

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON  
INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

**The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) recommends the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) submit the following positions to the U.S. delegations for the upcoming international negotiations.** Given the large number of recommendations, we elected not to summarize them atop this report as it would dramatically increase the length of this report. For convenience, we have bolded our recommendations. The HMSAS appreciates the Council scheduling us for a two-day in-person meeting.

**Pacific Bluefin Tuna (PBF)**

The Council was well represented at the 3rd Intersessional WCPFC-NC and IATTC Joint Working Group Meeting on the Management of Pacific Bluefin Tuna (JWG). In addition to Dr. Rebecca Lent, Co-Chair Josh Madeira, and Ryan Wulff (NMFS), HMS Advisory Body members Mike Thompson, Markus Medak, and Mike Conroy attended in-person while Philip Dionne and Liz Helmers attended virtually. Also present were Councilmember Jaime Diamond and HMS staff officer Kerry Griffin. We again thank you for your support in ensuring the Council and West Coast stakeholders were able to be involved in shaping the important outcomes.

After much discussion, agreement on the framework of a Management Procedure (MP) was reached ([Agenda Item G.2.a, NMFS Report 1](#)). The HMSAS very much appreciates the work of Drew Lawler, Ryan Wulff, and many others in getting this done.

As noted in [NMFS Report 1](#), six issues remain to be considered during this summer's meeting of the JWG. The [HMSAS, during the Council's March meeting, addressed many of these and reiterates our recommendations](#). The HMSAS offers the following as additional recommendations to transmit to the U.S. delegation.

1. East-West fishery impact:

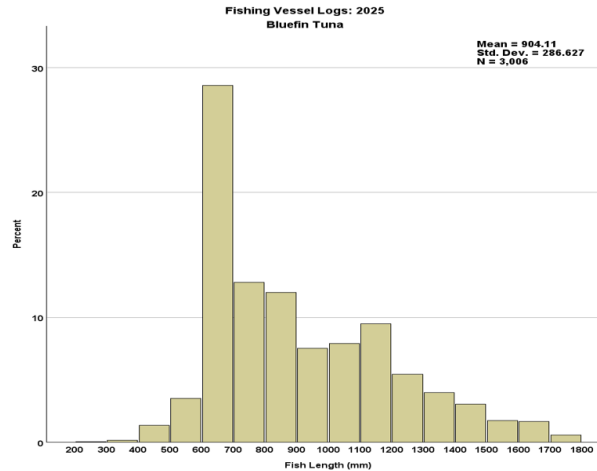
**While the HMSAS supports immediate actions to get to a 30/70 East/West fishery impact ratio, we are also cognizant this will not receive much support. As an alternative, we recommend taking a stepwise approach with a long-term goal of returning to a 30/70 impact ratio.** Given the current ratio is 17/83, we could support a longer-term approach whereby at the end of that timeframe the impact ratio will be 30/70. The HMSAS also supports further conversations with Mexico surrounding the equitable sharing of the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) catch limit.

2. Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) small fish/age-0 control measures:

The HMSAS believes the age-0 fishery was a primary cause of the stock crash revealed in the 2014 Stock Assessment. **The HMSAS recommends that any implementing measure in the WCPO clearly disallows any increases in the age-0 fishery. We also recommend additional measures to protect WCPO small and age-0 fish,** particularly in the case of an exceptional circumstance event or with a low recruitment trend.

3. Recruitment drop/exceptional circumstances:

The HMSAS remains concerned about increasing uncertainty in recruitment indices. In collaboration with the Southwest Fisheries Science Center/NMFS, the southern California sportfishing fleet has been collecting and sharing length frequency data since 2015. The data collected during the 2025 fishing season is replicated below and shows a significant recent recruitment event.



**The HMSAS recommends NMFS incorporate this information in support of a new recruitment index for the stock. The HMSAS recommends robust exceptional circumstances be adopted as part of the MP.**

4. Conversion factor:

The HMSAS is very concerned about the use of conversion factors. Converting large fish to small fish should never be allowed. **The HMSAS recommends limits be placed on this to ensure the stock is not negatively impacted.** We remain interested in additional discussions on the need and value of developing additional size classifications. For example, management for age-0, management for small fish (currently < 30 kg/67 lbs.), and management for large fish.

