TECHNICAL AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE
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AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON CATCHES OF STRIPED MARLIN

WCPFC-TCC21-2025-29
9 September 2025

Submitted by Scientific Services Provider (SSP (SPC-OFP))

MLS overview

SPC

2025-09-08

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Background

As part of the compliance review process the Secretariat is tasked with evaluating CCMs' fishing activities relative to the Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) in force. In 2025, TCC20 discussed the challenges associated with evaluating the striped marlin (MLS) CMMs as in both CMM 2015-02 and CMM 2024-06, there are provisions related to 'fishing for' and 'targeting' which are currently undefined in the context of these measures. Therefore, *"TCC20 tasked the SSP to provide additional information on catches of SW striped marlin and NW Striped marlin, including as a percentage of total catch per vessel, in order to inform discussions on both striped marlin stocks at SC21, TCC21 and WCPFC22 regarding the clarification of the term 'fishing for'/'targeting'"*. (ref: TCC20 Outcomes, paragraph 29)

This document provides a brief background on the MLS catches in the WCPFC Convention Area and characterizes the catches of MLS relative to total catch, by vessel, at the annual and trip level, for the consideration of TCC21.

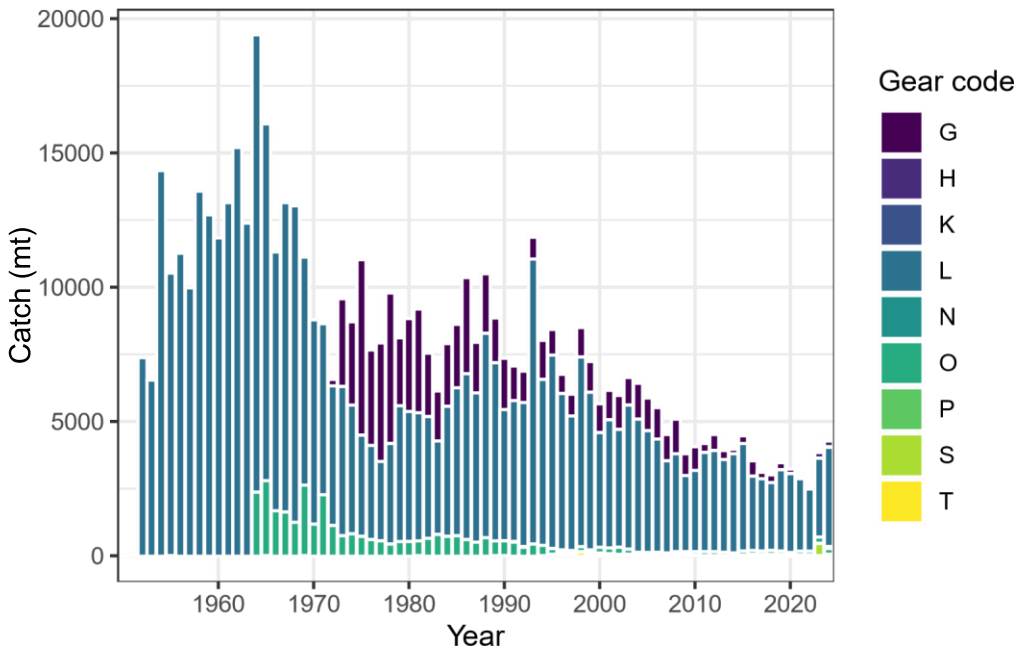


Figure 1: Striped marlin catches across the full WCPFC Convention Area, by gear and year

Given that the vast majority of the MLS catches come for **longline**, the remainder of this paper will focus on longline catches, as there does not appear to be evidence of 'targeting' nor 'fishing for' in other gears due to the very low catch levels.

Southwest Pacific striped marlin (south of 15S)

This section will focus on the characterization of striped marlin in the Southwest Pacific, relative to CMM 2006-04.

