HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES INCLUDING PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA TRIP LIMITS

Current season updates:

Commercial as of November 13, 2026:

- There are anecdotal reports of fair swordfish catches beginning around October 1.
- 307 vessels landed 5,137.5 mt of North Pacific albacore tuna (NPA);
- 97 vessels landed 693.4 mt of Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF);
- Landings of other HMS stocks into west coast ports are not mentioned, as Pacific Fisheries Information Network does not provide an ability to determine whether a landing is from a west-coast based vessel or whether it is a vessel from the Hawaiian longline fishery or some other vessel not based on the west coast landing product harvested on the high seas.
- Historically, El Ninos have been accompanied by increased purse seine landings of yellowfin and skipjack tuna. The lack of those stocks in a marketable size and commercial volume is a concern.

Recreational

- As of the middle of October the California Passenger Fishing Vessel (CPFV) logbooks show 32,190 PBF were caught weighing 734 mt;
- There has been an abundance of small Yellowfin tuna available on day trips (half-day and three-quarter day).
- Over 400 wahoo have been harvested by vessels fishing 2-days or less;
- There have been increased catch of both striped marlin and blue marlin on CPFV trips this year.

Summary of HMSAS Recommendations:

- The Council communicate to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. State Department its strong support for the U.S. nominating Mr. Josh Madeira to be consider as Vice Chair of the Northern Committee.
- For the upcoming meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC):
  - The Council communicate to the U.S. delegation to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) its expectation the U.S. will engage at WCPFC Northern Committee 22 (NC), including subsequent sessions, and at the WCPFC Commission meeting to:
    - Adopt the NC recommendations for PBF and North Pacific swordfish (SWO) as presented;
    - Adopt an implementing Conservation and Management Measure for PBF that specifies all TAC allocations and ensures consistency with the MP and Joint

IATTC-NC Working Group Meeting on PBF Management (JWG) recommendations;
- Task the ISC with analyzing and reporting on the conservation impacts of the use of conversion factors for PBF;
- Ensure the International Science Committee (ISC) has the input needed to advance work on a Management Strategy Evaluation for SWO in 2027;
- Work with Canada and Japan to schedule, in a timely fashion, intersessional work on a potential management measure for North Pacific albacore;
- Prioritize establishing a unified U.S. position on South Pacific albacore (SPA);
- Allocation criteria for SPA recognize historical average catches from the early 2000s, including the 2000–2004 period, and advocates for a flag-based calculation of allocation;
- Any observer and electronic monitoring requirements for SPA consider the fleet's performance;
- Consider how quota transfers of SPA could benefit the west coast troll fleet. Also ensure any resulting Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) includes appropriate multi-year reconciliation provisions; and

- Set trip limits for the U.S. commercial PBF fishery based on a slightly modified version of Option 3 in I.2.a Supplemental Attachment 1.

Pacific Bluefin Tuna

The HMSAS strongly supports the effort and leadership of the U.S. delegation, including Co-chair Josh Madeira, Ryan Wulff and entire National Marine Fisheries Service team, during all of the JWG meetings in the last two years that culminated in the adoption of the PBF long-term harvest strategy and new biennial measure for 2027 – 2028 at the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC). This is a historic first long-term harvest strategy for PBF and is the first comprehensive Management Procedure (MP) to be adopted at IATTC. The HMSAS notes several major achievements for U.S. fisheries, fishing communities, and stakeholders:

- Adoption of Reference Points that will protect the stock and ensure science-based management triggers if the stock declines in the future;
- Agreement to change the East-West fishery impact to restore fishing access in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) over time;
- Modest increase in quota for U.S. commercial fleets and specific measures to protect and maintain recreational fishing in the EPO; and
- Reductions in small fish catch in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) and new conservation commitments.
- Agreement to allocate 40mt/yr in the WCPO to support Hawaii's increasing PBF catches in its longline fishery in recent years.

