

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

This report provides an update on Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) meetings, U.S. priorities to the IATTC and the Joint IATTC-Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee (NC) on Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF), and a list of upcoming international meetings. Additionally, NMFS is soliciting nominations for non-government U.S. Commissioners to regional fishery management organizations (RFMOs).

### **Updates on IATTC Meetings**

The IATTC held four meetings virtually in April and May. The [3<sup>rd</sup> Electronic Monitoring \(EM\) Workshop](#) was held April 25-27, 2022, to discuss management considerations including data confidentiality, compliance with EM requirements, equipment specifications, fleet coverage and review rate, and the use of the data for science vs. compliance. The [11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Bycatch Working Group](#) (BYCWG) was held May 10-11, 2022, to consider a minimum circle hook size effective at mitigating sea turtle bycatch, among other bycatch issues. The BYCWG did not come to agreement on a minimum circle hook size for the sea turtle [Resolution C-19-04](#) and instead recommended that a second circle hook workshop be convened before the next BYCWG meeting in 2023. The [6<sup>th</sup> Ad hoc Working Group on Fish Aggregating Devices](#) (FADWG) was held May 12-13, 2022, to consider, among other things, biodegradable FAD materials and reporting. The FADWG adopted a definition of biodegradable FADs and a classification system for biodegradable FADs. The [13<sup>th</sup> Scientific Advisory Committee](#) (SAC) meeting was held May 16-20, 2022, to consider the latest stock assessments, stock status indicator analyses, research, and updates related to fisheries under the purview of the IATTC. The SAC endorsed the BYCWG recommendations and made recommendations to the IATTC on tunas, swordfish, dorado, sharks, management strategy evaluation, and port sampling. NMFS expects that reports, including any recommendations, from each of these meetings will be available by the 2022 IATTC annual meeting in July.

### **U.S. Priorities to the IATTC**

NMFS provided a preliminary list of priorities to the Council in March 2022 (See [Agenda Item I.2.a, Supplemental NMFS Report 1](#)). The IATTC intends to hold its 99<sup>th</sup> extraordinary meeting on August 1, 2022, for the selection of the Executive Director. This will be followed by the 100<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting August 1-5, 2022. As noted above, the IATTC BYCWG and SAC did not reach agreement on recommendations regarding a minimum size circle hook effective at mitigating bycatch of sea turtles and will be hosting another workshop in 2023. We do not anticipate a proposal to address this issue at the upcoming IATTC meeting. The United States continues to support improving the compliance review process and may consider how to address changes depending on the outcomes of the 1st Compliance Workshop, which was rescheduled from July to June 1-2, 2022, and will be held virtually.

Based on the feedback received from stakeholders during the North Pacific albacore (NPALB) meeting hosted by NMFS on April 5, 2022 (see Agenda Item G.2.a, Supplemental NMFS Report 2 for a summary of the meeting), the United States supports adoption of a harvest strategy for

NPALB at the IATTC this year. NMFS is soliciting feedback on a draft proposal to the IATTC (see Agenda Item G.2.a, Supplemental NMFS Report 3).

### **Joint IATTC-WCPFC NC Working Group on PBF (JWG)**

As the PBF stock continues to rebuild (see [Agenda Item G.2. Attachment 1](#)), the United States is focused on developing the long-term harvest strategy for PBF. In 2021, the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) suggested that the JWG develop operational management objectives and performance indicators to facilitate the evaluation of potential harvest strategies. NMFS hosted two PBF stakeholder meetings that solicited input on these topics. The first meeting, on April 1, 2022, was dedicated to the long-term harvest strategy. The second meeting on May 4, 2022, hosted by NMFS WCR and facilitated by Kearns & West, Inc., was focused on domestic management of PBF and invited stakeholders to provide feedback on the long-term harvest strategy. See Agenda Item G.2.a, Supplemental NMFS Report 4 for a summary of feedback on the long-term harvest strategy received on both April 1 and May 4. See Agenda Item G.2.a, Supplemental NMFS Report 5 for a summary of the May 4 meeting prepared by Kearns and West, Inc.

### **Solicitation for RFMO Commissioner Nominations**

NMFS is seeking [nominations for qualified individuals to serve as non-government U.S. commissioners to eight RFMOs](#):

- Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)
- International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)
- International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC)
- Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO)
- North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO)
- North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC)
- South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO)
- Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)

These are all RFMOs in which NMFS has discretion to nominate candidates for commissioner. The United States participates in several RFMOs, which are treaty-based bodies that play a critical role in the global system of fisheries governance. They are the primary way we achieve cooperation between fishing nations to ensure the sustainable conservation and management of shared fish stocks and other living marine resources.

Commissioners participate in meetings and delegations to help develop and support the United States' positions on the conservation and management of shared living marine resources.

This public solicitation of nominations enhances transparency in our process, promotes equity and access for all communities across the United States, and increases diversity in the candidate pool to ensure the views and interests of the range of U.S. stakeholders are considered in the process of developing and advancing U.S. positions at RFMOs.

Nominations for U.S. commissioners, including self-nominations, should be submitted by July 8, 2022, to: [nmfs.rfmo@noaa.gov](mailto:nmfs.rfmo@noaa.gov). Additional details on this process and candidate qualifications for each RFMO can be found in the [Federal Register](#).

NMFS is committed to increasing the diversity of stakeholder voices that represent the United States in our international fisheries engagements, and promoting representation of underserved communities in the pool of potential candidates for appointment as non-government U.S. commissioners to RFMOs.

**Upcoming Meetings**

<b><u>IATTC-related Meetings</u></b>	
Workshop on Compliance	June 1-2 (virtual)
U.S. General Advisory Committee and Scientific Advisory Subcommittee	June 29-30 (virtual)
Annual Meetings of the IATTC	July 26-August 5 (San Diego, CA)
Joint IATTC-WCPFC NC Working Group on PBF	July 11-13 (virtual)
Meetings of the AIDCP	October 17-18 (San Diego, CA)
<b><u>WCPFC</u></b>	
Scientific Committee	Aug 10-18 (virtual)
<b><u>ISC</u></b>	
Plenary	Jul 12-18 (Hawaii)