

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

This report provides a preliminary look at U.S. priorities for upcoming Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and Agreement on International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP) meetings scheduled for July 31-August 11, 2023, to be held in Victoria, Canada. This report also provides summaries of a U.S. stakeholder meetings that NMFS hosted to inform discussions anticipated at the Joint IATTC-Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee (NC) Working Group (JWG) on Pacific Bluefin Tuna (PBF) in 2023, as well as meetings of the IATTC subsidiary bodies. In addition, this report provides a list of upcoming meetings related to international management of highly migratory species.

Potential U.S. priorities for the IATTC meeting

North Pacific albacore (NPALB): The U.S. intends to submit a proposal for the consideration of the IATTC on a NPALB harvest strategy, which would include harvest control rules (HCR). The United States intends to submit a proposal on this topic first to the NC, which will be held July 6-7, 2023. Proposals to the NC will be made available on the [NC19 meeting webpage](#).

Non-entangling Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs): The United States may submit a proposal to the IATTC to require only non-entangling materials be used on FADs. This proposal would align with the Conservation and Management Measure [2021-01](#) adopted by the WCPFC in 2021.

Climate change: The United States intends to submit a proposal to the IATTC to formally include climate change as a topic on the agendas of the IATTC's Ecosystem and Bycatch Working Group (EBWG) and Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC). Both the SAC and the EBWG adopted recommendations at May 2023 meetings to include climate change as agenda items for future meetings.

Circle hook size: The U.S. will consider submitting a proposal to the IATTC to define "large" circle hook size for shallow setting longline vessels in the eastern Pacific Ocean. This proposal is intended to complete the requirements of [Resolution C-19-04](#), which tasked the EBWG (formally Bycatch Working Group) and SAC with recommending a minimum size circle hook to the IATTC. The EBWG and the SAC did not reach consensus on a recommendation to define a large circle hook at meetings in May 2023. However, this issue continues to be a priority for the United States to reduce sea turtle bycatch in IATTC fisheries.

International Meeting Updates

NMFS-hosted PBF Stakeholder Meeting (April 19, 2023)

NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office and West Coast Region hosted a webinar to gather input from U.S. stakeholders on PBF candidate operational management objectives and performance indicators, as well as how to revise the list of candidate reference points and HCRs for a future management strategy evaluation (MSE) evaluation on PBF. A summary of the meeting, which includes meeting materials, is included in NMFS Report 1.

5th Workshop of an Electronic Monitoring System (EMS) (April 24-26, 2023)

The IATTC held its 5th EMS workshop virtually facilitated by the IATTC staff and focused primarily on financial considerations of implementing an EMS in the EPO. The workshops do not result in formal recommendations, but the range of views discussed during the meeting are included in the meeting report. Outcomes from these workshops will inform future meetings of an official working group on electronic monitoring to be convened later in 2023. Meeting materials and, when available, the report of the workshop can be found on the IATTC [workshop webpage](#).

1st Meeting of the Ecosystem and Bycatch Working Group (EBWG; May 11-12, 2023)

The IATTC held the EBWG in-person in La Jolla, California, and Celia Barroso (NMFS WCR) represented the United States. The EBWG adopted a suite of recommendations including on management measures for sharks, sea turtles, and seabirds. In particular, the group did not recommend a specific circle hook minimum size effective at mitigating sea turtle bycatch, but instead requesting the IATTC host another workshop aimed at informing a recommendation on circle hook size. Meeting materials, and when available the meeting report, may be found on the [1st EBWG Meeting webpage](#).

7th Meeting of the Ad hoc Fish Aggregating Device Working Group (FADWG; May 12-13, 2023)

The FADWG met in-person in La Jolla, California, and Rachael Wadsworth (NMFS WCR) represented the United States. The FADWG reviewed research results for biodegradable FADs as well as presentations on the FAD fishery in the EPO. The FADWG adopted a range of recommendations for FAD management including a recommendation to require non-entangling materials on FADs. Meeting materials may be found on the [7th Meeting of FADWG webpage](#).

14th Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC; May 15-19, 2023)

The SAC met in-person in La Jolla, California, and Dr. Steve Teo (NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center) represented the United States. The IATTC scientific staff presented stock assessments, including updates and needs to be able to complete additional stock assessments; research results, ecosystem and bycatch issues; and data improvement needs. The IATTC scientific staff presented a new assessment on Southeast Pacific swordfish and plans for improving other assessments (e.g., EPO skipjack tuna), and Dr. Steve Teo presented initial results from the ISC's North Pacific albacore assessment. When available, the meeting materials, report, and recommendations may be found on the [14th SAC Meeting webpage](#).

US-Canada Albacore Tuna Treaty Negotiations

On April 14, 2023, the U.S.-Canada Albacore Tuna Treaty Data Working Group, composed of representatives from governments of both the United States and Canada, met to review data from the 2022 fishing season. For both nation's fleets, overall catch was greater than in 2021 with some minor changes to the percentage of catch from the fishing areas (i.e., Exclusive Economic Zones or the High Seas).

Delegations from the United States and Canada met in person in Seattle, Washington, on April 18, 2023. An agreement for terms of a fishing regime to apply in 2023 or beyond was not reached. Subsequently, Mr. David Hogan (Department of State) held a call on May 4, 2023, with the U.S. delegation to discuss the implications of the current state of negotiations, including next steps, and

the potential for an agreement on a fishing regime to apply to 2023. Mr. Hogan will attend the June Council meeting virtually and be available to provide an update to the Council.

Upcoming meetings

<u><i>IATTC-related Meetings</i></u>	
U.S. General Advisory Committee and Scientific Advisory Subcommittee	June 15, 2023 (Virtual)
4th Technical Meeting on Catch Documentation Scheme for PBF	July 3, 2023 (Japan)
Joint IATTC-WCPFC Northern Committee	July 4-5, 2023 (Japan)
Annual Meetings of the IATTC and AIDCP	July 31 - August 11, 2023 (Canada)

<u><i>WCPFC</i></u>	
Northern Committee Part I	July 6-7, 2023 (Japan)
Scientific Committee	August 16-24, 2023 (Palau)
Technical and Compliance Committee	September 20-26, 2023 (Federated States of Micronesia)
Northern Committee Part II	TBD

<u><i>ISC</i></u>	
ISC Plenary	July 12-17, 2023 (Japan)