

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

This report provides a summary of Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) meetings that occurred since the last Council meeting, an overview of U.S. priorities for the next meeting, and a list of upcoming international meetings. All meetings have been held virtually in 2021 thus far. There are two virtual meetings occurring in June (North Pacific albacore (NPALB) U.S. Stakeholder Meeting and the 97th IATTC Extraordinary Meeting). NMFS will provide a Supplemental Report with the outcomes of those meetings.

### **1st Electronic Monitoring (EM) Workshop**

IATTC staff hosted the [1<sup>st</sup> EM Workshop](#) April 22-23, 2021. Celia Barroso, NMFS West Coast Region (WCR) led the U.S. delegation. This workshop was intended to introduce concepts and highlight action items for the IATTC this year. In particular, the IATTC scientific staff recommended that the IATTC adopt: 1) definitions, 2) a workplan and 3) Terms of Reference for upcoming workshops. The IATTC is expected to discuss these recommendations and, provided the IATTC adopts the workplan, the next workshop is expected to occur in the fall of 2021 to discuss objectives and scope of an EM system in the IATTC Convention Area.

### **2nd Tropical Tuna Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) Workshop**

The IATTC hosted a [2<sup>nd</sup> tropical tuna MSE workshop](#) virtually May 3-4, 2021. Rachael Wadsworth (WCR) led the U.S. delegation. The workshop reviewed the MSE process for tropical tuna in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO), which will focus on bigeye tuna initially. The workshop participants reviewed the objectives developed at the first workshop in December 2019 and discussed options for reference points and harvest control rules. The U.S. managers and scientists at the workshop made several suggestions for the IATTC scientific staff to consider in their initial MSE analysis. The IATTC currently has three years of funding for this work, and the next workshops are expected to further propose options for reference points and harvest control rules for tropical tuna.

### **Bycatch Working Group**

The [10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Bycatch Working Group](#) convened virtually on May 5, 2021, to discuss a minimum circle hook size for implementing paragraph 4.c of Resolution C-19-04 (*Resolution to Mitigate Impacts on Sea Turtles*), EM, longline observer data and minimum requirements, and other topics. Celia Barroso (WCR) led the U.S. delegation. The workshop participants were unable to reach agreement on a minimum circle hook size at this meeting, and the [Bycatch Working Group](#) recommended convening a workshop before its next meeting to develop a minimum circle hook size in accordance with Resolution C-19-04.

### **Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) Working Group**

The [5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on FADs](#) convened virtually May 6-7, 2021. Rachael Wadsworth (WCR) led the U.S. delegation. Participants discussed definitions of terms related to FAD fisheries, FAD data collection, and management measures. The IATTC scientific staff presented a new analysis showing the statistically significant relationship between bigeye

tuna fishing mortality and floating object sets ([FAD-05 INF-D](#)). The [FAD Working Group recommendations](#) include considering options to decrease the number of FADs in the water (e.g., limiting active FADs and requiring vessels to submit the FAD interaction form as soon as possible after a trip terminates).

### **Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)**

The IATTC held its [12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee](#) virtually May 10-14, 2021. Dr. Steve Teo, Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) led the U.S. delegation. No new stock assessments were presented for bigeye or yellowfin tuna in the EPO, but the IATTC scientific staff presented updates for stock status indicator analyses, and a workplan to complete new assessments in 2024. The SAC also reviewed recommendations from the aforementioned workshops and working groups, and provided [recommendations to the Commission](#).

### **Priorities for 2021 Extraordinary and Ordinary Annual IATTC Meetings**

The IATTC is convening its [97<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Meeting](#) virtually June 7-10, 2021. The meeting will focus on tropical tuna management measures for 2022 and beyond. The IATTC is expected to discuss additional topics during the ordinary 98<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting scheduled for August 23-27, 2021.

### Tropical Tuna

The current resolution on tropical tunas ([C-20-06, Resolution on the Conservation Measures for Tropical Tunas in the Eastern Pacific Ocean During 2021 Pursuant to Resolution C-20-05](#)) expires at the end of the 2021 calendar year. Consequently, the IATTC needs to adopt a new resolution this year to establish management measures for tropical tunas in 2022. The United States is putting forward a draft proposal on tropical tunas with additional measures to address controls on FAD activations and deactivations.

### Pacific Bluefin Tuna (PBF)

The current resolution on PBF (Resolution [C-20-02, Measures for the Conservation and Management of Pacific Bluefin Tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, 2021](#)) expires at the end of 2021. Consequently, the IATTC needs to adopt a new resolution this year. Currently, the U.S. commercial catch limit for 2021 is 425 mt. Because this Resolution applied for a single year, any catch in excess of 300 mt would be taken off of a limit for 2022 in a manner consistent with the biennial limits that have been in place since 2015.

The Joint IATTC-Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee (NC) Working Group (Joint Working Group) will meet virtually July 26-28, 2021. We anticipate that the Joint Working Group will discuss the current PBF rebuilding plan, including catch limits. The Joint Working Group is expected to make recommendations to the IATTC and NC, which will be considered for adoption by both the IATTC and the WCPFC. At its 12th meeting, the IATTC SAC recommended “the extension of the provisions of Resolution C-18-01, as already extended by Resolution C-20-02, and that the Commission take note that increased catches based on the scenarios analyzed are possible under the harvest strategy prepared by the joint tuna RFMOs Working Group. The choice of catch scenario should take into account the desired rebuilding rate and the distribution of catch between small and large bluefin.”

### Electronic Monitoring

The United States is interested in the IATTC moving forward with EM in purse seine, longline, and transshipment fisheries in the EPO. The U.S. intends to urge the Commission to adopt the recommendations of the IATTC Bycatch Working Group and SAC regarding EM.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

<u><i>IATTC-related Meetings</i></u>	
1st General Advisory Committee (GAC) and Scientific Advisory Subcommittee (SAS)	May 26
Extraordinary IATTC Meeting	Jun 7-10
Joint IATTC-WCPFC NC Working Group U.S. Delegation Call	TBD
Joint IATTC-WCPFC NC Working Group	Jul 26-28
2nd GAC and SAS	TBD
Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program and IATTC Annual Meetings	Aug 16-27
<u><i>WCPFC</i></u>	
Scientific Committee	Aug 11-19
Northern Committee	TBD
<u><i>ISC</i></u>	
NPALB MSE U.S. Stakeholder Meeting	Jun 1
Plenary	Jul 12-15, 19-20