Annual catches by vessel

The initial assessment applied a similar logic as used to evaluate 'fishing for' South Pacific albacore in CMM 2015-02, i.e. *"Vessels fishing south of 20 degrees South with an annual catch of albacore in that area with South Pacific albacore greater than 50% of the catch of potential target tuna (albacore, yellowfin, bigeye, southern bluefin), skipjack and swordfish."*. (para 289 of the WCFPC20 Summary Report)

Here, we used the same subset of species as described above for SP albacore, with the inclusion of MLS. The proportion of MLS, relative to the total catch of this subset of species was calculated per vessel at the annual level for all longline activity in the area south of 15S.

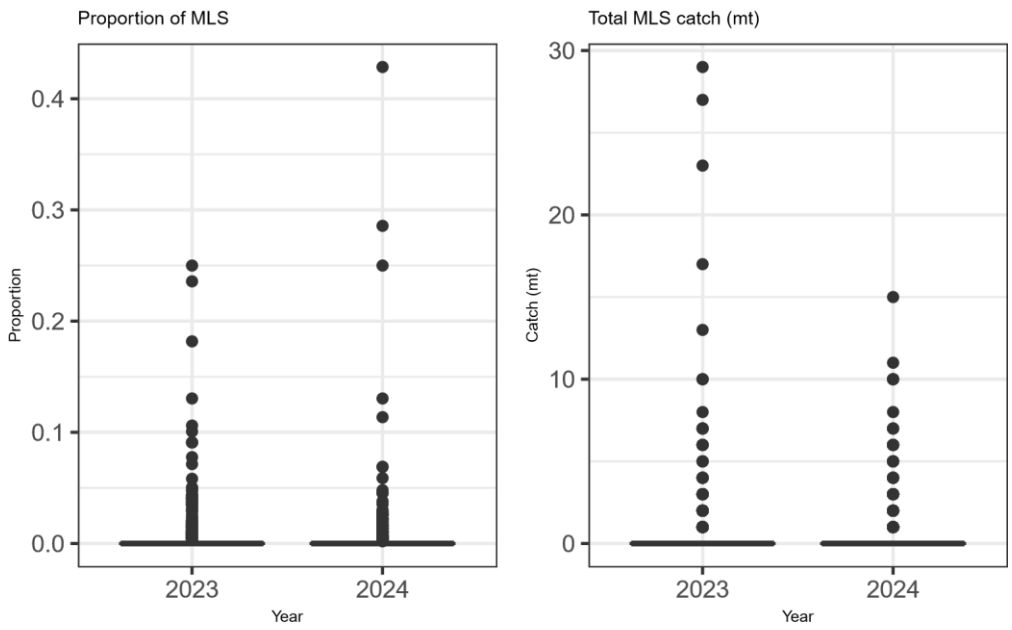


Figure 2: Distribution of the proportion of MLS relative to total catch (left) and total MLS catch (right), at the per vessel annual level, in 2023 and 2024. Species included: ALB, BET, SBF, SKJ, SWO,YFT, MLS

The distribution of MLS proportion, at the annual level, indicates that when MLS is caught, more than 95% of the time is represents less than 10% of the total catch, and more than 85% of the time it represents less than 5% of the catch.

Figure 3 shows the proportion of MLS relative to total catch to better understand the total catch volume for vessels that harvest relatively high proportions of MLS. For most vessels, it appears that when MLS represents a larger portion of the total catch, the overall catch volume is relatively low.

We also reviewed these data while excluding southern bluefin (SBF), as some members report these catches to CCSBT as opposed to the WCPFC.

