

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL (HMSAS) REPORT
ON INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

North Pacific Albacore

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) is disappointed that the February 20, 2025, North Pacific Albacore (NPA) U.S. stakeholder webinar has been postponed. The intent of this meeting was to:

- (1) Discuss draft U.S. proposals for the 2025 Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) meeting for NPA; and
- (2) Discuss “exceptional circumstances” as related to the NPA Management Strategy Evaluation.

Fishery participants were very interested in these conversations and hope the webinar can be rescheduled as soon as possible. The HMSAS strongly recommends this webinar be rescheduled in a timely manner noting that HMS is not on the Pacific Fishery Management Council’s (Council) Agenda until June. Given the importance of these two items, it will be critical for the Council to provide timely thoughts and recommendations to the U.S. Delegation ahead of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee meeting in July.

Regarding the U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty, in November we expressed the need for the State Department “to begin negotiations on a potential regime as soon as possible. U.S. Fishery participants were disadvantaged by the timing of last year’s negotiations which resulted in a one-year carryover regime agreed upon in May.” Today, there is no regime under the Treaty and uncertainty exists as to when discussions on a regime will resume. Uncertainty is already affecting U.S. fishery participants in terms of scheduling maintenance projects and provision of crews. The HMSAS recommends the Council communicate the importance of Treaty conversations to the State Department and encourage resumption of those discussions. The HMSAS also recommends the State Department:

- Engages U.S. fishery participants to determine if there is a need to define a date by which if there is no agreement on a regime, there be no regime for 2025;
- Prioritize a longer regime (five years for example) rolling over the terms of the recently completed regime.

First Joint IATTC- WCPFC NC Intersessional Working Group Meeting on Pacific Bluefin Tuna Management (JWG) – February 5 – 7, 2025

The JWG was held in Monterey, California, marking only the second occasion that this body has met in an Eastern Pacific country. It was important for participating countries to understand the significance of the Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF) fishery in our waters, and it was evident in the large U.S. delegation that included representation by a diverse range of fleets. The HMSAS was well

represented at the JWG meeting and was active in providing input to the U.S. delegation. The HMSAS would like to thank the Council for their supporting representatives of the HMSAS and HMS Management Team to attend and participate in these important discussions. The participation of a range of commercial and recreational fleets that have a stake in these fisheries enabled a stronger and more informed the U.S. delegation that was able to get input in real time and shape the negotiations that will continue through 2025. HMSAS member Josh Madeira, who was appointed co-chair of the JWG in September 2024 to replace Dorothy Lowman, led the meeting.

The meeting began on a somber note announcing the passing of Chuck Farwell. Chuck was a longtime member of the HMSAS and provided us all with his knowledge and expertise about the life and biology of PBF. He will be missed.

The [Chairs' Summary](#) (I.2 Attachment 2) provides an excellent overview of the discussions that took place. The overall objective of the meeting was to provide “guidance and recommendations to the International Scientific Committee (ISC) to advance the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE)” for PBF. This negotiation was an important first step toward a new long-term management regime; but the MSE included too many management scenarios – or Harvest Control Rules (HCRs). The ISC requested that countries reduce the number of HCRs so that they could complete the results by June 2025 (ahead of the July negotiations). The HCRs include varying values for Target, Threshold and Limit Reference Points considering operational management objectives and performance indicators. The HMSAS believes the final set of HCRs that were selected for further MSE analysis represents a range of scenarios and will be instructive in developing an informed harvest strategy for PBF. The HMSAS notes that several countries opposed the more precautionary HCRs, and the U.S. ensured that several options remained that would ensure the stock is maintained at healthy levels so that the Eastern Pacific fishery remains viable for the future. The HMSAS very much appreciates the U.S. Delegation pushing for a 70/30 (Western Pacific Ocean/Eastern Pacific Ocean) impact ratio (current status quo is roughly 80/20). The impact ratio will not impact performance of any HCRs, except for catch.

The decisions taken at the JWG meeting enabled the ISC to move the MSE ahead and remain on track for completion in June. This means that countries will likely negotiate selection of the HCR that will guide the long-term harvest strategy at the JWG meeting in July 2025.

The HMSAS expects discussions about specific HCRs and elements of the long-term harvest strategy will ramp up in advance of the JWG meeting to be held in July. The HMSAS believes that it will continue to be very important to engage U.S. commercial and recreational interests in these discussions. We expect to provide more specific recommendations at your June meeting.

PFMC
2/27/2025