



**COMMISSION  
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**LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN ON CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF  
SKIPJACK, BIGEYE, AND YELLOWFIN TUNA**

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**WCPFC8-2011/31  
17 November 2011**

**ISSUES:**

1. The attached document is a letter from the Chairman on the conservation and management of Skipjack, Bigeye and Yellowfin Tuna which has also been circulated as WCPFC Circular 2011/30.

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**TO ALL COMMISSION MEMBERS, COOPERATING NON-MEMBERS AND  
PARTICIPATING TERRITORIES**

**4 November 2011  
Circular No.: 2011/30  
No. of Page: 8**

Dear All

**Conservation and Management of Skipjack, Bigeye, and Yellowfin Tuna**

Thank you for your thoughts and comments on the initial paper. We have tried to deal with as many of the comments provided on the initial version at the recent TCC meeting as possible.

However, given the nature of the discussion and the comments it was not possible to find a common or middle ground for several of the issues. We have moved a number of issues into a section called Longer Term Issues. In that section we suggest that the Commission agree to deal with specific issues at specific future meetings. Once dealt with, those issues would provide guidance on any changes needed to the CMM in place at that time.

The document is being provided to serve as a starting point for continuing the discussion of the content of a new CMM for skipjack, yellowfin, and bigeye tuna. Comments are welcome and will be made available to all CCMs as we receive them.

Thank you for your participation in this process and we look forward to further discussion at the Commission meeting.



Dr. Charles Karnella  
Chair  
Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

## Proposed Way Forward

### Conservation and Management of Skipjack, Bigeye, and Yellowfin Tuna

#### High Level Objectives

Ensure through the implementation of compatible measures for the high seas and EEZs, for all methods of fishing, that skipjack, bigeye and yellowfin tuna stocks are maintained at levels capable of meeting any agreed target reference points and do not fall below their limit reference points. Until such reference points are agreed upon, the Commission's adopted effort and/or catch will not compromise the long term health of these stocks throughout the Convention Area.

#### Skipjack

Ensure that limits on effort and/or catch levels will not increase  $F$  beyond the current level, 1.5 million metric tons (the mean catch for 2006-2009), until the Commission has adopted limit and target reference points for Skipjack tuna in the Convention Area.

#### Bigeye

Ensure that the fishing mortality rate ( $F$ ) for bigeye tuna is not greater than that specified in CMM 2008-01 (i.e. 30% lower than the reference year(s) for CMM 2008-01).

#### Yellowfin

Ensure that the fishing mortality rate ( $F$ ) is not greater than that specified in CMM 2008-01 (i.e. that of the reference year(s) in CMM 2008-01

#### Management Measures

##### Purse Seine

##### Effort Level

EEZs – level of effort specified under CMM 2008-01 will continue for 3 year(s);

High Seas – level of effort specified in 2008-01 will continue for 3 year(s).

(Note this CMM applies to all waters in the Convention Area in which purse seining occurs; the Commission must adopt an effort management plan for the high seas that is

compatible with the Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) that the PNA members operate in their waters.)

#### FAD Closure (Option 1)

EEZS and High seas – a 4 month prohibition on setting on FADs will be in place each year from 1 July to 31 October for all purse seine vessels fishing in the Convention Area.

#### Night Setting Ban

During any FAD prohibition season there shall be no purse seine sets made between the hours of sunset and sunrise. For purposes of this measure the hours of sunset and sunrise are those times for the time zone in which the vessel is in as specified in the nautical almanac.

#### FAD Management Plans

CMM 2008-01 (paragraphs 23 and 24) required all CCMs fishing on the high seas to submit Management Plans for use of FADs by their vessels on the high seas. We have not included a requirement for FAD Management Plans in the proposed way forward; however the Commission should discuss this and whether it would be useful to collect basic information on FAD use before revisiting the issue of FAD Management Plans.

The Plans were to include strategies to limit the capture of small bigeye and yellowfin tuna associated with FADs in addition to implementation of the FAD closure. There was no discussion of how these plans would be used or agreement on the content of such plans. There has been limited compliance with this requirement. If this requirement is to be included in the revision of CMM 2008-01, the Commission and CCMs would benefit from additional guidance on the content and purpose of such plans. The Scientific Committee has noted that there are no estimates of the number of FADs used, the number of FAD deployments, or the number of FAD retrievals in the WCPO.

#### High Seas Closures

### High Seas Closures (Option 1)

The Commission retains the closures of the high seas pockets.

### High Seas Closures (Option 2)

The commission retains the closures of the high seas pockets but allows access to a specified number of Philippine wet boats carrying observers and VMS operating in a specific and limited area (i.e. only the area in which such fishing has been documented) of the western pocket to catch a given amount of tuna. The Philippine Government must provide the Commission with a detailed plan of how the activities of these vessels will be monitored to ensure that all fishing and catches occur at the specified levels and in the manner approved by the Commission.

### Catch Retention

All catch taken in purse seines shall be retained and recorded in vessel logbooks and the information provided to the Commission in the required annual reports.

The Commission shall task the Scientific Committed to prepare a report on the likely benefits of releasing individuals that are still alive when brought on board.

