

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) meetings scheduled for August 26 through September 6, 2024. This report also provides an outcome of the U.S.-Canada North Pacific Albacore Treaty discussions. In addition, this report provides a list of upcoming meetings related to international management of HMS.

Potential U.S. priorities for the IATTC meeting

Tropical Tuna: IATTC Resolution [C-21-04](#) (*Conservation measures for tropical tunas in the eastern Pacific Ocean during 2022-2024*) expires at the end of the 2024 calendar year. The IATTC will present updated stock assessments for yellowfin, bigeye, and skipjack tuna at the IATTC Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting to be held in June 2024. The results from the stock assessments will inform the IATTC Staff's recommendations for tropical tuna conservation measures for 2025 through 2027. The IATTC Staff will also review the additional bigeye tuna catch limits and sampling program adopted in 2022 for effectiveness and continuation in the next management measures. The United States will use the information from the SAC meeting to inform any U.S. proposals for the IATTC annual meeting.

Pacific Bluefin Tuna: IATTC Resolution [C-21-05](#) (*Measures for the conservation and management of Pacific Bluefin tuna in the eastern Pacific Ocean*) is also expiring at the end of this calendar year. We expect a draft executive summary of the Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF) stock assessment to be presented at the IATTC SAC in June, with the final assessment to be presented at the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) Plenary later in June. The United States will use the stock status information to inform any U.S. proposals for the Joint IATTC-Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee (NC) Working Group and IATTC annual meeting.

Circle hook size: Resolution [C-19-04](#) (*Resolution to mitigate impacts on sea turtles*) tasked the IATTC SAC and Working Group on Ecosystem and Bycatch (EBWG) with recommending a minimum circle hook size to the Commission by 2021. The IATTC held a workshop in 2022 to analyze scientific information regarding different circle hook sizes and their effectiveness at mitigating sea turtle bycatch. Neither the workshop participants nor the Ecosystem and Bycatch Working Group have reached agreement on a definition of minimum hook size for longline vessels, as required in Resolution C-19-04. Depending on discussions at the 2nd Permanent Working Group on Ecosystem and Bycatch in June, the United States may consider submitting a proposal on circle hook size.

U.S.-Canada North Pacific Albacore Treaty

The U.S. and Canadian delegations last met on November 28, 2023, in Vancouver B.C. to discuss reinstating a reciprocal fishing access regime for 2024 and potentially beyond. Some preliminary data on the 2023 season (for which there was not a reciprocal access and fishing regime in place) were exchanged, and delegates noted significant decreases in landings over 2022 for both the U.S.

and Canadian fleets. Canada reiterated their position, proposing an increase in the number of Canadian vessels as well as an extension of the season their vessels would have access to the U.S. EEZ, while also stressing a desire for fairness and equitable access to the benefits of the Treaty. Ultimately no agreement was reached, and both the United States and Canada agreed to continue discussions in spring 2024 ahead of the Data Work Group data exchange meeting.

Upcoming Meetings

<u><i>IATTC-related Meetings</i></u>	
2nd Ad Hoc Working Group on Electronic Monitoring (EM)	April 23-25, 2024 (virtual)
IATTC SAC Preparatory Session	May 27, 2024 (virtual)
2nd Meeting of the Permanent Working Group on Ecosystem and Bycatch	May 28-29, 2024 (virtual)
8 th Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)	May 30-31, 2024 (virtual)
15 th Meeting of the IATTC SAC	June 10-14 2024 (La Jolla, CA)
U.S. Scientific Advisory Subcommittee and General Advisory Committee	Save the date for August 1 and 2, 2024 (either virtual or La Jolla, CA)
3rd Meeting of the Ad hoc Working Group on EM	Late August, before annual meeting (Panama City, Panama)
Annual Meeting of the IATTC and AIDCP	August 26-September 6, 2024 (Panama City, Panama)

<u><i>WCPFC</i></u>	
Joint IATTC-Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) NC WG on PBF / NC	July 10-16, 2024 (Hokkaido, Japan)
Scientific Committee	August 14-21 (Philippines)
Technical and Compliance Committee	September 25-October 2 (Pohnpei, FSM)

<u><i>ISC</i></u>	
ISC Plenary	June 19-24, 2024 (Vancouver, Canada)