

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

On March 3rd, the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) announced the transfer of 6,000 metric tons (mt) of Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) Bigeye Tuna quota from Japan to China for the 2021 fishing season, to be harvested using longline gear. Japan also transferred 2,000 mt to Korea and 500 mt to Chinese-Taipei. There was some discussion about the impact of this transfer on the bigeye tuna stocks as well as other highly migratory species in the EPO. With the current uncertainty in the stock status of bigeye tuna in the EPO we are concerned about potential impacts to the stock arising from an increase in harvested amounts, as this quota has been unused by the Japanese fleet for a number of years. The three U.S. Commissioners to the IATTC – Bill Fox, John Zuanich, and Mike Thompson – have also expressed their concern. We are aware that as a matter of procedure this transfer is perfectly legal and allowed under current IATTC rules. However, our concern is that increased effort by any fleet in the EPO could lead to problems not only with bigeye but other species such as North Pacific albacore, marlin, and swordfish. On the second page of this Statement, we provide reported catch (in mt) by Chinese longline vessels in the EPO for the 2002-2017 timeframe as supporting evidence to show increasing trends in the amount of incidental catch which occurs when harvesting bigeye tuna for at least the past 10 years.

We would like these concerns to be passed along to National Marine Fisheries Service for their consideration in future talks at the international level.

Table 1. Reported catch by Chinese longline in the EPO, metric tons, 2002-2017, IATTC public domain data.

Year	Albacore	Bigeye Tuna	Yellowfin tuna	Billfish, sharks, other	Swordfish	Total
2002	1,327	7,614	1,457	532	852	11,782
2003	1,743	10,066	2,739	1,022	1,301	16,871
2004	590	2,645	798	326	527	4,886
2005	895	2,104	682	221	368	4,270
2006	14	709	246	27	12	1,008
2007	76	2,324	224	91	171	2,886
2008	136	2,379	469	605	455	4,044
2009	325	2,481	629	709	479	4,623
2010	641	2,490	459	807	748	5,145
2011	2,726	5,450	1,807	1,224	926	12,133
2012	7,485	4,386	2,591	3,624	1,226	19,312
2013	11,055	5,199	1,874	3,119	1,537	22,784
2014	16,909	5,253	2,120	2,167	1,546	27,995
2015	14,516	8,401	2,642	2,397	1,964	29,920
2016	16,306	7,052	2,398	1,440	1,456	28,652
2017	17,341	7,093	2,907	1,495	1,970	30,806

Figure 1. Reported total catch by Chinese longline, 2002-2017.

