

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON BIENNIAL HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) discussed the recent assessment results for the Eastern Pacific Ocean stocks of yellowfin and bigeye tunas, and does not have specific recommendations at this time for how the results should be used to make status determinations consistent with the status determination criteria in the Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (HMS FMP). The HMSMT notes particular complications with proxy selection for minimum stock size threshold.

The HMSMT supports the Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) proposal stated in [Supplemental SSC Report 1](#). Specifically, the HMSMT recommends the Council task the SSC to review, for the March 2021 meeting, National Marine Fisheries Service proposals for maximum fishing mortality threshold proxies from the 2020 tropical tuna assessments, as well as options for using probabilistic framework assessments for HMS status determinations more generally. This would provide the HMSMT the opportunity to further evaluate stock status of tropical tunas, consider management measures if adopted by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), evaluate workload associated with using probabilistic framework assessments, and provide additional input to the Council before finalizing the three-meeting biennial management cycle in March. Should the IATTC not adopt relevant resolutions, such input could include further evaluating the need for emergency action.

In the case of Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF), which is overfished and subject to overfishing, the Council would be obligated under the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) Section 304(i) to make recommendations for international and domestic management measures aimed at ending overfishing if no IATTC resolution is adopted. Such circumstances may satisfy criteria in [NMFS procedure 01-101-07](#) for the Council to recommend emergency action in March after taking into consideration the relative impact of the U.S. commercial fleet on the stock. Without additional Council action, the lack of an IATTC resolution would not affect domestic regulations in place under the MSA to restrict recreational fishing mortality of PBF.

The HMSMT discussed the possible need for unilateral management measures if IATTC resolutions are not adopted in 2020 for one of the stocks referenced above. The HMSMT notes the relevance of Section 2.3.1 of the HMS FMP, which addresses situations where unilateral management of West Coast-based vessels targeting HMS may be warranted. In its consideration of the circumstances listed, the HMSMT questioned the need for unilateral management in instances where the relative impact of the U.S. fleet is so minor that controls on the U.S. fleet alone would not have a significant biological effect on the stock.