This progress is foundational to the future of the U.S. PBF fishery but there are still critical issues that need continued U.S. oversight and active engagement in the international arena:

- Ensure strict adherence by Mexico to IATTC Resolution C-26-02, including appropriate reporting and monitoring of all PBF catches, including any incidental catches by non-target fisheries and other emerging fisheries.
- Work with Mexico toward a more equitable allocation of PBF in the next two management cycles that more closely represents the historic fishing footprint. For example, according to records published by the International Scientific Committee for

Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) between 1980 and 2014 Mexico's commercial fleets harvested 73,858 mt of PBF. During that same timeframe, US commercial fleets harvested 36,265 mt of PBF. This represents a roughly 2:1 ratio. However, if we only considered the time period from 1980 - 2000 Mexico's commercial fleets harvested 12,900 mt of PBF. During that same timeframe, US commercial fleets harvested 34,969 mt of PBF; a roughly 1:3 ratio. Resolution C-26-02 sets the 2027-28 biennial limit for Mexico at 11,256 mt while the U.S. receives 1,945. This is a roughly 6:1 ratio.

- Increase oversight of WCPO PBF fisheries through the WCPFC NC and ISC science processes to ensure appropriate implementation and analysis of WCPFC measures, adequate research to determine the conservation impact of the use of conversion factors and advance progress on the development of improved recruitment indices.

The HMSAS **recommends that the U.S. continue engagement at WCPFC Northern Committee 22 (including subsequent sessions) and at the WCPFC Commission meeting to**:

- **Adopt the NC recommendations on the MP for PBF;**
- **Adopt and implement a CMM that specifies all TAC allocations and ensures consistency with the MP and JWG recommendations.**
- **Tasks the ISC to analyze and report on the conservation impacts of the use of the PBF conversion factors.**

PBF Domestic Trip limits for 2027-28

The HMSAS reviewed and discussed the Options provided in I.2 Supplemental Attachment 1 – Pacific Bluefin Trip Limit Options. **The HMSAS recommends a slightly modified version of Option 3**:

January - June:
- Initial trip limit = 75 mt
- The trip limit reduces to 40 mt once total catch is within 400 mt of the annual limit.
- The trip limit reduces to 5 mt once total catch is within 225 mt of the annual limit.

July - September:
- The trip limit reduces to 40 mt once catch is within 350 ~~300~~ mt of the annual limit.
- The trip limit reduces to 5 mt once total catch is within 200 ~~175~~ mt of the annual limit.

October - December:
- The trip limit reduces to 40 mt once catch is within 200 mt of the annual limit.
- The trip limit reduces to 5 mt once total catch is within 125 mt of the annual limit.

Our recommendation to increase the initial trip limit to 75 mt (from the current 60 mt) is based on the limited number small coastal purse seine vessels authorized to use that gear type to harvest tuna in the EPO and the capacity of those vessels. An owner/operator of one of those vessels participated in our discussions and explained the reality of those operations (fishing practices, travel time to and from the grounds, how vessels are offloaded, etc). Hearing those realities provided comfort that increasing the initial trip limit will not jeopardize the stock nor non-purse seine fisheries targeting PBF. We also recommend slightly increasing the buffer during the July – September timeframe to protect the smaller-scale operations targeting PBF using hook-and-line as

well as midwater snap gear and other EFP gears. Based on recent years, those months seem to show more effort for PBF and landings of PBF for those gear types.

North Pacific Swordfish (SWO)

The HMSAS appreciates the U.S. leadership to advance a proposal and solicit comments from other delegations on candidate inputs for an MSE for SWO. The recently completed NC22-2 meeting adopted the proposal and now it moves to the WCPFC for adoption as part of the NC report. **The HMSAS recommends the U.S. ensure adoption of the NC recommendations at the WCPFC and that the ISC has the input needed to advance this work in 2027**.

North Pacific Albacore (NPA)

The HMSAS notes the recently completed stock assessment for NPA shows the stock in good health. At the July meeting of the NC, the Chair requested Japan and Canada combine their proposals to implement the agreed upon Harvest Strategy. The NC chair also proposed an intersessional working group co-chaired by Japan and Canada to continue work on Draft amendments to the Conservation and Management Measure for North Pacific Albacore (CMM 2019-03). **The HMSAS recommends the Council communicates to the U.S. delegation to the WCPFC its expectation that conversations will take place on the sidelines of the WCPFC meeting with Japan and Canada to schedule that intersessional work in a timely fashion**.

