

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) received a briefing on the proceedings from the 5th Joint Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) - Western and Central Pacific Fishery Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee (NC) Joint Working Group (JWG) on Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF) Management and 16th session of the NC.

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) briefed the HMSMT on considerations for future domestic implementation of a PBF resolution applicable to 2021 (see [I.2.a, Supplemental NMFS Report 2](#)). It is anticipated that the IATTC will adopt the draft proposal on PBF conservation and management measures recommended by the JWG and rollover the existing resolution for 2021. As noted in the NMFS report, a U.S. catch limit of 425 mt is expected.

After discussing domestic PBF management for 2021 with the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS), the HMSMT found the two options outlined in the HMSAS report under this agenda item to be reasonable approaches. These options would allow for timely and accurate management of the catch limit, as well as greater flexibility for the fleet than current regulations allow.

The HMSMT supports removal of the pre-trip notification in 2021. Managers have expressed to the HMSMT that the pre-trip notification established for the 2019-2020 management cycle did not meet its goal of allowing real-time and predictive management of the catch limit. That, coupled with frustration from industry over this requirement, leads the HMSMT to agree with the HMSAS suggestion for removing the pre-trip notification.

While the HMSMT liked the approaches outlined in the [I.2.a, Supplemental NMFS Report 2](#), the modifications to the three-tiered approach presented in the HMSAS report created a much more flexible management approach which suits both industry and managers. The HMSMT sees tradeoffs between the two options presented in the HMSAS report.

Option 1 would allow for larger trip limits earlier in the season, which would provide the purse seine fleet with increased catch opportunity. However, as shown in Table 1 of the Supplemental NMFS Report 2, the hook-and-line fleet catch has increased substantially in the last year in quarters 3 and 4. Allowing only 25 mt for the end of the season may constrain this component of the fishery which provides a high-value product to consumers.

Option 2, however, would allow for a larger amount of remaining quota at the end of the year, leaving more fishing opportunity for hook-and-line fishers. In exchange, the purse seine fleet may be slightly more limited earlier in the year. Due to the status of the PBF stock, the HMSMT sees the value in fisheries that optimize catch to provide high-value products to consumers. However, the HMSMT feels that the 100mt buffer presented in the first bullet of Option 2 is too large and may prevent the U.S. fleets from fully utilizing the quota.

Therefore, the HMSMT recommends that the Council consider a modified version of Option 1 in the HMSAS report --- after the 3rd quarter (fourth bullet in HMSAS Option 1, copied below with suggested edit) the trip limit is reduced to 2mt at 375 mt instead of 400 mt to provide a larger buffer at the end of the season.

- *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~~ 375 mt, the trip limit drops to 2 mt for the remainder of the year.*

PFMC
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