

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

Proposed Rule on tropical tunas

On December 5, 2024, NMFS issued a proposed rule ([89 FR 96631](#)) to implement Resolution C-24-01 (*Conservation Measures for Tropical Tunas in the Eastern Pacific Ocean During 2025-2026*) of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC). The IATTC adopted this Resolution at its meeting in September 2024. The proposed rule would maintain and extend management measures for active fish aggregating device limits and closure days for bigeye tuna limits until amended or replaced. These regulations would apply to large purse seine vessels of class sizes 4-6 and longline vessels greater than 24 meters in overall length that fish for tropical tuna in the eastern Pacific Ocean. The comment period closed on January 6, 2025. NMFS plans to publish the final rule by March of 2025.

Proposed Rule on Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF)

On December 30, 2024, NMFS issued a proposed rule ([89 FR 106400](#)) to implement IATTC Resolution C-24-02 (*Measures for the Conservation and Management of Bluefin Tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean*), adopted in September 2024. NMFS also published a [Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment](#) which analyzes the impacts of PBF catch and trip limits on the affected environment.

The biennial limit for 2025 and 2026 combined is 1,822 metric tons (mt). In 2025, the proposed annual catch limit is 1,285 mt. In 2026, the annual limit would be the total catch in 2025 subtracted from the biennial limit. However, the annual limit in 2026 cannot exceed 1,285 mt.

The proposed initial trip limit for both 2025 and 2026 is 60 mt, and would reduce as follows:

- January - June:
 - The trip limit reduces to 40 mt once the total catch is within 400 mt of the annual limit.
 - The trip limit reduces to 5 mt once the total catch is within 225 mt of the annual limit.
- July - September:
 - The trip limit reduces to 40 mt once the catch is within 300 mt of the annual limit.
 - The trip limit reduces to 5 mt once the total catch is within 175 mt of the annual limit.
- October - December:
 - The trip limit reduces to 40 mt once the catch is within 200 mt of the annual limit.
 - The trip limit reduces to 5 mt once the total catch is within 125 mt of the annual limit.

NMFS developed the trip limit scheme for 2025-2026 based on discussions with the Council and its HMS advisory bodies, including industry representatives. The intent behind these trip limits is to encourage U.S. vessel owners and operators to fully utilize the U.S. catch limit while allowing ample opportunity for multiple gear types. Trip limit reductions adjust seasonally to ensure a portion of the annual catch limit remains available to smaller-volume gear types (such as hook-and-line gear) throughout the year.

Existing in-season action and reporting procedures would continue to apply under this rulemaking. NMFS would use available fishery information to estimate when the overall catch is expected to reach thresholds to reduce the trip limit. NMFS would then announce in-season actions to reduce the trip limit or close the fishery on the [NMFS website](#), via email, and by federal register notice.

The 30-day public comment period on the proposed rule and associated draft environmental assessment closed on January 29, 2025. NMFS did not receive any comments. NMFS expects to publish the final rule within a few months.

Deep Set Buoy Gear (DSBG) updates

On February 1st, 2025, NMFS opened the permit application period for limited entry DSBG permits under qualification tier 9. Applications are open through March 31, 2025. The permit applications are available through the [National Permits System](#).

To apply for a limited entry DSBG permit under tier 9 in 2025, a person must submit a complete application through the National Permits System website no later than 11:59 pm Pacific daylight time on March 31, 2025. A complete application consists of all required information, as detailed in [50 CFR 660.707\(g\)\(12\)\(i\)](#). NMFS may decline an incomplete application. Late applications will not be accepted.

NMFS will issue limited entry DSBG permits to approved applicants on a first come, first serve basis, according to the date and time that their application was submitted. According to regulations, NMFS will issue up to 25 permits each year. If NMFS approves more than 25 applications this year, the approved applicants above 25 (who were not issued a permit) will receive priority for permit issuance next year. NMFS will continue to accept applications for tier 9 permits on an annual basis during the application period, and issue up to 25 permits per year until a total of 300 limited entry DSBG permits are issued. Should the Council and/or NMFS determine that the maximum number of permits should be fewer than 300, a rulemaking would be required to change the maximum.

For more information, visit the [Deep-Set Buoy Gear](#) website, or contact the West Coast Region Permits Branch at 562-980-4238 or wcr-permits@noaa.gov.