

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL
REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) received an update on International Management Activities impacting HMS stocks from Celia Barroso. Several HMSAS members attended the 15th Scientific Advisory Subcommittee (SAS) to the General Advisory Committee (GAC), and the 30th GAC to the U.S. Section to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) meetings, 7th Pacific Bluefin Tuna IATTC / Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee Joint Working Group (JWG) and IATTC Plenary meetings in July and August. We offer the following comments.

Pacific Bluefin Tuna (PBF)

The HMSAS appreciates the efforts and leadership of Dorothy Lowman who led much of the discussion at the JWG, including discussion on development of harvest strategies that are critical to ensure the long-term sustainability of PBF. The HMSAS also appreciates National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) efforts to introduce proposals on operational management objectives and interim harvest control rules that included input from U.S. stakeholders. It was disappointing that other nations were unprepared to substantively discuss these proposals. U.S. stakeholders and the HMSAS are concerned with some of the initial suggestions provided by other countries that could significantly undermine the overall long-term objective – to maintain the stock at sustainable levels with a high level of confidence.

The WCPFC Northern Committee (NC) meeting will review the outcomes of the JWG and update the workplan and develop requests for the ISC. It will be important for the U.S. to ensure that JWG decisions are appropriately adopted at NC. In addition, the U.S. should set clear expectations on the need for intersessional communications and work with other member nations so that the 2023 JWG can progress the development of long-term comprehensive harvest strategies as the top priority.

The HMSAS recommends that the Council restate the June 2022 HMSAS recommendations to NMFS as the U.S. position for NC. In addition, the HMSAS recommends that the Council provide the following recommendations to NMFS regarding PBF at the NC and related matters:

- Set a clear expectation with other countries on the need to consult with their stakeholders and come prepared to adopt proposals on elements of a precautionary and comprehensive long-term harvest strategy in 2023, particularly management objectives, performance indicators, reference points and harvest control rules.
- Adopt a clear workplan for the ISC that prioritizes development of elements of the MSE in 2023. We hope this would be an opportunity to proactively address, and correct, the current inequity of the Western Pacific Ocean/Eastern Pacific Ocean and U.S./Mexico allocations.

- Request that NMFS provide information and solicit informal input from U.S. stakeholders regarding management strategy evaluation (MSE) development that will be discussed at the upcoming November ISC PBFWG meeting. In addition, the Council should request an update from NMFS at the November Council on their plans to provide science analyst capacity necessary for PBF MSE development.

North Pacific Albacore (NPA)

We appreciate NMFS leadership, in particular Celia Barroso, Valerie Post, and Ryan Wulff, in ensuring a [Resolution creating a Harvest Strategy for NPA](#) was adopted during the most recent IATTC meeting. We also appreciate the delegation furthering the U.S. industry priority that all fisheries be included in management of the NPA fishery. Industry's goal is to avoid adoption of a Resolution or CMM that does not cover all harvest of albacore. During your June meeting, the Council supported our recommendations regarding the exclusion of harvest control rules from the Harvest Strategy conversation. The aforementioned IATTC Resolution included a commitment to adopted harvest control rules (HCRs) in 2023. We reiterate the concerns raised in [our June report on International Management Activities](#) in asking the Council recommend to NMFS that potential discussions on a Harvest Strategy during the upcoming NC meeting not include any formal HCRs. We recommend that NMFS promote language that mirrors the IATTC Resolution.

We encourage NMFS to schedule a workshop to engage with NPA industry and stakeholders early in 2023 in anticipation of proposing HCRs for NPA later that year.

IATTC overview

The HMSAS is encouraged by the progress at IATTC this year, including adoption of measures on NPA, compliance, transshipment, electronic monitoring (EM) and the renamed bycatch/ecosystem WG. The HMSAS continues to stress the importance of advancing EM as quickly as possible to level the playing field for U.S. fisheries and notes that many countries continue to lack observers to meet the current 5 percent IATTC coverage requirement.

Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ)

One last proposal was introduced by Costa Rica regarding the United Nation's BBNJ initiative. This proposal, which was not adopted, sought to protect the role of Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs) in all matters related to the conservation, management and sustainable use of fishery resources and fisheries. While this did not pass, there does appear to be an appetite to consider this at a later date. The perception, from our member who was at the meeting, is that IATTC membership was generally opposed to usurping power from the RFMOs as it relates to fisheries operations. The majority of the HMSAS supports the intent of the proposal submitted by Costa Rica.

PFMC
09/12/22