

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

Updates on IATTC Regional Vessel Register (RVR) Regulations

If approved, the NMFS West Coast Region (WCR) intends to publish proposed regulations under the Tuna Conventions Act of 1950, as amended. These regulations would implement new International Maritime Organization (IMO) requirements in Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) Resolution C-18-06 (*Resolution (Amended) on a Regional Vessel Register*) and amendments to existing regulations related to the IATTC Regional Vessel Register (Vessel Register) for purse seine vessels fishing in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO). The proposed regulations would apply to U.S. commercial fishing vessels fishing for tuna and tuna-like species in the EPO. The proposed rule would expand the IMO number requirements for U.S. commercial vessels authorized to fish on the high seas in the IATTC Convention Area, such that vessels less than 100 gross tons or less than 100 gross registered tons, but 12 meters or greater in overall length, would be required to obtain an IMO number. The proposed rule would also modify regulations associated with the IATTC Vessel Register and incidental catch provisions. These revisions would make U.S. regulations more consistent with the IATTC management framework, while improving operational flexibility for the U.S. purse seine fleet. The proposed regulations are expected to publish in the Federal Register around mid-March, and will be open for public comment for 30 days.

U.S. Stakeholder Webinar on North Pacific Albacore Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE)

The NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) and WCR hosted a webinar on February 13, 2019, to present the results of the North Pacific albacore (NPALB) MSE conducted by the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC). This webinar provided an opportunity to engage with more stakeholders than could travel to the 4th North Pacific albacore MSE Workshop (MSE Workshop) scheduled for March 5-7, 2019, in Yokohama, Japan. U.S. Government representatives attending the MSE Workshop will have an opportunity to convey information gathered during the webinar.

Dr. Steve Teo (SWFSC) presented an overview of previous NPALB MSE workshops hosted by the ISC, as well as a brief introduction into MSE, reference points, and harvest control rules. Subsequently, Dr. Desiree Tommasi (SWFSC) presented the results of the initial MSE. Participants raised questions to clarify model assumptions and the general results; however, the most common concern was that the material presented was dense and difficult to understand. Consequently, NMFS WCR hosted a follow-up phone call with webinar participants on Thursday, February 28, 2019. This call provided an opportunity to discuss the results after participants had more time to review and understand the information. NMFS will submit a supplemental report describing the outcomes of the MSE Workshop after the workshop concludes.