

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON BIENNIAL HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) received a briefing from Amber Rhodes (NMFS) on the progress of status determinations and Regional Fishery Management Organizations' (RFMO) agreements on reporting stock status and adopting limit reference points for stocks listed as management unit species in the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP). Given this briefing and the information reported in [Agenda Item H.4, NMFS Report 1](#), the HMSMT recommends that the Council consider making domestic and international management recommendations addressing the status of Pacific bluefin tuna and Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) yellowfin stocks, and possibly also the EPO bigeye tuna stock, during the upcoming November and March meetings in this biennial management cycle.

The HMSMT anticipates that prior to the November meeting, NMFS, as a part of the stock status determination process, will send formal notice to the Council of its obligations to consider domestic and international recommendations (under Section 304(i) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act) to address recently assessed stock status for Pacific bluefin tuna and yellowfin tuna. Typically, these notices include information regarding catches and recommendations by other managing entities (e.g., RFMOs and Regional Fishery Management Councils). The HMSMT can use this information for the purpose of suggesting management measures for the Council to consider or to inform additional analyses.

With respect to the status of the EPO bigeye stock, the HMSMT is concerned about indications of increased fishing pressure in recent years. The HMSMT understands that NMFS determined, based on the 2017 assessment that the stock is currently not subject to overfishing nor is it overfished. The HMSMT also understands that there are strong doubts about the suitability of using the 2018 assessment outputs for management decisions, and that the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) completed an indicator analysis to further inform management discussions about the status of the stock. As stated in [Agenda Item H.4, NMFS Report 1](#), this indicator analysis suggests that the stock is under increasing fishing pressure. However, it is unclear at this time, whether these findings obligate the Council to make recommendations. During HMSMT discussions, NMFS staff agreed to provide clarity on this issue prior to the November meeting as the agency proceeds in finalizing stock status determinations based on 2018 assessments.

During development of Amendment 4 to the HMS FMP, the HMSMT discussed the applicability of optimum yield (OY) and annual catch limits (ACLs) to HMS FMP fisheries, as mentioned in the Situation Summary for this agenda item. The HMSMT notes that the HMS FMP, as currently amended, addresses the application of these MSA requirements to HMS (see Sections 4.3 and 4.5 in [Agenda Item H.4, attachment 1](#)).

Lastly, in relation to procedures described in the HMS FMP regarding the need to prepare a draft HMS Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report for Council review during the biennial management cycle, the HMSMT proposes to make a report titled "SAFE Report -- Stock Status Information" for the November Council briefing book. Once the Council has reviewed this report, Council staff can make it available online as part of this year's SAFE Report.