

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL ON INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) offer the following comments on International Management Activities.

I - Pacific Bluefin Tuna

During the 6th Session of the Joint Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission-Northern Committee (WCPFC-NC) Working Group Meeting on the Management of Pacific Bluefin Tuna (July 27-29) (JWG-6), two proposals were agreed upon which impact catch limits and future management of Pacific Bluefin Tuna (PBF). These are outlined in [Chairs' Summary of the 6th Joint IATTC and WCPFC-NC Working Group Meeting on the Management of Pacific Bluefin Tuna](#) (Chair's Summary). The first (Chair's Summary, page 13), amends CMM 2020-02 and would allow a 15 percent increase in harvest of large fish (> 30kg) in the Western Pacific (WCPO) and a 15 percent increase in harvest in the Eastern Pacific (EPO). The second (Chair's Summary, page 14), would establish Harvest Control Rules for the second rebuilding period. The IATTC was unable to come to an agreement (on the first) during its recently adjourned meeting (August 23-27).

A. JWG-6

Two members of the HMSAS were part of the U.S. Delegation. We incorporate the comments contained in the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) report on International Highly Migratory Species Activities ([Agenda Item D.2.b, Supplemental NMFS Report 1](#)) related to the JWG-6 meeting. We wish to highlight two matters we feel relevant for Council consideration:

1. Regarding the JWG Recommendation to modify management measures for Pacific Bluefin tuna:
 - Catch increases as follows:
 - 15 percent increase for WCPO large fish; 0 percent increase for small fish
 - Additional 30 mt of WCPO large fish for parties who do not have a large fish catch limit
 - 15 percent increase for EPO
 - Additional annual increase of 200 mt for EPO fisheries
 - We are encouraged the final recommendation limited the increase to 15 percent; with no increase in harvest of small fish. This seems more in line with the slight improvement in the status of the stock as noted in last year's Stock Assessment and increased certainty that the initial rebuilding target identified in Harvest Strategy for Pacific Bluefin Tuna Fisheries & the long-term management thereof has been met or will be met well before the 2024 timeline.
 - To start the process of obtaining a more equitable split between the WCPO and EPO, EPO fisheries were provided an additional 200 mt in addition to the 15 percent increase. While appreciative of the efforts of the U.S. delegation, U.S. stakeholders are not encouraged by

the minimal 200 mt increase given to the EPO over and above the 15 percent increase. It is our contention that the EPO should be getting more fish, particularly the United States, when considering historical catch records.

- In October, this recommendation will be forwarded to the Northern Committee and discussed at the continued IATTC meeting. **We recommend the Council support this recommendation.**

2. Regarding Harvest Control Rules for the second rebuilding period:

- The U.S. introduced this recommendation with broad support of the U.S. Delegation.
- This will be forwarded to the Northern Committee and was adopted by the IATTC during its August meeting. **We recommend the Council support this proposal at the Northern Committee.**

B. 98th IATTC Plenary meeting August 23-27

The proposed Resolution for PBF was delayed due to an inability to come to an agreement with Mexico on how to best achieve a more equitable split of the EPO quota for PBF. As with the EPO/WCPO split the U.S. delegation is trying to get a reasonable reallocation of catch for U.S. stakeholders. Members of the HMSAS who have been involved in these conversations are very appreciative of the efforts of the U.S. Delegation, in particular Ryan Wulff, in representing our interests.

As noted in the NMFS Report, the proposed Resolution on PBF catch limits, if adopted, will require implementing regulations. The HMSAS recommends the Council ensure sufficient time is set aside in November for such discussions.

C. Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE)

The HMSAS notes under Paragraph 23 of the Chair's Summary there may be renewed interest in a MSE for PBF. "The JWG also encouraged interested parties to organize stakeholder workshops for the EPO and the WCPO respectively, in advance of the next JWG meeting, to facilitate further discussion by the JWG of management inputs for the MSE, in particular, operational management objectives and the anticipated management framework (e.g., how to balance the eastern and western Pacific fisheries)." NMFS introduced the idea, and we support, the scheduling of workshops for U.S. stakeholders early in 2022 to provide ample time to understand the MSE process and to consider management inputs.

II - 98th IATTC Plenary meeting August 23-27

The HMSAS had one member participate in this meeting as part of the U.S. Delegation. We preface this comment with an understanding that it has been very difficult the last 2 years with the shortened time frame of the virtual platform and the major differences in local time zones. There is no time for personal face-to-face negotiations and sidebars that normally occur during the "in person" format. Some delegations seem to try and run out the clock to prevent consensus.

This meeting was as contentious and as disappointing as last year's annual meeting which led to an emergency meeting in December. We were once again held hostage by one country (a different one this time) who was as intractable as the one last year in order to stall the process. The topic

of dissention was limiting catch of Big Eye Tuna. Therefore, the proposed measure for tropical tunas was continued to the October meeting and perhaps beyond.

As noted above and in the NMFS report, “due to time constraints, the IATTC did not discuss the majority of proposals submitted.” However, terms of reference, definitions, and other items related to Electronic Monitoring were discussed and adopted.

III - Marine Stewardship Council (“MSC”) and Western and Central Pacific Ocean (“WCPO”) fisheries

On July 27, [MSC issued a press release](#) indicating, “Twenty-two tuna fisheries in the Western Central Pacific Ocean could face suspension of their certification to the Marine Stewardship Council’s Standard for sustainable fishing unless an international agreement is reached on how to set controls on catch limits between 26 countries.” The HMSAS is concerned about impacts to markets to U.S.-based stakeholders participating in MSC certified fisheries in the WCPO – for example the South Pacific Albacore fishery. We encourage the Council to work with stakeholders and NMFS in an effort to minimize possible significant negative impacts to U.S. participants in fisheries which may be impacted.

IV – North Pacific Albacore (“NPA”)

The HMSAS received a briefing from Celia Barroso (NMFS). We are encouraged to learn conversations are taking place to establish a timeline for the Northern Committee to develop Harvest Control Rules, Reference Points, etc. regarding the NPA fishery. We support this effort and suggest NMFS host additional stakeholder workshops to foster better understanding of the MSE results and how different management strategies may impact U.S.-based NPA fisheries. We remind the Council of the comments we submitted in June which highlighted our concerns – see [F.2.b, Supp HMSAS Report 1, June 2021 \(pcouncil.org\)](#).

PFMC
09/10/21