

Excerpt from
Decision Summary Document
Pacific Fishery Management Council Meeting
September 12-17, 2014

<http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/0914decisions.pdf>

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HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT

International Activities

The Council provided the following requests and recommendations to NMFS:

- Noting that the recent emergency closure to the commercial take of Pacific bluefin tuna was intended for directed fisheries, the Council requested NMFS issue an Emergency Rule as soon as possible providing for an incidental take of Pacific bluefin tuna for West Coast non-directed commercial fisheries, with a 1 metric ton (mt) per trip landing limit, to be closed if and when the remaining portion of the 500 mt quota has been caught. It is recommended the NMFS work closely with harvesters to enhance fishery monitoring in relation to the quota.
- The Council recommended NMFS work bilaterally with Mexico as soon as possible, including at the October Extraordinary Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) meeting, to align recreational fishery management objectives and related strategies.
- The Council recommended the U.S. Delegation emphasize in the IATTC forum that the U.S. is moving to reduce the recreational catch of Pacific bluefin tuna under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), with the expectation that other countries will also respond to the conservation need, but to work toward not incorporating recreational measures in the expected IATTC resolution negotiation. The U.S. should continue to support a quota no less than 500 mt for aggregate West Coast commercial fisheries, as contained in the current IATTC Resolution.
- The Council recommended NMFS investigate ways in which the Council can be more directly involved in the stock assessment process conducted by the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC), using Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) staff participating on ISC Working Groups as the conduit for information flow.

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New or Routine Management Measures for 2015-2016 Fisheries

The Council adopted ranges of alternatives for management of the recreational fishery for Pacific bluefin tuna as follows:

- For reducing recreational daily bag limits and possession limits for Pacific bluefin tuna caught off California from the current 10 fish per day per angler bag limit (30 fish possession limit):

alternatives below five fish per day and accompanying possession limits. A preliminary preferred alternative of a two-fish daily bag limit and a six-fish possession limit for multi-day trips was identified in this range.

- For processing recreationally caught tuna at sea south of Pt. Conception, three alternatives were identified: filleting in a manner that would allow both the number and species of tuna to be determined, heading and gutting only or gutting only, and not allowing processing of tunas. Allowing filleting in a manner that allows for subsequent species identification was selected as the preliminary preferred alternative (PPA).

For the at-sea filleting alternative, it is expected that the Enforcement Consultants will work with the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) and Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) is identifying a workable method that the Council will consider at the next Council meeting. Final action on Pacific Bluefin tuna recreational fishery management measures is scheduled for the November 2014 Council meeting.

The Council also selected ranges of alternatives for high priority protected species hard caps, finfish bycatch caps, and enhanced monitoring for the California drift gillnet fishery based on Agenda Item G.4.b, HMSMT Report 3 and Supplemental HMSMT Report 5. A preliminary preferred alternative was also identified that includes annual hard caps for fin, humpback, and sperm whales; and leatherback, loggerhead, olive ridley, and green sea turtles. For other protected species and finfish, the PPA establishes bycatch performance limits. Based on Council action, revised sets of alternatives will be brought forward at the November 2014 Council meeting for further consideration with the intent of final action in early 2015, with the understanding that NMFS would be able to implement any adopted measures by August 15, 2015.