

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. The HMSAS appreciates NMFS's efforts at the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Northern Committee (WCPFC NC) and offers comments to inform U.S. positions at the upcoming WCPFC annual meeting. In addition, the HMSAS provides comments regarding the U.S. – Canada albacore treaty negotiations.

North Pacific Albacore (NPA)

The HMSAS appreciates NMFS's efforts to ensure that the WCPFC NC adopted a NPA proposal that matches the 2023 IATTC resolution, including modifications to clarify that the measure includes all catch north of the equator (not just above 20° N. latitude). **The HMSAS recommends that the Council support the Northern Committee NPA resolution for approval at the WCPFC meeting.**

The HMSAS appreciates that NMFS has signaled intentions to consult with NPA industry and stakeholders in early 2023 with intention to inform harvest control rules that will be agreed at IATTC and WCPFC next year.

Pacific Bluefin Tuna (PBF)

The HMSAS discussed a range of issues on PBF domestic and international management. The HMSAS continues to support a precautionary approach to PBF management while the stock is rebuilding and discussed the importance of making substantive progress on a comprehensive long-term harvest strategy as a precondition to any discussions on new interim harvest control rules. In addition, the HMSAS revisited concepts that would protect PBF spawning areas and consider expanding management to at least three size classes (young of year, juvenile, spawners). The HMSAS also discussed the importance of getting the PBF Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process moving as quickly as possible as this should be basis for future management decisions. The HMSAS notes that the ISC PBFWG is meeting in November and seeks information from NMFS regarding the scope of the MSE work to be conducted and ways to ensure transparency and stakeholder engagement in MSE development.

The HMSAS appreciates NMFS's efforts at the WCPFC NC to ensure that all delegations adhered to the agreements from the 7th PBF Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting. The HMSAS notes that Korea introduced a proposal to unilaterally increase their own quota and appreciates the U.S. efforts to maintain existing measures. The HMSAS continues to be concerned with these types of attempts to add exemptions that lack any scientific basis, violate quotas and do not follow the JWG process. We support the updates to the WCPFC NC workplan that outlines the significant work needed by all parties to progress long-term harvest strategies in 2023.

The HMSAS recommends that the Council communicate the following points and requests to NMFS and the U.S. delegation to WCPFC. The Council:

- **Supports a precautionary approach for PBF with priority focused on rebuilding and a secondary priority to find a more equitable balance of quota. The Council supports continued use of the JWG as an appropriate venue for all PBF management decisions, and notes opposition to attempts by other countries to create new exceptions outside of this process.**
- **Requests that the U.S. delegation encourage other countries to do stakeholder outreach so that there can be meaningful progress on long-term comprehensive harvest strategy elements (management objectives, performance indicators, reference points, harvest control rules) for PBF in 2023. The Council requests that the U.S. ensure progress on long-term harvest strategy development as a precondition for any discussions on new interim harvest control rules.**
- **Requests updates from NMFS regarding PBF MSE development and opportunities for informal U.S. stakeholder engagement.**

North Pacific Swordfish

The HMSAS favorably received information from NMFS regarding WCPFC NC adoption of a new conservation and management measure (CMM) for North Pacific swordfish. While the WCPFC NC proposal is a step in the right direction and would bring this fishery under a new conservation and management measure, the HMSAS identified that the proposal is limited in its scope to north of 20° N. latitude. This leaves a significant gap between the equator and 20° N. latitude with no management in place in WCPFC waters. The HMSAS notes several scientific, governance and compliance concerns with this gap and is concerned that management should be consistently applied throughout the range of the stock.

The HMSAS recommends that the Council communicate the following position to NMFS and the U.S. delegation to WCPFC. The Council:

- **Supports adoption of the WCPFC NC recommendation to adopt the new CMM for North Pacific swordfish.**
- **Notes concern over the management gap and urges the U.S. to work with other nations at the upcoming WCFPC meeting on a plan to establish a consistent CMM that covers the equator to 20° N. latitude in 2023.**

U.S. – Canada Albacore Treaty

The HMSAS discussed the letter submitted by the [Canadian Government re Proposal on a Pacific Albacore Tuna Treaty Access Regime beyond 2022](#). In particular, the proposed changes to Annex A and C. It is worth reminding the Council that the Treaty still disproportionately benefits the Canadian fleet.

We appreciate the Canadian Government forwarding a starting point for negotiations which will take place during the upcoming bilateral meeting in Vancouver, BC next week. Given the recent date of the letter, the comments we offer have not been fully vetted with all of the fishery participants; but are informed by HMSAS members who are active in both WFOA and AAFA.

Annex A:

- Flexibility on the overall length of replacement vessels, allowing for a buffer of up to ten feet (three meters), with a clause to prevent any subsequent increase in vessel length;

It is our understanding the primary purpose for this is to provide economic benefits to current Canadian vessel owners that may wish to sell their rights to access the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). We are not supportive of this proposal as it would result in much larger capacity of the Canadian fleet.

- Modified text on the requirement to collect and share catch and effort data to ensure the provision of accurate information on fishing activity in the other Party's EEZ.

Any efforts which would provide additional clarity and confidence in the data are welcome. As such, we are supportive of this requirement.

Annex C:

- Increasing the number of Canadian vessels on the USA68 List authorized to fish in the United States EEZ and access designated ports to 110.

This is unacceptable. We recommend status quo on the number of Canadian vessels on the USA68 List.

- Increasing the length of the fishing season for Canadian vessels in the U.S. EEZ to October 31, to match the season for American vessels in Canada's EEZ.

This is also unacceptable. The September 15 date was designed to ensure the Canadian troll fleet was out of U.S. waters by the time the fishery switched to a predominately bait fishery. This reduces the opportunity for conflicts between troll vessels and bait fishery operations.

In summary, we are supportive of efforts to ensure more timely and accurate data are collected to inform the Treaty and management of the fishery into the future. We are not supportive of the other proposed changes as outlined in the letter from the Canadian Government. We recommend the Council adopt the language within this Report and forward to the State Department as the Council's position on this important matter.

PFMC
11/03/22