

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) appreciates the Council's support for our 2023 international management recommendations, and we thank our U.S. Commissioners, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the State Department for their leadership that accomplished and/or made significant progress on our top priorities, particularly the North Pacific albacore (NPA) tuna harvest control rules and the Pacific bluefin (PBF) tuna long-term harvest strategy. As we turn to the upcoming 2024 international meetings, the HMSAS would like to encourage positions that maintain and build on these gains. Specifically, the HMSAS supports U.S. positions that will maintain appropriate science-based precautions while also seeking increased fishing opportunities for U.S. West Coast fleets. The HMSAS provides specific recommendations below.

North Pacific albacore tuna:

- **Encourage early engagement with stakeholders as negotiations under the U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty are planned.**
- **Schedule workshops with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to foster further discussions with U.S. stakeholders regarding implementation of the new harvest strategy, after the International Scientific Committee (ISC)/Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) finalizes its work advising how fishing intensity could be interpreted to actual management measures under the harvest strategy.**

Pacific bluefin tuna:

- **Communicate to US delegations to upcoming international meeting the priorities more fully developed below related to potential catch increases, rebalancing of fishing opportunity between the Western Pacific Ocean and Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO), and prioritizing progress on a long-term harvest strategy.**
- **Plan for discussions of domestic management changes that may be appropriate following the international meetings**

North Pacific albacore tuna

The HMSAS appreciates the time and effort expended by industry, the States, and federal partners resulting in a one-year Canadian Treaty regime for 2024 on terms that mirrored the 2022 fishing and port access regime. Concerns remain about the timeline resulting in the one-year regime. Because it wasn't agreed to before the middle of May, some US fishery participants were unable to take advantage of the Port Access provisions for maintenance or other purposes. Because renewed conversations on the Treaty are planned for this Fall, the HMSAS recommends the Council encourage our State Department partners that dialogue and negotiations should be ongoing and not an afterthought that gets dealt with late in the year. As dialogue and negotiations progress, communication with stakeholders is paramount. We support the goal of a longer-term regime fostering stability in the fleet and allows for the many small businesses participating in the fishery the opportunity to better prepare for the circumstances whether it be port access, marketing concerns, or fishing opportunities.

The Draft [Scientific Advice on Interpreting the Fishing Intensity Metric from the NPA Tuna Harvest Strategy in Terms of Catch and Effort Management Measures](#), highlights Effort Controls

as a reasonable way to manage EPO surface harvest. The HMSAS sees value in stakeholder workshops after this fishing season to begin conversations on how to best implement the NPA Harvest Strategy; and thus requests the Council task NMFS with scheduling those after the completion of the current albacore fishing season. This may culminate with the adoption of domestic management measures implementing the harvest strategy in advance of the 2026 stock assessment.

Pacific bluefin tuna

In May 2024, the ISC published the [Draft Executive Summary of the 2024 Pacific bluefin tuna stock assessment](#). The full assessment report will be reviewed and finalized by the ISC at their plenary meeting from June 19-24, 2024. The HMSAS notes the following key points:

- The stock assessment indicates that the stock is no longer overfished and is not subject to overfishing according to reference points commonly used by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC).
- In addition, the stock has recovered much more quickly than predicted and has achieved the second rebuilding target ($20\%SSB_{F=0}$).
- While this is very positive news, the stock assessment notes continued uncertainty regarding recruitment and projections indicate that large increases in quota are likely to result in overfishing and/or reducing the population below the second rebuilding target.

U.S. fishermen faced difficult decisions ten years ago but today those decisions have resulted in recovery of the stock much earlier than anticipated. This is a significant accomplishment for the U.S. government and stakeholders, including West Coast commercial and recreational fishermen, scientists, conservation organizations, and others. However, without a comprehensive and precautionary long-term harvest strategy in place, these gains continue to be at risk.

The HMSAS encourages the U.S. to take positions that can continue to keep Pacific bluefin tuna on track to maintain and grow the population and secure the long-term harvest strategy that can provide additional opportunities for U.S. fishermen. **The HMSAS recommends that the Council communicate the following priorities to NMFS as they prepare for the upcoming 9th Joint Working Group on PBF and the 20th WCPFC Northern Committee:**

- **Ensure that any consideration of quota increases will not result in overfishing and/or decreases in spawning stock biomass (SSB);**
- **Identify opportunities to increase U.S. fishing opportunities, including through an East-West and North-South quota rebalance as SSB increases;**
- **Continue to prioritize progress on the long-term harvest strategy through development of the management strategy evaluation.**

The HMSAS looks forward to working with NMFS and the Council on implementing measures for any new proposals agreed at the upcoming international meetings as part of the September Council meeting. This is of particular interest to the purse seine component of the fishery.

PFMC
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