

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The National Marine Fisheries Service provided the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) with a summary of international management activities for highly migratory species. The Pacific bluefin tuna 2018 stock assessment indicates that the rebuilding targets recommended by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)-Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee Joint Working Group are expected to be met with high probabilities. The projected harvest scenarios provided by the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean bluefin tuna stock assessment strongly favors Western Pacific nations. We do not support an increase in annual catch limits until we see continued strong recruitment through the next stock assessment. Increasing the catch at this time is a risky endeavor. We expect an uptick in recruitment will become part of the spawning stock biomass in 5 years in 2021-2022. We urge the United States to wait until we see an increase in recovery of the spawning stock before supporting an increase in catch. If, however, the IATTC or WCPFC decides to increase the catch, we would demand an equitable, proportional increase between the eastern and western Pacific fishing nations.

Assuming that the current catch limits are carried forward in 2019 and 2020, we want to ensure our domestic Pacific bluefin tuna regulations support domestic fisheries and do not exceed the annual limits. We propose considering the following changes as a way to achieve, but not exceed the annual limit.

- 1) An adjustment of the current regulation to:
 - Lower the daily trip limit to 15 tons daily landing of Pacific bluefin tuna limit.
 - Lower the trigger point to 60 percent of the annual limit at which time the daily trip limit reduces to 2 tons per day.
- 2) Establishment of an allocation by gear.
- 3) Additional restrictions on purse seine fishing days to help minimize the potential that the fleet will exceed the annual limits.
 - A limit on the number of purse seine trips per boat per week with 72 hours between trips.
 - These adjustments would reduce the ability of a fleet from quickly reaching and exceeding the annual limit.
 - The HMSAS acknowledges that we do not have a purse seine rep on the Advisory Subpanel at this time.

Regardless of the final management measures, we recommend the United States delegation prioritize flexibility in the annual limit to allow the fishery to pay back an overage through a “credit card” system.