of the year. As proposed, protections under the proposal would cover only the benthic habitat. U.S. fishery participants, through the U.S. Department of State, have sought confirmation

that surface fishing activities will NOT be impacted. Closure of this area to surface fishing activities would have profound impacts on the supposed reciprocal nature of the Treaty.

U.S. Albacore fishing interests are also concerned about other events which are problematic or could impact a future regime:

- The seizure by the Canadian Government of a U.S. commercial albacore vessel in 2019. While the vessel was subsequently released, its catch was not and was sold by the Canadian Government.’
- The unexplained Canadian Government’s recent holding up of fifteen containers from a U.S. vessel fishing in the South Pacific this winter.
- Apparent lack of communication between the Canadian Government and the U.S. Government with regard to both situations enumerated above. If there has been such communication between the governments, the stakeholders have received no information.
- The Benchmark stock assessment for North Pacific albacore scheduled to be approved by the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species (ISC) in July of this year. We do note the in-person ALBWG stock assessment workshop scheduled for later this month has been rescheduled for April and will be conducted by webinar. We have been told this will not delay the timeline for completion of the stock assessment in time to be presented to the ISC in July. Based, in part, on the Pacific-wide drop in North Pacific albacore harvests, U.S. fishing interests expect the stock assessment to reflect this. If the stock approaches a level which necessitates a regional fishery management organization response, that needs to be considered as well.

Unless and until we get clarification on the items above, we do not feel we are in a position to provide advice to the Council on a future regime. We would appreciate the Council’s support in ensuring the outstanding items are addressed and communicated to industry stakeholders, non-industry stakeholders, and the Council.

Taking into account that the Council will not be considering HMS items before a future regime may be agreed upon, U.S. industry expects the following items to be brought-up during any consultations:

- Term of a future regime:

Given the uncertainty surrounding the upcoming stock assessment a one-year regime may be preferred by industry
- Change Canadian fishing season dates to 6/1 ending on 9/1
- Hail in – out w/ estimation of catch

Presently, US vessels are required to hail-in and hail-out with the Canadian Coast Guard. US industry believes requiring Canadian vessels to hail-in and hail-out with the US Coast Guard; and when hailing out of the US Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) providing an estimation of catch within the US EEZ, would be appropriate.

- Consider implementing a permitting requirement for Canadian vessels that harvest in the US EEZ.

On May 30, 2018 (just before the start of the 2018 fishing season), the Canadian Government implemented a requirement whereby U.S. North Pacific Albacore Tuna fishing vessels had to obtain an EEZ Albacore Tuna Fishing License for U.S. Vessels (EEZ tuna fishing license) before being entering Canada's EEZ to fish. Establishing a similar requirement for Canadian vessels would also seem appropriate.

- Update and formalize the types of data required to be presented during the annual DWG call.

Over the years, additional questions have resulted from information presented during the annual DWG calls. The HMSAS believes that updating the types of data reported by and to the DWG would be helpful in more properly evaluating the benefits derived from the Treaty by both nations. This is currently enumerated in Paragraph 5 of Annex A and would likely need to be amended.

We thank you for your attention to this important matter and look forward to the Council's support of its albacore fishermen, buyers, and processors, and the local fishing communities which are dependent on them.

Recommendations to Council re: Ongoing Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Activities

Increased coordination between the ISC and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission science provider is recommended to determine Pacific-wide stock status of striped marlin to capture data for regional availability on striped marlin, whether the fish are from the Western and Central North Pacific stock or the Eastern Pacific Ocean stock.

PFMC
03/07/20