

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON RECOMMENDATIONS TO REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) discussed recommendations that the Council might consider making to the U.S. delegation to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). Numerous issues and proposals will be discussed at the WCPFC meeting; however, the HMSMT only provided recommendations on issues that seemed most relevant to the Council.

Pacific Bluefin Tuna

The HMSMT recommends that the U.S. delegation to the WCPFC support the proposed Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) for bluefin tuna that was adopted by the Northern Committee. The proposal adopted by the Northern Committee improves conservation of bluefin tuna by removing exemptions and extends the duration of the measure for another two years. The proposal was adopted by the Northern Committee with a reservation from Korea, so it is unclear whether this proposal will be presented at the WCPFC meeting. Regardless, the HMSMT recommends supporting a conservation measure to reduce fishing mortality on Pacific bluefin tuna in the North Pacific Ocean.

Striped Marlin

The HMSMT recommends that the U.S. delegation to the WCPFC support proposed conservation measures that limit the fishing mortality of striped marlin in the North Pacific Ocean. The most recent stock assessment of striped marlin was conducted by the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) in 2007. The stock assessment report indicated concern over the status of striped marlin with conservation advice to reduce the fishing mortality rate of striped marlin from the current level (2001-2003). In 2009, a proposed CMM for striped marlin was discussed at the WCPFC; however, it was not adopted and further discussion was postponed until this year. It is likely that this issue will be discussed again at this year's annual WCPFC meeting. The HMSMT also notes that the ISC is conducting a striped marlin assessment in the spring of 2011.

North Pacific Albacore

With regard to North Pacific albacore, the HMSMT recommends the current measure that limits the total level of fishing effort for North Pacific albacore (CMM-2005-03) remain in place in the absence of a more comprehensive CMM. The Northern Committee did not adopt any proposals to change the current albacore CMM (CMM-2005-03) in 2010. In addition, there will be an ISC North Pacific albacore stock assessment in 2011 and the HMSMT recommends the Council request the assessment results relative to appropriate reference points for management.

Tropical Tunas

With regard to tropical tunas (i.e., bigeye, yellowfin, and skipjack tunas), the HMSMT notes that in view of ongoing concern over the stock of bigeye tuna in the western and central Pacific Ocean, the measure currently in place (CMM-2008-01) should at a minimum be maintained. The current CMM for tropical tunas was adopted in 2008 and will remain in effect until 2011 and beyond, unless it is amended by the WCPFC. If this measure is reopened for negotiation in 2010, the HMSMT would support strengthening the current measure.

Other Relevant Issues

The HMSMT recommends that the Council generally support proposals presented at the WCPFC that would increase compliance with WCPFC CMMs and provide the WCPFC with a process and mechanisms to censure or sanction members of the WCPFC that are not in compliance.

The HMSMT recommends that the Council support the adoption of the Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) between the WCPFC and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) for cross certification of observers. The HMSMT agrees that cross training observers to meet requirements of each Commission and certifying them to observe vessels that fish in both Conventions Areas would be beneficial and more efficient for industry, the Commissions, and data collection purposes.

The HMSMT also recommends that the Council continue to support the ISC's multi-species biological sampling program to improve stock assessments.

PFMC

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