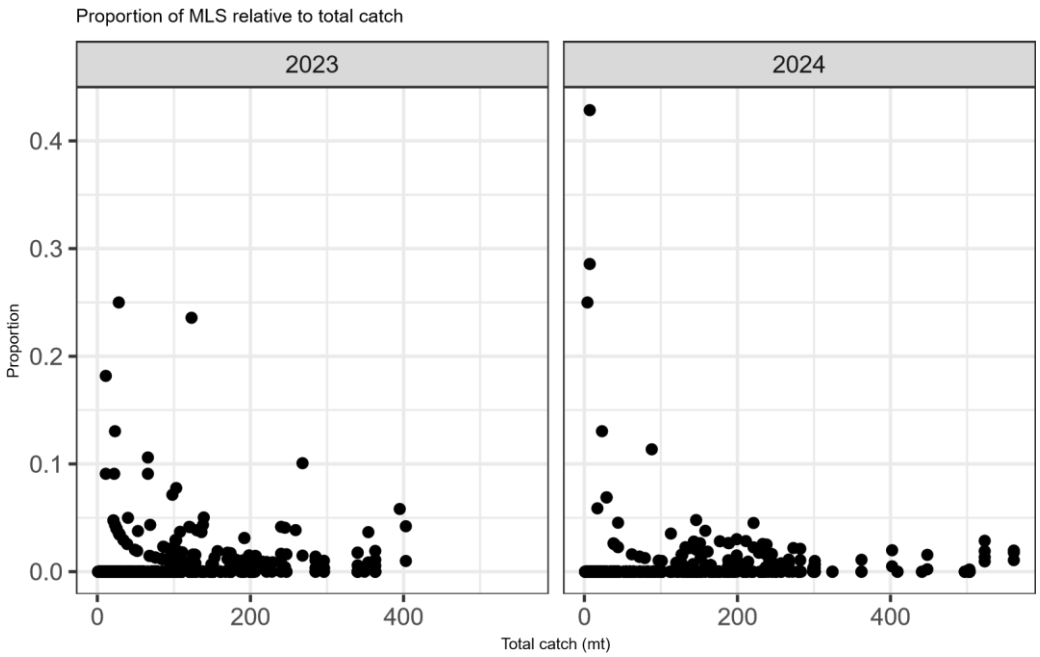


Figure 3: The proportion of SW Pacific MLS relative to total catch plotted against total catch, at the per vessel annual level. Species included: ALB, BET, SBF, SKJ, SWO,YFT, MLS

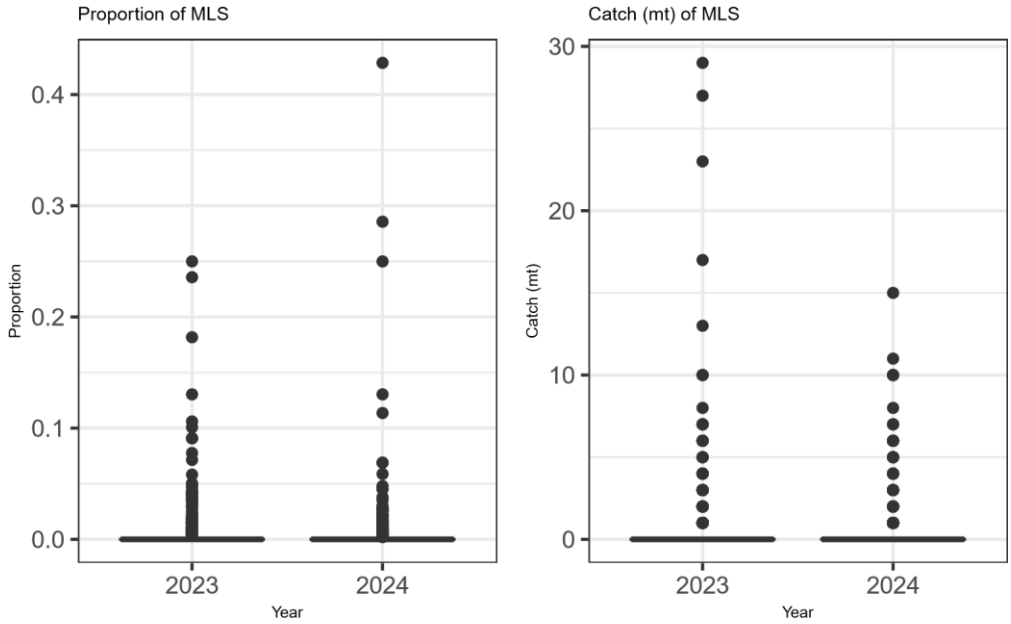


Figure 4: Distribution of the proportion of SW Pacific MLS relative to total catch (left) and total SW Pacific MLS catch (right), at the per vessel annual level, in 2023 and 2024 (excluding SBF)