5. Additional considerations related to Reference Points (RP):

If the stock begins to show a declining trend, but not to a level it has breached an agreed upon RP, **the HMSAS recommends the JWG discuss potential informal reference points (with no management action triggered) to consider an appropriate proactive response should a RP be breached.**

6. Implementation measures:

The HMSAS supports the schedule for reviewing the management procedure. We are also mindful the IATTC's management measure for PBF expires at the end of 2026. With a PBF stock assessment being completed in 2027, **we recommend the JWG to consider and recommend harvest levels in the EPO for 2027.**

## North Pacific Albacore (NPA)

### 2026 Stock Assessment

The [Executive Summary of the Draft ISC North Pacific Albacore Stock Assessment](#) was made available last month. The two takeaways: (1) The stock is in great shape (not overfished nor subject to overfishing) and (2) Future projections (based on current fishing intensity) show the stock is at very low risk of breaching any of the reference points. We do acknowledge “the recruitment estimates in the last 5 years (2020-2024) were highly uncertain and should be treated with caution,” but note that didn’t impact future projections at current fishing intensity.

### NPA – Harvest Strategy

HMSAS appreciates NMFS convening the February and May stakeholder webinars to gather input ahead of upcoming international discussions on North Pacific albacore management. At that time, several key aspects of the proposed revisions had not yet been fully defined, and stakeholders expressed a desire for additional time to better understand the implications of incorporating spawning potential ratio (SPR) and other management metrics before considering changes to the existing harvest strategy.

Since that webinar, the latest North Pacific albacore stock assessment has been completed and indicates the stock remains healthy. This evidences that current controls are effective in ensuring the stock remains healthy. Given the health of the stock, we should take the time necessary to address the concerns raised below while carefully evaluating implementation of the Harvest Strategy. This includes how effort controls would be defined and implemented and what impacts those changes could have on the fleet.

On Friday, June 12, a document was uploaded to the Northern Committee Briefing Book entitled [Key components of new conservation and management measures for North Pacific albacore to implement the harvest strategy adopted in 2023](#). The HMSAS appreciates this document and fully supports its coverage including “all fisheries in the EEZ and high seas in north of equator.” **We recommend the Council encourage the U.S. delegation to work with Japan and other interested parties in refining a future conservation and management measure (CMM) implementing the Harvest Strategy.**

The HMSAS continues to have concerns regarding:

- The lack of clear definitions and implementation mechanisms surrounding effort controls and how they may be applied across fisheries and jurisdictions;
- How management will apply to fisheries targeting NPA as opposed to those incidentally interacting with the stock;
- The potential economic and operational impacts that management changes could have on the traditional U.S. surface fishery;
- Potential management actions affecting the South Pacific albacore fishery and a likely shift in effort/participation from the South to the North; and
- The accuracy of data being reported to the ISC/RFMOs.

**Additionally, HMSAS recommends:**

- **Surface fisheries using troll or pole-and-line gear types are, by definition, deemed to be targeting albacore and that absent other evidence, all other gear types will be deemed to be interacting with NPA incidentally (non-targeted).**

- Recognizing that the U.S. pole-and-line and troll fleet is a directed surface fishery that specifically targets North Pacific albacore, while other fisheries generally encounter albacore as a non-target species;
- **Maintaining and strengthening the existing 2002-2004 baseline for effort controls.** The HMSAS questions how those effort controls are currently enforced and how they will be enforced into the future internationally; and
- **Continuing stakeholder engagement** with the fleet prior to this summer's international meetings to ensure that those directly affected by management decisions have meaningful opportunities to provide input.

### U.S. – Canada Albacore Treaty

The Treaty remains the primary framework governing reciprocal fishing access and port access privileges between the United States and Canada. The Treaty functions through a layered implementation regime consisting of the treaty instrument, bilateral diplomatic Exchange of Notes, implementing arrangements, federal regulations, and agency administrative actions, which collectively establish the legal framework governing reciprocal access and treaty operations. (A more detailed description of the Treaty and its background was included in our [March 2026 Statement](#).)

