

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL (HMSAS)
REPORT ON RECOMMEND INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Pacific Bluefin Tuna

As noted in [H.2.a, Supplemental NMFS Report 1, November 2021 \(pcouncil.org\)](#), “The U.S. catch limit for 2021-2022 is 739 mt, not to exceed 523 mt in a single year. For 2023-2024, the catch limit is 1,017 mt, not to exceed 720 mt in a single year. As in previous resolutions, a member may carry under-harvest from the previous biennium in an amount not to exceed 5 percent of the previous catch limit. For example, the United States may add 5 percent of 600 mt (i.e., 30 mt) from 2019-2020 to the 2021-2022 biennial catch limit. This resolution requires a rulemaking and NMFS intends to publish the proposed rule in December 2021.”

Domestic Management of Pacific Bluefin Tuna

In considering management of the domestic commercial Pacific bluefin (PBF) fishery, we understand the challenges associated with trying to account for the needs of all participants in a way that does not result in significant under-harvest or an early attainment of the catch limit where fish caught incidentally have to be discarded.

This year, the U.S. commercial catch limit is 425 mt. As of November 14, [National Marine Fisheries Service \(NMFS\) is reporting a total of 183 mt have been landed](#). A majority of this has been harvested by gear types other than purse seine.

The HMSAS had a lengthy discussion about potential changes to the domestic management regime for the commercial PBF fishery and offer the following recommendations.

1. At most, the U.S. catch limit for 2022 would be 523 mt. Given the relatively modest potential increase, at this time we are not proposing an increase in the trip limit for the 2022 season. We propose an initial trip limit of 20 mt with the following thresholds for trip limit reductions in the 2022 season:
 - **January-June:** If cumulative catch reaches 200 mt, then the trip limit is reduced to 15 mt; and if cumulative catch reaches 300 mt, then the trip limit is reduced to 3 mt for the remainder of the year or until the annual catch limit is met and the fishery is closed.
 - **July-September:** If cumulative catch reaches 250 mt, then the trip limit is reduced to 15 mt; and if cumulative catch reaches 325 mt, then the trip limit is reduced 3 mt for the remainder of the year or until the annual catch limit is met and the fishery is closed.
 - **October-December:** If cumulative catch reaches 300 mt, then the trip limit is reduced to 15 mt; and if cumulative catch reaches 450 mt, then the trip limit is reduced to 3 mt for the remainder of the year or until the annual catch limit is met and the fishery is closed.

2. However, for the 2023-24 biennial, we are proposing an increase in the initial trip limit to 30 mt. We are also proposing to increase the intermediate trip limit to 20 mt. We propose the following thresholds for the 2023-24 biennial.
 - **January-June:** If cumulative catch reaches 400 mt, then the trip limit is reduced to 20 mt; and if cumulative catch reaches 500 mt, then the trip limit is reduced to 3 mt for the remainder of the year or until the annual catch limit is met and the fishery is closed.
 - **July-September:** If cumulative catch reaches 430 mt, then the trip limit is reduced to 20 mt; and if cumulative catch reaches 520 mt, then the trip limit is reduced 3 mt for the remainder of the year or until the annual catch limit is met and the fishery is closed.
 - **October-December:** If cumulative catch reaches 470 mt, then the trip limit is reduced to 20 mt; and if cumulative catch reaches 630 mt, then the trip limit is reduced to 3mt for the remainder of the year or until the annual catch limit is met and the fishery is closed.
3. Acknowledging that the U.S. catch limit for 2024 will not be known until catch from 2023 is finalized, we recommend the following guiding principles:

If the annual limit is between 525 and 720 mt, the initial trip limit is 30 mt:

- **January-June:** When cumulative catch is within 320 mt of the annual limit, the trip limit shall be 20 mt. When catch is within 220 mt of the annual limit, the trip limit shall be 10 mt. When catch is within 150 mt of the annual limit, the trip limit shall be 3 mt.
- **July-September:** When cumulative catch is within 290 mt of the annual limit, the trip limit shall be 20 mt. When catch is within 200 mt of the annual limit, the trip limit shall be 10 mt. When catch is within 140 mt of the annual limit, the trip limit shall be 3 mt.
- **October-December:** When cumulative catch is within 250 mt of the annual limit, the trip limit shall be 20 mt. When catch is within 105 mt of the annual limit, the trip limit shall be 3 mt.

If the annual limit is between 375 mt and 524 mt, the initial trip limit is 20 mt:

- **January-June:** When cumulative catch is within 320 mt of the annual limit, the trip limit shall be 15 mt. Thereafter the trip limit shall be 10 mt until catch is with 150 mt of the annual limit, in which case the trip limit shall be 3 mt.
- **July-September:** When cumulative catch is within 290 mt of the annual limit, the trip limit shall be 15 mt. Thereafter the trip limit shall be 10 mt until catch is with 140 mt of the annual limit, in which case the trip limit shall be 3 mt.
- **October-December:** When cumulative catch is within 250 mt of the annual limit, the trip limit shall be 15 mt. When catch is within 105 mt of the annual limit, the trip limit shall be 3 mt.

If annual limit is between 275-374, the initial trip limit is 15 mt:

- **January-June:** When cumulative catch is within 220 mt, the trip limit shall be 3 mt.

- **July-September:** When cumulative catch is within 200 mt, the trip limit shall be 3 mt.
- **October-December:** When cumulative catch is within 105 mt, the trip limit shall be 3 mt.

If the annual limit is between 221-275, the initial trip limit is 10 mt and there is no intermediate trip limit:

- **January-June:** When cumulative catch is within 220 mt, the trip limit shall be 3 mt.
- **July-September:** When cumulative catch is within 200 mt, the trip limit shall be 3 mt.
- **October-December:** When cumulative catch is within 105 mt, the trip limit shall be 3 mt.

If the annual limit is 220 or less, the trip limit shall be 5 mt for the entire year.

The HMSAS really struggled trying to figure out how to set these catch limits two and three years in the future. NMFS is requesting one regulation cover the catch limits through 2024. Most other Council-managed fisheries can review domestic management measures annually or in some cases during the season. The HMSAS asks that in the future that the Council request NMFS to investigate ways to adjust domestic catch limits annually. This may require a change in the HMS FMP. At a minimum, we would like the Council to bring this up for discussion in September 2023.

PFMC
11/18/21