



**Western  
Pacific  
Regional  
Fishery  
Management  
Council**

July 13, 2010

Charles Karnella  
~~Dr. Rebecca Lent~~ NMFS PIRO  
Director Monululu  
Division of International Affairs  
NOAA Fisheries Service  
1315 East West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Rebecca:

The recent 148<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting in Hawaii produced several recommendation concerned with the international fisheries management, more specifically with the conservation and management measures stemming from the Western and Central Pacific Commission

1. The Council recommended the U.S. advocate for several options related to a new bigeye and yellowfin conservation measure, which may include the following:
  - Purse seine bigeye tuna catch limits for all purse seine fleets in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean
  - Mandatory port sampling
  - More extensive FAD fishing closures and monitoring of FAD fisheries
  - Evaluation of the FFA/PNA vessel day scheme for bigeye conservation
  - Options for non-calendar year longline fishing years
  - Rolling three year catch limits for longline fisheries
  - The Council further requested NMFS PIRO respond to the letters sent by the Council requesting consideration of these issues. Council staff should work with the staff of NMFS PIRO International Division to address these issues.
  
2. The Council recommended the U.S. draft a conservation and management measure for consideration by the WCPFC that would require CCMs to require their vessels to mark fishing gear.
  
3. The Council recommended the U.S. ensure that the WCPFC working group on CCM compliance with conservation and management measures continues its work to provide the WCPFC a process and mechanisms to censure or sanction a CCM that is not in compliance with conservation and management measures.

The first recommendation is concerned primarily with the conservation and management measures for bigeye and yellowfin tuna. This Council continues to be skeptical about attempts to conserve bigeye catches by purse seiners through effort limitation or operational restrictions on FADs. Moreover, since the US has adopted catch limitation as an overall policy to reduce overfishing, it seems inequitable that bigeye catch limits are applied to US longline fisheries but not to the US purse seine fishery. Further, management of incidental catches by catch limits, such as red snapper in the gulf shrimp trawl fishery are mechanisms that are working to reduce fishing mortality from unintentional catches.

This Council strongly advocates that purse seine bigeye catch limits be sought for all fleets, since its will likely be the only way to achieve tangible reductions in purse seine bigeye catches, which will complement the reduction in bigeye catches by longliners. Having a purse seine bigeye catch limit will also be an incentive for the US and other purse seine fleets to minimize bigeye catches and thus not be shut down.

Otherwise, the lack of catch limits in the purse seine fishery will mean a continuing decline of the maximum sustainable yield in weight for Pacific bigeye as a result of the large juvenile catch by purse seiners, which reduces the yield per recruit. As such, longline fleets will be faced with increasingly stringent bigeye catch limits which will have limited conservation benefits with unrestricted purse seine bigeye catches.

Most of the elements of recommendation 1 are self explanatory; mandatory port sampling is important to more accurately determine the volume of purse seine caught bigeye and more extensive FAD closures will be required in the absence of purse seine bigeye catch limits. The Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) in which the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) countries have such a vested interest should be evaluated with respect to its impact, if any on bigeye conservation.

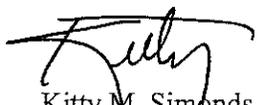
Much has been written and discussed about the VDS and high seas pocket closures as if these would benefit bigeye and other tuna stocks, but the PNA group is seeking to maximize revenues from fishing within their EEZs. If this does not result in decreases of purse seine bigeye catches then the VDS will likely have no conservation benefits.

The non-calendar year schedules for catch limits and multi-year catch limits should at least be discussed by the WCPFC since longliners are going to have to live with bigeye and possibly other species catch limits for the foreseeable future and more flexibility should be given for countries on how these limits may be managed, without compromising the conservation goals. The last part of recommendation 1 indicates that the Council has approached the Pacific Islands Region about these issues but not received responses to all communications.

Recommendation 2 stems from the marine debris caused by discarded fishing gear, including FADs, and the need to be able to tie these to specific fishing vessels. The last recommendation is asking that conservation and management measures some with some teeth so that failure to comply results in some form of punitive action, such as export prohibitions or likeminded measures that provides an incentive for countries to abide by CMMs.

Please let me know if you have any questions about these recommendations or would like to discuss them further.

Sincerely



Kitty M. Simonds  
Executive Director

cc: Bill Gibbons-Fly, Department of State  
Mike Tosatto, acting Regional Administrator, Pacific Islands Region  
Eric Schwaab, NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries



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**Council Recommends Stricter Bigeye Tuna Measures for Purse Seiners, Expedited Assessment of Hawaii False Killer Whales, Hawaii Recreational Bottomfish Deferral**

HONOLULU (15 October 2010) The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council concluded its three-day meeting in Honolulu yesterday with recommendations regarding federal management of US Pacific Island pelagic fisheries and marine protected species as well as program planning and administrative matters.

To address the overfishing status of Pacific bigeye tuna, the Council reiterated its June 2010 recommendations that stricter measures should be applied to the catch of the species by purse-seine vessels. Pacific bigeye tuna are managed internationally by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC). The Council recommended that the United States, which is party to the WCPFC, transmit draft management proposals to the Commission for consideration prior to its Dec. 6 to 10, 2010, meeting in Hawaii that would establish bigeye tuna catch limits for purse seiners, mandatory port sampling, effective fish aggregation device (FAD) fishing closures, evaluation of the use of a vessel day scheme for bigeye conservation, rolling three-year catch limits for longline fisheries and mandatory gear marking for all for fishing vessels in the WCPFC convention area.

Although not its target species, the US purse seine fleet (which falls under the auspice of the US Department of State) catches twice as much bigeye tuna as the Hawaii longline fleet. The overfishing of bigeye tuna coincides with the increasing use of FADs by US and other purse-seiners, which target skipjack tuna to be canned. The purse-seine FADs also attract juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna, species that are targeted in their adult stage by longliners, including the Hawaii-based fleet, for the fresh fish and sashimi markets.

The Council also recommended that the United States request that the WCPFC evaluate the use of catch limits for pelagic fisheries in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. A similar study is being conducted by the IATTC for the Eastern Pacific Ocean. The WCPFC bigeye tuna catch limit for the US longline fleet, which consists of the Hawaii fleet plus one vessel operating out of the West Coast, is 3,763 mt annually through 2011. In 2009, the Hawaii quota was reached at the end of December. This year it is expected to be reached in mid-November.

~~In addition to the catch limit, the Hawaii deep set longline fleet targeting tuna may be facing more closed areas around Hawaii as well as a suite of additional mandatory gear requirements to address protection of false killer whales. The false killer whales are currently not listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) nor are they designated as depleted under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). There are two stocks of Hawaii false killer whales, the pelagic stock and the insular stock. They visually look the same, but have genetic differences.~~

~~Under the standards established by the MMPA, the estimated level of false killer whale mortalities and interactions with the Hawaii longline fleet are too high. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) assembled a team to develop a plan to reduce hooking and entanglement of false killer whales by the fishery. The plan contains several elements such as captain and crew training to safely release captured false killer whales and a series of fishery time area closures that are linked in size and duration with the level of interactions.~~

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