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

This report provides an update on North Pacific Albacore Tuna Treaty (PATT) discussions and provides information for an upcoming U.S. stakeholder meeting on North Pacific albacore and for an Intersessional Pacific Bluefin Tuna Joint Working Group meeting. This report also includes a table of recent and upcoming international and U.S. meetings related to HMS (Table 1).

Updates on PATT discussions

On Wednesday, January 21, 2026, the newly assigned Senior Foreign Affairs Officer Elana Mendelson, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, Office of Marine Conservation, hosted a stakeholder call that included U.S. fishing industry representatives, U.S. government staff, representatives from Washington, Oregon, and California who also hold seats on the HMS Advisory Subpanel or HMS Management Team, as well as Council members. Elana recapped where negotiations left off with Canada in 2025 on reaching agreement for a revised reciprocal port access and fishing regime for U.S. and Canadian vessels, and noted there was no agreement for reciprocal access in 2025. Elana also provided an update that she initiated the process to seek authorization to negotiate with Canada on the terms of the Treaty annexes for 2026 and beyond.

U.S. industry representatives from the Western Fishboat Owners Association (WFOA) and the American Albacore Fishing Association (AAFA) shared their views and positions on the potential future of the access regime for the PATT. NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center staff and chair of the PATT Data Working Group (DWG) Steve Teo briefed Elana on the data workload schedule and proposed a DWG data exchange meeting in mid to late April to review 2025 catch and effort data, with the understanding that no reciprocal fishing occurred in 2023 or 2025. Next steps include Elana's informal discussions with Canada's counterpart and continuing the authorization process. WFOA and AAFA representatives stated that if no agreement was reached by mid-March, U.S. vessels would not have time to exercise the port access benefits of the Treaty annexes. Elana will provide an update to stakeholders after informal consultations with Canada and once a timeline is clear for authorization to negotiate on the terms of the Treaty annexes.

On Monday, February 9, 2026, the Department of State is planning to host a call for interested U.S. stakeholders to provide an update on informal discussions with Canada and discuss next steps.

North Pacific Albacore Stakeholder meeting

NMFS West Coast Region and Pacific Islands Regional Office are planning to host a U.S. stakeholder webinar virtually on Wednesday, February 18, from 1pm to 5pm Pacific Standard Time. The intent of this meeting is to gather stakeholder input to prepare for potential discussions at the 2026 annual meetings of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee

(NC) related to management of North Pacific albacore fisheries. A summary of this meeting will be made available following the webinar in advance of the March Council meetings.

Intersessional Pacific Bluefin Tuna Joint Working Group

A 3rd Intersessional Pacific Bluefin Tuna Joint Working Group between the IATTC, WCPFC, and NC (JWG) will be held March 11-13 in Newport Beach, California. Stakeholders interested in participating as part of the informal U.S. delegation either in-person or virtually pending U.S. approval should fill out this form from NMFS by February 9. The deadline to make a reservation at the hotel with the special group rate is February 17.

Table 1. Recent and upcoming IATTC, WCPFC, and U.S. stakeholder meetings in 2026.

Meeting	***Dates***	***Meeting format***
Continuation of the 1st Workshop on Advancing Shark, Sea Turtle, and Seabird Best Handling and Release Practice Guidelines	January 26, 2026	Virtual
1st Informal Consultation between the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP) Working Group and the Committee on Administration and Finance (CAF)	January 27 - 28, 2026	Virtual
Intersessional Meeting of the Permanent Working Group on Fleet Capacity	January 29 - 30, 2026	Virtual
3rd Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) Working Group	February 10 - 11, 2026	Virtual
1st North Pacific Albacore U.S. Stakeholder Webinar	February 18, 2026	Virtual
1st Formal South Pacific Albacore Joint Working Group	March 17 - 18, 2026	Virtual
1st Meeting of the Working Group on Dorado	March 10 - 12, 2026	Hybrid; Costa Rica
3rd Intersessional Pacific	March 11 - 13, 2026	Hybrid; Newport Beach, CA

Bluefin Tuna JWG		
2nd Climate Change Workshop	April 6 - 8, 2026	Virtual
2nd North Pacific Albacore U.S. Stakeholder Webinar	May TBD, 2026	Virtual
Informal Meeting between the AIDCP Working Group and CAF	May 20 - 21, 2026	Virtual
4th MSE Working Group	May 27 - 28, 2026	Virtual
4th Permanent Working Group on Ecosystem and Bycatch	June 1 - 2, 2026	Virtual
10th *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Fish-Aggregating Devices	June 3 - 4, 2026	Virtual
17th Scientific Advisory Committee	June 8 - 12, 2026	In-person (location TBD)
Intersessional Meeting of the CAF	June 15 - 17, 2026	Hybrid
First South Pacific Albacore Allocation Workshop	June 25 - June 26, 2026	Wellington, New Zealand (Hybrid)
Plenary for the 26th International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species in the North Pacific Ocean	June 22 - 29, 2026	In-person (Chinese-Taipei)
Catch Documentation Scheme 7 / JWG11 / Northern Committee 22	July 8 - 14, 2026	In-person (Nagasaki, Japan)
5th MSE Working Group	July 21 - 22, 2026	Virtual
104th IATTC Annual Meeting, AIDCP Meeting of the Parties and subsidiary meetings	August 24 - September 4, 2026	In-person (location TBD)
AIDCP Meeting of the Parties	October 26 - 28, 2026	Hybrid