The relative proportions of MLS to total catch, and frequency of those proportions, was similar the full subset as compared to the subset excluding SBF (which should not be surprising as some members do not report their SBF catches to the WCPFC).

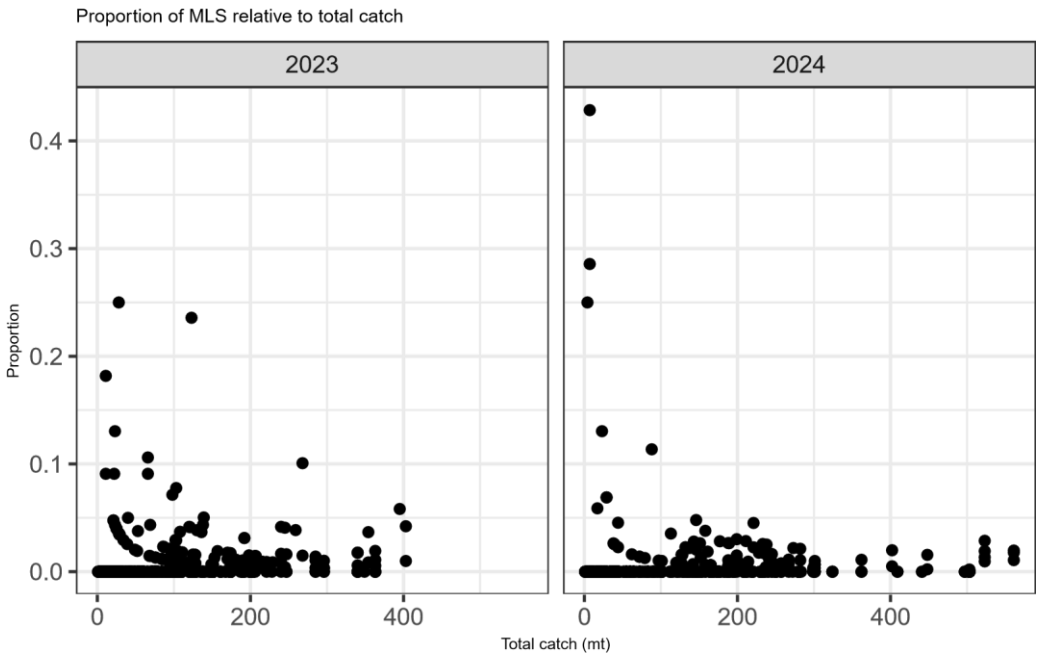


Figure 5: Proportion of SW Pacific MLS relative to total catch plotted against total catch, by vessel and year (excluding SBF)

Trip level summaries

Catch and proportion of MLS were also evaluated at the trip level, to potentially capture the presence of more seasonal targeting.

