

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL
REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Northern Committee Meeting:

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) is concerned about the lack of a quorum at the September 2019 meeting in Portland, OR. Many participants spend much time and financial resources to attend these events. The HMSAS recommends that the Council recommend to the Permanent Advisory Committee (PAC) and U.S. delegation to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) to support changes at the WCPFC meeting in December 2019 reducing the required member attendance to achieve a quorum in Northern Committee meetings from 75 percent to a lower, more feasible number.

Biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (“BBNJ”)

Last month, the third of four meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction was held in New York. The primary purpose of this meeting was to review the content of the zero draft of a proposed instrument/agreement.

Throughout the zero draft it was repeatedly stated this instrument “would not” undermine existing relevant legal instruments (which is assumed to include Regional Fishery Management Organizations (“RFMOs”)). Prior to the meeting, a number of fishery organizations submitted comment letters addressing various components of the zero draft. Each of these letters shared one commonality, that RFMOs (Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission and WCPFC for example) should be allowed to continue to effectively address management of those fisheries on the high seas without worrying about other processes which may contradict or conflict in their approaches. U.S. fishing industry participants believe it will be imperative that BBNJ efforts do not replace the RFMOs. RFMOs should be responsible for proposing management actions impacting HMS fisheries on the high seas.

The fourth and final Conference meeting is tentatively scheduled for the first half of 2020. As we approach the scheduled completion of the United Nation’s action on this endeavor, the HMSAS requests the Pacific Council, along with the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, take an active role in advising NMFS and the Dept. of Commerce on the importance of our fisheries which operate on the high seas.

Albacore Traceability

The HMSAS asks the Pacific Council to recommend NMFS and Dept. of Commerce increase research of potential mislabeling regarding country of origin for albacore imported into Canada for processing; and then exported to the U.S. market under “Product of Canada” labeling. Industry fishing groups and U.S. individuals cannot track specific information (harvesting nation, traceability throughout the supply chain, etc.). We believe NMFS would be more effective at verifying our belief that this is an actual problem. We acknowledge, this would necessarily require sharing of potentially sensitive information from and with the Canadian

Government. This could have a positive result for all west coast albacore fishermen and processors (U.S. and Canada alike). Such information may also prove important in the upcoming U.S./Canada albacore treaty negotiations as it will help all albacore fishermen. Market prices for sashimi grade blast frozen albacore on the west coast has decreased dramatically over the past three seasons while west coast landings have dropped 30 percent probably indicating there is not a glut of local albacore; but other factors. We believe this is the direct result of North and South Pacific albacore harvested by heavily subsidized Chinese longline vessels entering the U.S. market through Canada.

PFMC
09/15/19