South Pacific Albacore (SPA)

The HMSAS recognizes that SPA negotiations have entered a critical phase, shifting from development of the management procedure to decisions regarding allocation and implementation. With the total allowable catch established under CMM 2025-01, the HMSAS is increasingly concerned about allocation decisions impact on the U.S. West Coast troll and pole-and-line fleet. **The HMSAS recommends that the Council request that the U.S. delegation establish a unified U.S. position that maintains and prioritizes the West Coast fleet's access to the stock, recognizes its historical contributions to the harvest and development of the troll fishery, and preserves future fishing opportunities**.

Recent allocation scenarios presented in draft proposals to WCPFC demonstrate the substantial risks and consequences of different allocation decisions on the U.S. West Coast fleet. In particular, the HMSAS notes that different combinations of the historical reference period and allocation between the high seas and exclusive economic zones (EEZs) could significantly impact and/or eliminate the ability for U.S. West Coast trollers to access the SPA fishery. For example, if a reference period of 2000-2004 is adopted, it could result in a quota for the US West Coast Trollers up to 2,096 mt, depending on the highs seas to EEZ ratio. Whereas, if the reference period of 2004-2023 is adopted the range would be as low 365 mt. **The HMSAS recommends that allocation criteria recognize historical average catches from the early 2000s, including the 2000–2004 period, and advocates for a flag-based calculation of allocation**. Any division between high-seas and EEZ fishing must result in a fair and beneficial position for the U.S. troll and pole-and-line fleet. The HMSAS emphasizes that recent periods of reduced participation, including from a range of challenges relating to poor fishing conditions, economic hardship, and fleet contraction, should not prejudice this allocation and limit historical fishing opportunities or future access for the U.S. West Coast troll fleet.

The HMSAS continues to emphasize the troll and pole-and-line fleet's limited impact on overall stock health and bycatch when considering MP Implementation proposals. **The HMSAS**

recommends that observer and electronic monitoring requirements[1] should reflect the minimal bycatch associated with the fleet's gear configuration, the impracticality of hosting an onboard observer during a three-month roundtrip, and the substantial costs associated with fuel, provisions, and other operating expenses. Management requirements should be proportionate to the risks and operational realities of the respective fisheries.

The HMSAS has previously supported constraints in the transferability provisions due to risks related to consolidation and transparency challenges. If the WCPFC moves forward with transferability of fishing quota, **the HMSAS recommends that the U.S. establish a mechanism or fund to compensate the West Coast troll fleet for any transfers of U.S. high seas quota to other countries**. The use of any new transferability provisions should benefit the fleet through research, travel off-set credits, infrastructure, funds to purchase future potential quota in high demand years, grants or other support for the West Coast fleet's future participation recognition of historical participation and interests, as appropriate. **The HMSAS further recommends that any resulting Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) includes appropriate multi-year reconciliation provisions[2] that benefit the West Coast fleet and allow participants to retain the value of their historical participation in the fishery**.

Given the significance and timing of the upcoming WCPFC negotiations, **the HMSAS requests that the Council reaffirm these priorities and communicate them to the U.S. delegation** before the upcoming WCPFC meeting, ensuring that the West Coast fleet's historical contributions, economic interests, and future fishing opportunities are meaningfully represented in the final allocation framework.

Northern Committee

The current Chair of the Northern Committee, Mr. Masanori Miyahara (Japan) has requested that countries propose a Vice Chair of the Committee. It would serve U.S. fishing communities to have someone from the U.S. that has experience with key Northern stocks, including PBF, NPA, and SWO take on that role. **The HMSAS recommends the Council communicate to NOAA and the State Department its strong support for the U.S. nominating Mr. Josh Madeira as Vice Chair of the Northern Committee. Josh's leadership as co-chair of the JWG was instrumental in getting agreement on the MP for PBF. HMSAS member Madeira was absent when the HMSAS discussed this**.

PFMC
11/15/26

[1] FFA members have submitted a delegation proposal - WCPFC23-2026-DP07
[2] *Ibid* (related to how quota underages or overages will be treated)