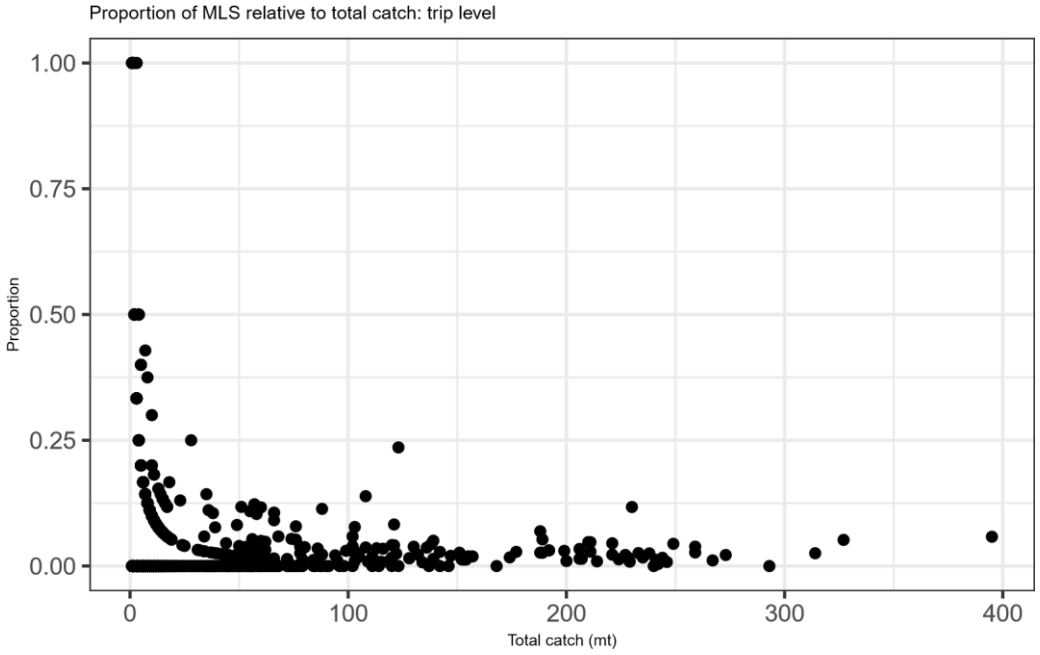
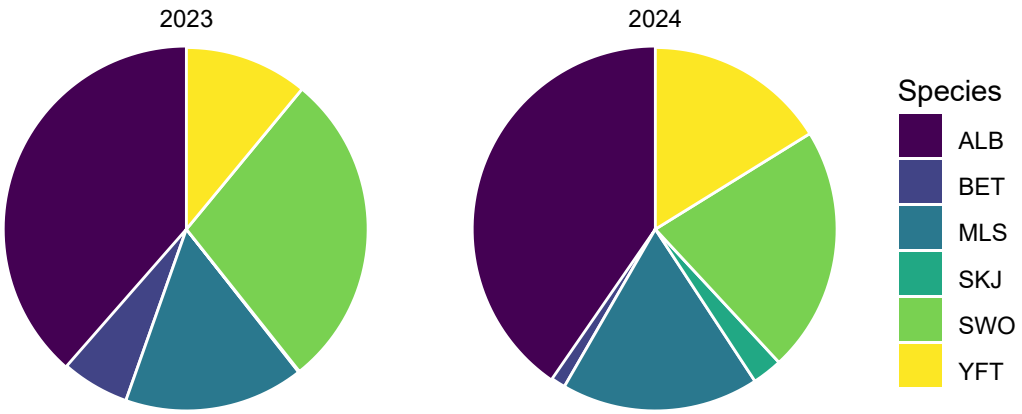


Figure 6: Proportion of SW Pacific MLS relative to total catch plotted against total catch, by vessel and trip. Species included: ALB, BET, SBF, SKJ, SWO,YFT, MLS

Species composition

Lastly, we explored the species composition for fishing trips that had more than 10% of MLS. 10% was a somewhat arbitrary cutoff, but more than 90% of the trips had less than 10% MLS, so the catch composition for the <10% that had higher proportions of MLS could be informative to the TCC.



North Pacific striped marlin

This section will focus on the characterization of striped marlin in the North Pacific, relative to CMM 2024-06. North Pacific striped marlin catches are evaluated for the area north of the equator, and in the same manner as Southwest Pacific MLS was evaluated above (excepting southern bluefin (SBF), as it is not applicable in the region).

Annual catches by vessel

The proportion of MLS, relative to the total catch, and total catch (mt) of MLS was calculated per vessel at the annual level for all longline activity in the area north of the equator.