The HMSAS appreciates that the U.S. Department of State has hosted several stakeholder discussions on this issue leading up to the 2026 albacore season and looks forward to additional opportunities to engage throughout this year. Several HMSAS members participated in these discussions and ultimately no regime was agreed to for 2026. The key question moving forward is whether the two countries will negotiate a future regime for 2027 and beyond that provides meaningful benefits to the U.S. albacore fleet.

The HMSAS continues to emphasize the importance of true reciprocity under the Treaty and recognizes the longstanding imbalance in benefits between the two countries. At the same time, there are fleet members that see value in maintaining reciprocal access due to longstanding working relationships between U.S. and Canadian fishermen, the possibility that ocean conditions could shift a larger portion of the stock into Canadian waters in certain years, crew pickups, maintenance activities, etc. That said, the historical data indicates that U.S. fishermen have not been heavily reliant on access to Canadian waters. Based on catch information provided for 1995-2024, U.S. fishermen harvested approximately 8,000 metric tons of albacore in Canadian waters, while Canadian vessels harvested approximately 65,000 metric tons in U.S. waters during the same period. Additionally, most of the catch taken by U.S. vessels in Canadian waters was landed into Canadian ports, resulting in limited downstream economic benefit to dependent coastal communities. According to data produced during the annual Treaty Data Exchange, the number of Canadian vessels landing albacore in U.S. ports has dropped considerably.

The HMSAS also notes that catch attribution and data transparency remain important considerations when evaluating any future regime. The United States maintains a more comprehensive and timely catch reporting system, while differences in reporting and data collection methods can make direct comparisons between the two fleets difficult. Any future agreement should be based on transparent, consistent, and verifiable data.

## North Pacific Swordfish

The HMSAS received a briefing on North Pacific swordfish (NP SWO) from NMFS in preparation for the upcoming negotiations of the 22<sup>nd</sup> WCPFC Northern Committee meeting in July 2026. North Pacific swordfish remains a very important species for West Coast fishermen and we support the U.S. taking steps to encourage comprehensive management of the stock through the WCPFC and IATTC. The HMSAS supports NMFS's proactive approach to consulting with stakeholders on NP SWO to inform U.S. positions ahead of the upcoming negotiations.

**The HMSAS offers the following recommendations regarding U.S. positions on NP SWO for the 22<sup>nd</sup> WCPFC Northern Committee meeting. The HMSAS:**

- **Supports U.S. leadership in developing and advancing proposal(s) to progress the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) as a step toward updating the harvest strategy for NP SWO.**
- **Supports development of the MSE with the following considerations:**
  - *Management objectives:* **Management objectives of safety, status, stability and yield that align with other northern stocks (PBF, NPA).** Given that the stock biomass is well above  $B_{msy}$ , a range of harvest control rules (HCR) should be considered to explore options that may increase yield with low risk of compromising safety or other management objectives.
  - *Reference years:* **Additional research on baseline periods to help identify appropriate reference years**, noting that additional information on patterns of regional availability of NP SWO would be helpful to inform the U.S. position and U.S. stakeholders (West Coast and Hawaii).
  - *Scope:* **A comprehensive approach to managing all fisheries (target and non-target catch) for NP SWO**, inclusive of WCPFC and IATTC convention areas and the equator to the northern extent of the range.
  - *Reference points:* **Support testing a range of RPs through the MSE process and setting a limit reference point (LRP) at  $F_{MSY}$  (the current LRP) or at  $20\%SSB_{F=0}$**  (consistent with other HMS). We hope the MSE analysis will provide insights into the tradeoffs of HCRs with different reference points but the risk of breaching either of these proposed LRPs in the near term is likely to be very low given the current status of the stock. We request further guidance from SWFSC regarding candidate  $F_{min}$  values, noting that the intent of  $F_{min}$  would be to rebuild the population to the LRP in a reasonable timeframe (e.g., within 5-10 years, or sooner if supported by the biology of the stock).
  - *HCR shape:* **Prefer HCR shapes that include a threshold reference point (ThRP) with adequate buffer between the target reference point (TRP) and ThRP** to support natural variability in catch and stability in operations.
  - *Operational Consideration:* **Recommend establishing Catch Levels (TAC and/or TAE) for each country with historical catches or incidental catches greater than**

**10 mt per the reference years determined above.** Countries with total catches of 10 mt or less shall report catches but are not subject to the MP.

PFMC  
06/00/26