

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL
REPORT ON RECOMMEND INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Pacific Bluefin Tuna

Members of Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) attended the Joint Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)-Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee Working Group on Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF) (Joint WG). As noted in [Supplemental NMFS Report 2](#) (“NMFS 2”), it is expected that the IATTC will adopt a resolution that rolls over the existing resolution for one year. As such, we are expecting a catch limit for 2021 in the amount of 425 mt.

Domestic Management of PBF

In considering management of the domestic commercial PBF fishery, we understand the challenges associated with trying to account for the needs of all participants in a way that does not result in significant under-harvest or an early attainment of the catch limit where fish caught incidentally have to be discarded.

This year, the U.S. commercial catch limit is 356 mt. As of November 12, [NMFS is reporting a total of 205 mt has been landed](#). Of this amount, roughly 120 mt has been harvested by the purse seine fleet. The HMSAS wishes to advise the Council this is not due to a lack of availability. It is, in fact, due to the large biomass off the Southern California Coast. The problem is trying to find a school that is small enough to set on. There is a growing hook-and-line fishery that provides a higher-value product for local markets.

The HMSAS had a lengthy discussion about potential changes to the domestic management regime for the commercial PBF fishery and offer the following recommendations.

1. We are supportive of eliminating the pre-trip notification requirement. It has caused hardship to purse seine vessels who have been unable to opportunistically target PBF immediately upon learning of available opportunity.
2. We discussed the two approaches outlined in NMFS 2 (two-tiered approach and a three-tiered approach); but present it differently:
 - At the outset, the HMSAS recommends the three-tier approach. We agree the trip limit should start at 20 mt and then be reduced to 15 mt until we reach a buffer value. Buffer is an amount of tonnage left in reserve that is designed to ensure opportunity is available across all gear types. We are recommending a buffer value that is reduced during the year to better enable the fishery to harvest at or near the U.S. annual catch limit. Being cognizant of; and responsive to, the calendar minimizes the chances of resource underutilization. The intent is to ensure adequate tonnage is available for non-seine gear types in the event the fishery is limited to 2mt catch limits. That tonnage will vary

depending on when the fishery reaches the value. The HMSAS cannot come to agreement on how this would be structured. As such, we provide both options we debated:

Option 1 – Buffer is reduced by 25 mt for each quarter:

- **During the first quarter** - if the fishery lands 250 mt, then the catch limit is reduced to 15 mt. If the fishery lands 325 mt, the trip limits drop to 2 mt for the remainder of the year.
- **During the second quarter**, if cumulative catch reaches 275 mt, then the trip limit is reduced to 15 mt. If cumulative catch reaches 350 mt during the second quarter, the trip limit drops to 2 mt for the remainder of the year.
- **During the third quarter**, if cumulative catch reaches 300mt, then the trip limit is reduced to 15 mt. If cumulative catch reaches 375 mt during the third quarter, the trip limit drops to 2 mt for the remainder of the year.
- **After the third quarter**, the trip limit would be reduced to 15 mt when the fishery has cumulative landings of 325 mt. When cumulative landings reach 400 mt, the trip limit drops to 2 mt for the remainder of the year.

Option 2 – Buffer is non-linear

- **Before the end of the third quarter**, if cumulative catch reaches 250 mt, then the trip limit is reduced to 15 mt. If cumulative catch reaches 325 mt before the end of the third quarter, the trip limits drop to 2 mt for the remainder of the year.
- **After the third quarter**, the catch limit will be reduced to 15 mt once the fishery has cumulative landings of 300 mt. If cumulative catch reaches 375 mt, the trip limit drops to 2 mt for the remainder of the year.

Striped Marlin

The HMSAS recommends the Council encourage NMFS to work with the Science bodies of the IATTC to prioritize assessing the stocks of Striped Marlin within the Convention Area. This recommendation was made at the June 2020 meeting to which the Council responded positively. However, due to IATTC meeting delays the HMSAS wanted to reiterate the recommendation.

PFMC
11/17/20