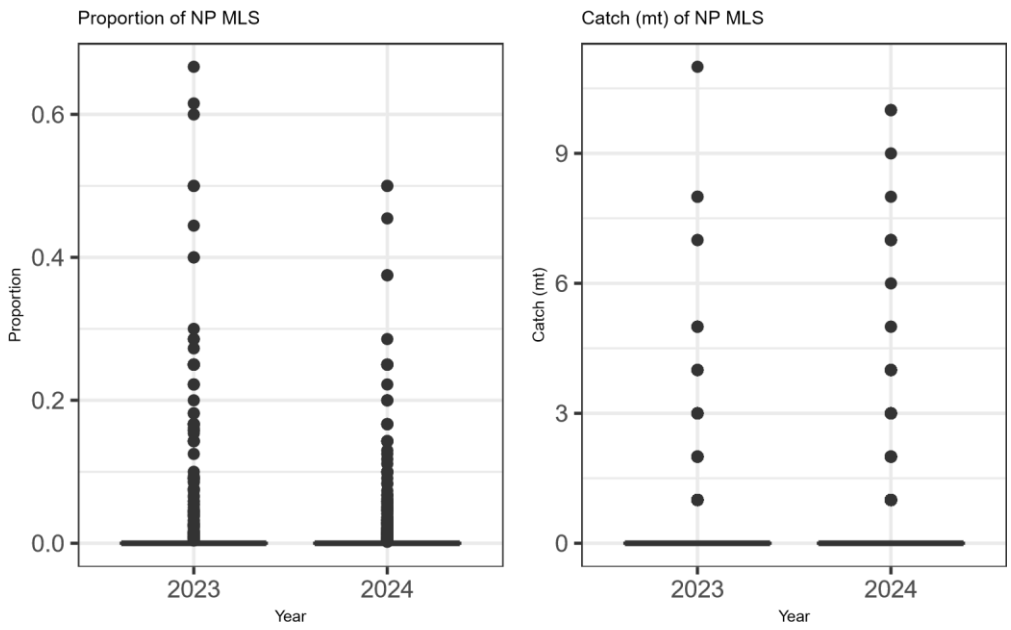


Figure 7: Distribution of the proportion of NP MLS relative to total catch (left) and total NP MLS catch (right), at the per vessel annual level, in 2023 and 2024. Species included: ALB, BET, SKJ, SWO,YFT, MLS

In the North Pacific, higher MLS proportions were observed, with a maximum value at almost 70% of the catch. Overall, MLS generally as much less than 10%, and for 95% of observations the proportion was less than 6%.

