

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE (NMFS) REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL
HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES (HMS) ACTIVITIES

Updates of Meetings

5th Joint Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee Working Group on Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF)

The Joint Working Group met virtually on October 5-6, 2020, to discuss PBF management in the IATTC and WCPFC. As noted in the [Co-Chairs' Report of the Joint Working Group](#) meeting, the Joint Working Group recommended the IATTC roll over the existing catch limits in [Resolution C-18-01](#) for 2021. Consequently, the United States would have an annual catch limit of 425 metric tons in 2021. As noted during the PBF Stakeholder meeting held in May 2020, there is stakeholder interest in changing the existing domestic implementation of IATTC resolutions on PBF. NMFS intends to submit a supplemental report in advance of the Council meeting to present options for Council consideration.

16th Meeting of the Northern Committee (NC)

The [NC met virtually on October 7, 2020](#), to consider the outcomes of the Joint Working Group and recent assessments of northern stocks, including North Pacific albacore (NPALB). The NC adopted the Joint Working Group recommendations on PBF and did not recommend changes to NPALB management.

IATTC Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) Meeting

The IATTC held its second virtual [SAC meeting](#) from October 26-28, 2020. This meeting served as a follow up to the first virtual SAC meeting for North America on June 22, 2020. Dr. Steve Teo, Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC), served as the Head of Delegation for the United States. The IATTC scientific staff presented another overview of the new stock assessments and risk assessment results for bigeye and yellowfin tuna in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO), which were the same as those presented at the first virtual SAC meeting. The SAC also discussed results from the recent International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) assessments on Pacific bluefin tuna and North Pacific albacore.¹

The IATTC staff presented management [recommendations](#) prepared for the IATTC, and the SAC members developed and adopted recommendations to the IATTC. The IATTC members could not agree to a SAC recommendation related to the status of bigeye tuna due to the bimodal assessment results. Several members, including the United States, provided feedback to the IATTC scientific staff on the models and the IATTC scientific staff presented a timeline to improve both the bigeye

¹ NMFS uses the results of IATTC and ISC assessments to complete stock status determinations according to status determination criteria (SDC) identified in the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for U.S. West Coast Highly Migratory Species Fisheries and the FMP for the Pelagic Ecosystem of the Western Pacific Region. Because the SDCs may differ from the international reference points, and because international reference points have not been adopted in all cases, NMFS status determinations may differ from the international determinations.

and yellowfin tuna models before the next benchmark assessment and risk analysis planned for 2023 ([SAC-11-01a](#)). Among other recommendations, the SAC recommended the IATTC extend the current catch limits in Resolution C-18-01 on PBF, and extend the tropical tuna Resolution C-17-02 for 2021 with review and updating of measures related to fish aggregating devices if appropriate.

Upcoming Meetings

The [95th annual meeting of the IATTC](#) will take place virtually from November 30-December 4, 2020. NMFS identified the priorities for the United States for this meeting in the [September 2020 NMFS Report](#). The General Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section of the IATTC and its Scientific Advisory Subcommittee will meet [virtually on November 10, 2020](#). Additionally, the WCPFC is scheduled to meet virtually from December 7-15, 2020.