

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Pacific Bluefin Tuna

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) notes, with concern, the condensed and abbreviated timeline for International meetings which impact U.S. fisheries. In particular, both the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) meetings are scheduled to occur after the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council's) November meeting. This may be particularly relevant for Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF) should there be consensus on raising quotas based on the most recent stock assessment. The 5th IATTC – WCPFC Northern Committee (NC) Joint Working Group (JWG) on Pacific Bluefin Tuna Management is scheduled to convene on October 5, with the WCPFC NC meeting later that week. It is likely that some agreement on Pacific-wide PBF harvest will come out of those meetings. While we may not know the particulars of a potential IATTC Resolution for our November meeting, we believe there are numerous issues related to the U.S. fishery which should be discussed. Many of these were included in the June Supplemental NMFS Report highlighting the outcomes of the [May 19, 2020 Pacific Bluefin Stakeholder Webinar](#). In particular:

- **Trip limit** – Currently, U.S. commercial vessels have a 15 mt trip limit. Is the current 15 mt trip limit optimal?
- **Pre-trip notification** – Currently, U.S. commercial purse seine vessels are required to submit a pre-trip notification at least twenty-four hours before departure. How has this impacted those vessels?
- **Buffer** – Currently the trip limit is reduced to 2 mt when catch is within 50 mt of the catch limit. Does this provide enough of a buffer to safeguard against overages?

For 2020, the U.S. Catch Limit was 356 mt, as of September 9, 2020, 52 mt has been landed. This year, the purse seine fleet(s) have reported great abundance of PBF; but schools in sizes too large to effectively set upon. In 2019, the U.S. Catch Limit was 425 mt, and 274 mt was harvested. We believe the E-Tix requirement implemented in California provides National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and California Department of Fish and Wildlife more certainty and up-to-date information on current commercial harvests. We remind the Council in-season action was taken last August to reduce the trip limit to 2 mt. This action was implemented prematurely based on assumptions made when a pre-trip notification was received. While NMFS was able to increase the trip limit back to 15 mt in about a week, by that time PBF was no longer available to the commercial fleet. The HMSAS believes changes can be made to our domestic framework which would protect harvest opportunity while ensuring the U.S. does not exceed whatever catch limit is in place for a given year.

Tropical Tunas

The HMSAS remains concerned about the status of both yellowfin tuna and bigeye tuna. We have been informed that more clarity may be provided on the status of both of those stocks before the Council's November meeting. We expect that additional clarity will provide the foundation for a more complete statement at that time.

PFMC
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