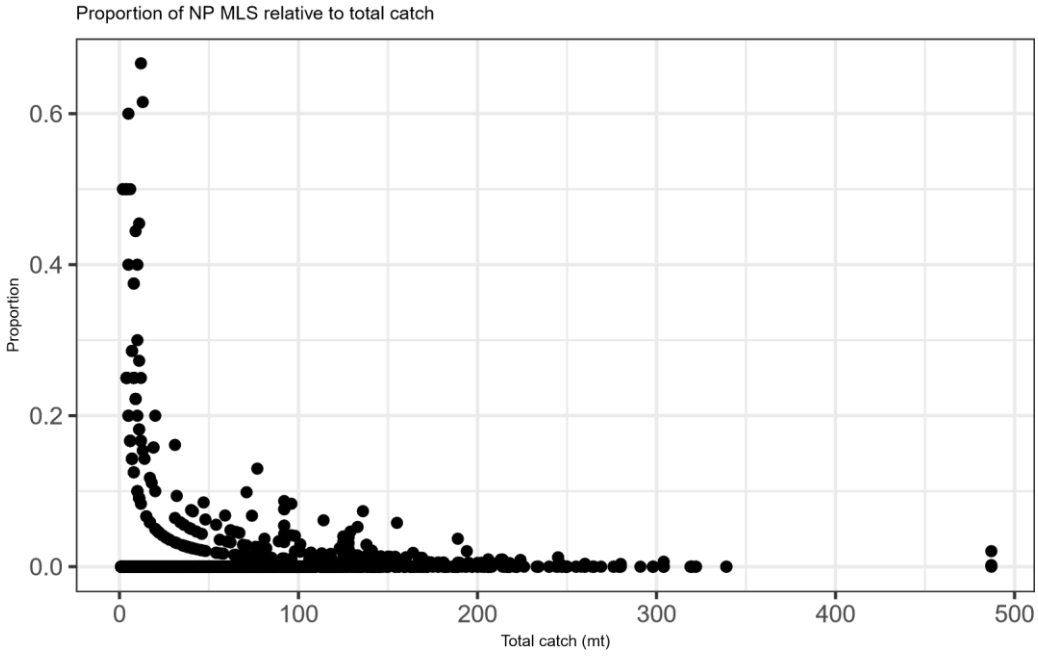


Figure 8: Proportion of NP MLS relative to total catch plotted against total catch, by vessel and year. Species included: ALB, BET, SKJ, SWO,YFT, MLS

As seen for SW Pacific MLS, observations with relatively high catch of MLS tend to have lower overall catch.

Trip level summaries

Similar to SW Pacific MLS, we evaluated trip level catches and proportions of MLS to potentially identify seasonal activities targeting NP MLS.

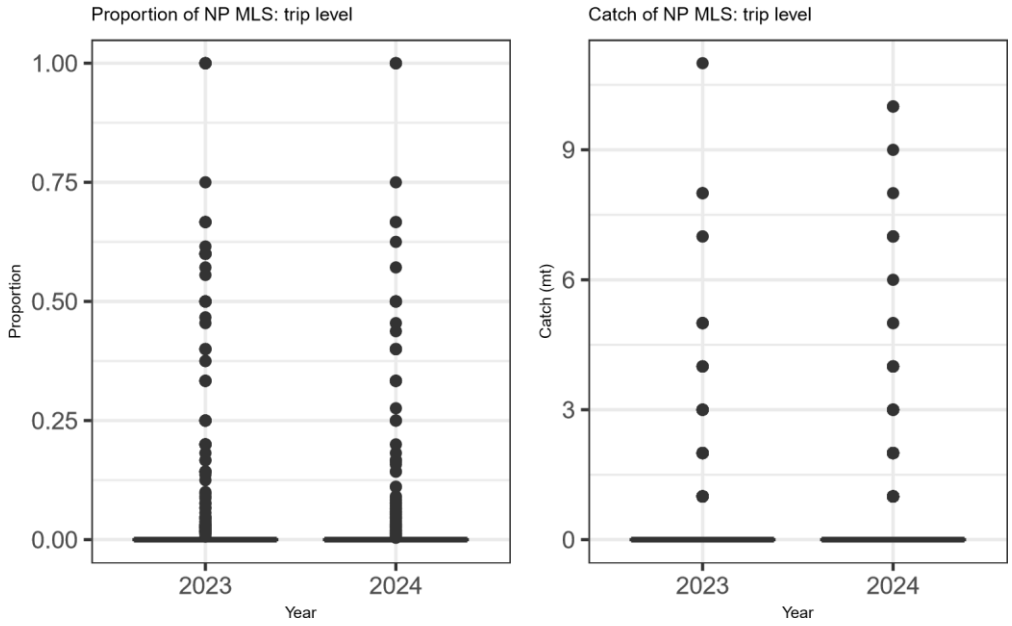


Figure 9: Distribution of the proportion of NP MLS relative to total catch (left) and total NP MLS catch (right), at the vessel and trip level, in 2023 and 2024. Species included: ALB, BET, SKJ, SWO,YFT, MLS

The trip level summaries of MLS in the North Pacific suggest that some trips have relatively high proportions of MLS, even in rare cases 100% of the catch. Even so, over 93% of trips had less than 10% MLS in 2023 and 2024.

