

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) received a briefing from Ms. Celia Barroso (NOAA Fisheries) on international activities since the June Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting. As reported by NOAA Fisheries, the recent negotiations resulted in significant progress on top priority HMS issues for the Council, notably on Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF) and North Pacific albacore (NPA).

Pacific bluefin tuna

The 8th Joint Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) – Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Working Group (JWG) made considerable progress with the adoption of candidate elements of the long-term harvest strategy, including management objectives, reference points and harvest control rules. This package of candidate elements now goes to the science provider, the International Scientific Committee (ISC), for evaluation as part of the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) and we are hopeful that results will be made available in 2025. Importantly, the results of the MSE and next year’s stock assessment will also include projection scenarios that account for a more equitable split of quota between the Western Pacific and the Eastern Pacific, specifically a 70:30 split, which has been a long-term objective for the U.S. Further, the projections will indicate the likelihood of overfishing under different quota allocations – an important reference point for compatibility with U.S. domestic management. In addition to these accomplishments, countries agreed to the U.S. proposal that sets interim harvest control rules and made some concessions regarding catch conversion factors in the current management measures. The JWG recommendations were adopted at IATTC with minor changes. The HMSAS anticipates that 2024 will be a major year for PBF – with the stock likely reaching or passing the second rebuilding target and triggering renegotiation of the quotas – and will therefore require considerable preparation and engagement between NOAA, the Council, and stakeholders.

North Pacific albacore tuna

The WCPFC Northern Committee (NC) and IATTC adopted harvest control rules for North Pacific albacore (NPA). This marks a major step forward toward final adoption of a comprehensive harvest strategy that is anticipated in December at the WCPFC annual meeting. If adopted in December, this will be the first comprehensive, MSE-tested harvest strategy adopted spanning two RFMOs and the complete range of this stock. This new harvest strategy is another step forward for international management of this stock and establishes important safeguards.

The HMSAS is appreciative of all the efforts of NOAA Fisheries to reach this milestone – including the preparatory workshops, Council sessions and other engagement opportunities with stakeholders on PBF and NPA tuna negotiations. This resulted in strong U.S. proposals that were broadly supported by the fishing industry, conservation groups and other stakeholders, and were ultimately adopted by the other countries with the key provisions in place. The HMSAS thanks Dorothy Lowman, Ryan Wulff, Kelly Kryc, Celia Barroso, Christa Svensson, and the rest of the

U.S. delegation team for all of their work that should benefit West Coast HMS fisheries and stakeholders.

North Pacific swordfish

The WCPFC NC recommended small amendments to management measures for North Pacific swordfish based on the new stock assessment information provided by ISC. The HMSAS continues to be concerned that these management measures will apply only to waters north of 20 degrees North, leaving a management gap and limited data reporting from the equator to 20 degrees North.

North Pacific Striped Marlin

The ISC provided a new stock assessment for North Pacific striped marlin, but further action is needed at WCPFC to rebuild this stock that is an important recreational fishery.

The HMSAS requests that the Council communicate the following priorities to NOAA Fisheries as they prepare for upcoming negotiations at the WCPFC:

- **Pacific bluefin tuna**
 - Continue to prioritize progress on the long-term harvest strategy through development of the MSE, including providing NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) staff capacity and resources to support MSE analysis.
 - Adopt the NC recommendations at the WCPFC and reject any attempts to negotiate outside of the JWG process.
 - If feasible given time constraints, consider a 2024 workshop with U.S. stakeholders once the preliminary stock assessment information is available (anticipated May 2024).
- **North Pacific albacore tuna**
 - Support adoption of the NC recommendation.
 - Consider further discussions with U.S. stakeholders regarding potential effort controls as part of the implementation of the new harvest strategy, after the ISC/SWFSC does its work advising how fishing intensity should be interpreted to actual management measures under the harvest strategy.
- **North Pacific swordfish**
 - Adopt the NC recommendation and work with other countries to address the management gap (equator to 20 degrees North) and data collection issues.
- **North Pacific striped marlin**
 - Adopt a more aggressive rebuilding plan to recover the stock to sustainable levels.

PFMC
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