

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

This report provides updates on recent meetings of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) meetings.

### **Joint IATTC-WCPFC Northern Committee (NC) Working Group on Pacific Bluefin Tuna (JWG)**

The Ninth JWG Meeting on Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF) management was held from July 10-14, 2024, in Kushiro, Japan. The International Scientific Committee (ISC)'s 2024 stock assessment showed the Pacific bluefin stock reached the second rebuilding target in 2021 (see Agenda Item K.3.a, NMFS Report 1, for status determination criteria calculations). The JWG negotiated a new proposal for both the WCPFC and IATTC, with catch increases as follows:

- 10% increase to WCPO small fish
- 50% increase to WCPO large fish limits + 300 metric tons (mt) for Korea
- 50% increase to EPO limits + 300 mt annually

For Korea only, the 10% increase to Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) small fish is applied. 71 mt of those small fish were allowed to permanently be transferred using the conversion factor to their WCPO large fish limit. An additional 300 mt of large fish were added to Korea's WCPO large fish catch limit. New Zealand and Australia received 200 mt and 40 mt catch limits respectively, to account for incidental catch. Japan committed to not apply any of the small fish increase to age-0 fish, and agreed to report on implementation of this commitment.

Japan also presented a proposal that would require members to report on their implementation of monitoring, control, and surveillance measures for PBF fisheries and farming operations. Japan's proposal was supported by others and JWG recommended that it be forwarded for consideration to the IATTC and WCPFC.

The ISC recommended the JWG meet intersessionally in the winter so they could present the preliminary results of the management strategy evaluation (MSE) and receive feedback from the JWG. See the [summary report](#) and [webpage](#) for more information.

### **WCPFC NC**

The 20th Meeting of the NC occurred July 15-16, 2024, in Kushiro, Japan. The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee and the IATTC adopted a harvest strategy for North Pacific albacore (NPALB) in 2023 (IATTC Resolution C-23-02). This harvest strategy includes harvest control rules that mandate reductions in fishing intensity if the spawning stock biomass falls below the adopted reference points. As part of the process of adopting a harvest strategy, the WCPFC NC and IATTC requested scientific advice from the Albacore Working Group of the ISC on interpreting required changes in fishing intensity into catch or effort limits for NPALB, as well as the criteria for identifying exceptional circumstances developed by the ISC (see the [ISC 24 plenary report](#)). The NC indicated it would consider these documents and address the harvest strategy in 2025. The U.S. plans to hold a stakeholder webinar in early 2025 to receive stakeholder input on the harvest strategy.

The NC also requested the ISC to provide input to NC21 on the feasibility and resource needs for conducting an MSE for NP swordfish. See the [summary report](#) and [webpage](#) for more information.

## IATTC

The 102nd Meeting of the IATTC will take place September 2-6, 2024, in Panama City, Panama. See the [meeting webpage](#) for more information, including all proposals. Resolutions, when available, will be posted on the [Resolutions webpage](#). The United States put forward the following proposals:

- Pacific bluefin tuna
  - As recommended by the ninth Joint IATTC-NC Working Group Meeting on PBF Management, in the eastern Pacific the IATTC proposal results in a 2025-2026 biennial limit of 1,822 mt for the United States and 10,763 mt for Mexico. The one-year maximum for each is 1,285 mt and 6,296 mt respectively. Changes to the IATTC measure includes revisions to the recreational fishing paragraph to state that recreational catches shall be managed in a manner consistent with commercial catches, and to require annual reporting of catches as opposed to semi-annual. The United States has submitted this proposal to the IATTC along with co-sponsors Japan, Mexico, and Chinese Taipei.
- Tropical tuna
  - The United States submitted a proposal to the IATTC to extend the provisions of Resolution C-21-04 for three more years. The proposal also contains provisions to automatically re-examine the Resolution if results of the yellowfin tuna stock assessment or stock status indicators indicate  $F$  is above  $F_{MSY}$ . Furthermore, recommendations from the SAC regarding ways to improve stock assessments by means of improving operational logbook data submissions, maintaining the Enhanced Monitoring Program, and continuing/expanding tropical tuna tagging projects are included.
- Circle hooks
  - The United States submitted a proposal to the IATTC amending the sea turtle Resolution (C-19-04) to define large circle hooks as 18/0, while allowing for the development of a third mitigation measure specific to small-scale coastal-mixed fleets fishing for dorado in Central America. This third measure would be defined at the circle hook workshop scheduled to take place in 2025.
- Forced labor
  - The United States submitted a proposal to the IATTC with non-binding language prohibiting unfair labor practices, forced labor, and human trafficking. The United States has introduced similar proposals to the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization ([SPRFMO](#)), [WCPFC](#), and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas ([ICCAT](#)) that have all been adopted. The IATTC has not yet considered such a proposal, but the fair and ethical treatment of crew on fishing vessels continues to be a priority for the United States.

The United States continues to have leadership roles in the IATTC. Rachael Wadsworth (NMFS West Coast Region) is currently the Chair of the Administration and Finance Committee, Dr. Yonat Swimmer (NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office) is co-Chair of the Ecosystem and Bycatch Working Group, and Colin Brinkman (Department of State) has been put forward to serve as co-Chair of the Electronic Monitoring Working Group.

**Upcoming meetings in 2024-2025\***

<a href="#"><u>WCPFC</u></a>	
<a href="#"><u>Science Management Dialogue</u></a>	September 10-13 (virtual)
<a href="#"><u>Technical and Compliance Committee</u></a>	September 25-October 1, 2024 (Federated States of Micronesia)
<a href="#"><u>21st Regular Session of the Commission</u></a>	November 28-December 3, 2024 (Suva, Fiji)
Joint Working Group 10	Tentatively July 9-12, 2025 (Japan)
Northern Committee 21	Tentatively July 14-15, 2025 (Japan)

\*2024-2025 meetings of the IATTC will be scheduled during the September meeting in Panama.