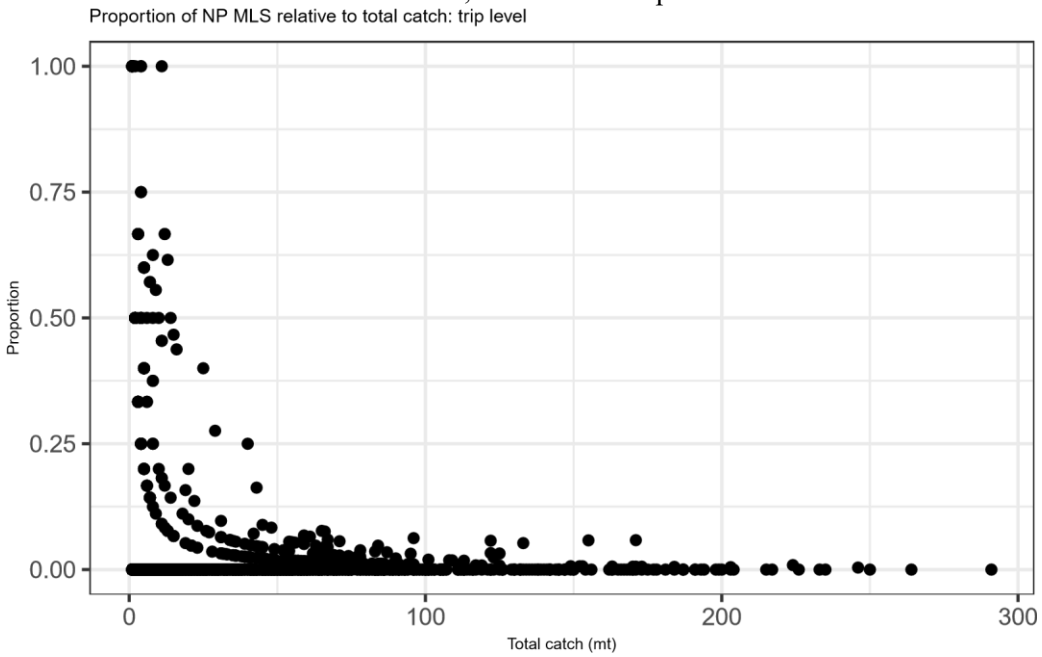


Figure 10: Proportion of NP MLS relative to total catch plotted against total catch, by vessel and trip. Species included: ALB, BET, SKJ, SWO,YFT, MLS

Species composition

Again, below is a broad summary of the species composition for trips that had more than 10% MLS, aggregated across all trips.

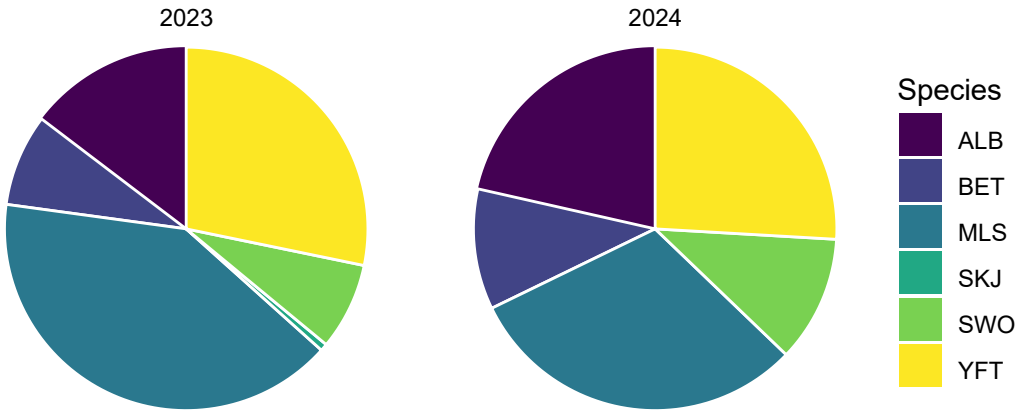


Figure 11: Pie chart showing the catch composition for all trips combined, where NP MLS made up more than 10% of the total catch