

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

U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty:

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) recommends that the Council support a continued suspension of the “fishing regime” under the U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty through 2012.

Suspension will allow stakeholders and managers to better assess information and data needed to address the long-term reciprocal fishing privileges under the treaty. Without added pressure of a pending fishing season shortly after the next scheduled bilateral meeting, the parties involved can compile necessary data in a more thorough manner. The HMSAS believes that to rush the process for the sake of one season is not the best approach.

The HMSAS also believes that the composition of the Canadian fleet, market and fishing methods have changed dramatically over the past 10 years. Such changes have resulted in increased vessel effort, catch per vessel, crowding on the grounds, leasing of permits and other activities that favor the Canadian fleet. This has led to confrontations on the grounds as described by letters submitted to the Council by U.S. fishermen. Therefore, the HMSAS is concerned about potential altercations between U.S. and Canadian fishermen.

Most U.S. fishermen agree that the presence of the Canadian fleet in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) has resulted in a reduction of the U.S. harvest in the U.S. EEZ.

The HMSAS requests that any economic study compares Canadian albacore removal from the U.S. EEZ beginning in 1995 (approximately 500 tons) to current removals estimated at over 4,000 tons. Currently, a much higher portion of the Canadian catch is delivered back to Canadian ports instead of U.S. ports.

The HMSAS recommends that the PFMC support research on albacore tuna and continued cooperation with Canada on international management objectives.

The HMSAS is aware that the treaty and its fishing regime are two separate issues. The treaty could remain without fishing, or with very little fishing, and remain a potential vehicle for cooperative research or management measures benefitting fleets of both countries.

Any new regime should clarify that catch in each EEZ is credited to that nation’s EEZ regardless of whether the treaty (or fishing regime) exists or not.

The HMSAS is confident that future negotiations will be conducted with the improved health and stability of the U.S. albacore fishery as the guiding principle.

Albacore Framework Plan

The HMSAS generally supports the concept of a “framework” plan to address potential future negative stock assessments and overfishing before it is a problem.

However, the HMSAS remains concerned that the process to produce this plan could get ahead of the international process in such issues as establishing reference points either target or limit, as well as proposing controls on the US albacore fleet with either effort or catch controls.

The HMSAS is concerned that any detailed plan under the “framework” concept would telegraph the U.S. government’s position to other nations in the international negotiations. Such transparent information could be detrimental to the U.S. industry which could result in lesser share of any potential access or national quotas.

Thus the HMSAS reminds the PFMC that:

- Presently NP albacore stocks are stable with no overfishing occurring;
- The U.S. albacore fleet and catch remain stable;
- Any effort or catch controls on the U.S. fleet needs to be applied multilaterally across the nations involved;
- The HMSAS also recommends any domestic or international reference points should be “target” and not “limit” points.
- One HMSAS member will be submitting a minority opinion during the public comment period with respect to the Management Framework for Albacore Tuna.

HMSAS ADVICE ON THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC FISHERIES COMMISSION (WCPFC)

The HMSAS reviewed developments with regard to the U.S. positions for the WCPFC Annual Meeting, which was delayed from December 2011 until March 26, 2012, and determined that very little had developed in the interim. Therefore, the HMSAS advice remains the same and can be summarized as:

1. The U.S. should support the adoption of appropriate biological reference points for all managed HMS stocks in the WCPFC Convention Area.
2. The U.S. should support increased compliance with WCPFC conservation and management measures including accurate and timely filing of required reports and statistics with the Commission.
3. The U.S. should encourage cooperation between the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and the WCPFC to establish and implement conservation and management measures in the overlap area of the respective Convention Areas.
4. The U.S. should encourage the IATTC and the WCPFC to adopt management and conservation measures which are compatible with measures of the other organization, recognizing differences between stock behavior and historic fishing methods in different areas.
5. The U.S. should oppose elements of the Regional Observer Program which would apply the same requirements to small vessels (however defined) that apply to larger purse seine

and long line vessels without regard to the physical and economic differences between large and small vessels.

6. The U.S. should support efforts to address overfishing of bigeye tuna and other consequences of fishing on fish aggregating devices by complete closures of the purse seine fishery which would require vessels to remain in port during the one of two seasonal closures during which the vessel has indicated it will not fish on fish aggregating device (FADs), similar to measures enacted by the IATTC in order to increase compliance.
7. With regard to closure of high seas pockets and other high seas areas the U.S. should take the position that there is no conservation basis for such closures and that areas closed in the past should be reopened with suitable controls in place to prevent illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing in those areas.

HMSAS Advice on the IATTC Annual Meeting

HMSAS provides the following advice to the Council on positions for the U.S. Delegation to the June 2012 Annual meeting of the IATTC.

At this early date with no information from either the IATTC scientific staff or the IATTC Scientific Committee, it is difficult to make any specific recommendations. However, the HMSAS does believe that it is appropriate for the Council to make the following general recommendations to the U.S. Delegation:

1. The U.S. should support the adoption of appropriate biological reference points for all managed HMS stocks in the IATTC Convention Area.
2. The U.S. should support increased compliance with IATTC conservation and management measures including accurate and timely filing of required reports and statistics with the Commission.
3. The U.S. should encourage cooperation between the IATTC and the WCPFC to establish and implement conservation and management measures in the overlap area of the respective Convention Areas.
4. The U.S. should encourage the IATTC and the WCPFC to adopt management and conservation measures which are compatible with measures of the other organization, recognizing differences between stock behavior and historic fishing methods in different areas.

PFMC
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