### Observers

Purse seine vessels are required to have an ROP observer on board during all fishing operations. Vessels transiting with all fishing gear stowed are not required to carry an observer, provided that they have notified their national fishing authority of the estimated dates and locations of such transit. (This could be moved to the appropriate place in CMM 2007-01)

### Longline

#### Catch Levels

The catch levels for bigeye tuna will remain as given in CMM 2008-01 for all CCMs for an additional 3 year(s), except China for which the catch will be xxxx .

The catch levels for yellowfin tuna will remain at levels specified in CMM 2008-01 for an additional 3 year(s).

#### Observers

Except for vessels fishing for fresh fish north of 20 degrees north, all CCMs shall have a minimum of 5% observer coverage for fishing operations in their longline fisheries no later than June 30, 2012, as specified in CMM 2007-01.

For those fleets fishing for fresh fish north of 20 degrees north CCMs will have a minimum of 5% observer coverage for fishing operations in their longline fleets no later than December 31, 2014 as specified in CMM 2007-01.

#### Catch Retention

All catch taken by longline gear must be retained and recorded in vessel logbooks and the information provided to the Commission in the required annual reports.

The Commission shall task the Scientific Committee to prepare a report on the likely benefits of releasing individual fish that are still alive when brought on board.

#### Other Commercial Fisheries

The effort in other commercial fisheries for skipjack, bigeye and yellow fin tuna will remain at 2006-2009 level.

Each CCM shall conduct an inventory of vessels flying its flag that operate in fisheries that fish for tuna in the Convention area. This inventory shall include a report of the catch and effort of these vessels. The Commission shall agree on the format of such a report based on recommendations made by the SC and TCC at their 2012 meetings. This inventory shall be provided to the Commission by May 1, 2013. The SC and TCC shall review these inventories during their meetings in 2013 and provide the Commission with recommendations on the management of the other fisheries. The Commission shall make initial decisions regarding catch and/or effort limits in the fisheries at its 2013 meeting.

#### Capacity

##### Purse Seine Vessels

The Commission shall develop a capacity management plan for purse seine vessels operating in the Convention Area. This plan shall identify the appropriate level of capacity for the long term health of the affected fish stocks and the fishery (ies) supported by those stocks. The plan must include provision for the attainment of the aspirations of the small island developing States to fish for the tuna resources found in the Convention Area using purse seine vessels. The distant water fishing nations should agree to cap capacity at existing levels until such a plan has been adopted by the Commission. The Commission will adopt such a plan at its 2013 annual meeting.

##### Longline Vessels

The Commission shall develop a capacity management plan for longline vessels operating in the Convention Area. This plan will include provisions for the attainment of the aspirations of the small island developing states to fish for the tuna resources found in the Convention Area. The Commission shall adopt such a plan at its 2014 meeting.

#### Other Vessels

The Commission shall develop a capacity management plan for vessels operating in other fisheries operating in the Convention Area. This plan will include provisions for the attainment of the aspirations of the small island developing states to fish for the tuna resources found in the Convention Area. The Commission shall adopt such a plan at its 2015 meeting.

#### Evaluation of effectiveness

Each year the SC and the TCC shall evaluate the effectiveness of each of the measures in this CMM and provide the Commission with recommendations on how the individual measures and the CMM as a whole can be improved. The Commission shall adjust the individual measures or the entire CMM as necessary to meet the goals established. The Commission shall provide its reason(s) for not adopting any measure recommended by both the SC and the TCC.

## **Longer Term Issues for the Conservation of skipjack, bigeye and yellowfin tuna.**

### Reference Points

The Commission has indicated that the adoption of reference points is a high priority. The process will begin in 2012 with a workshop to begin the analysis of management strategies and the adoption of reference points. The SC discussed this matter at its last meeting and provided Terms of Reference for consideration. The SC has recommended that an independent international expert(s) be invited to provide expert guidance on the use of reference points and other issues relevant to identifying fisheries management objectives. The Secretariat is developing Terms of Reference for this workshop.

No later than its meeting in 2014 the Commission will adopt reference points for bigeye yellowfin, and skipjack tunas . Once adopted the reference points will guide the Commission in amending some or all of the provisions in the CMM for these stocks.

### Allocation of Effort and/or Catch

Several CCMs have pointed out the inequity that may result from basing flag state catch or effort limits on an essentially arbitrary reference year (or span of years). Developing a method of allocating a limited amount of effort or catch (e.g. TAE or TAC), will assist the Commission in developing CMMs that have only an occasional exception, or, ideally, no exceptions. Such an undertaking should ensure that there is an overall equitability or fairness to all CCMs. Obviously this must include consideration of the aspirations of small island developing states as well as the historic participation of distant water fishing nations. This will not be an easy issue to deal with and may require an iterative process. Nonetheless, the Commission and its CCMs will be well served by the development of such a method of allocating the limited amount of effort and/or catch that almost certainly will be the case for the stocks under the Commission's jurisdiction. A major benefit is that each CCM will know the level of impact of the tuna management CMM that will result from changing the level of effort or catch, will know what the impact will be on other CCMs, and most important know what the cost and benefit of the CMM will be.

### Catch Attribution and Charter Vessels

As part of the effort of developing a system for allocation of effort and/or catch, the Commission must deal with the issue of catch attribution and charter vessels. The catches by, or fishing effort of, vessels operating under charter, lease or other similar mechanisms by developing CCMs within their EEZ, shall be counted against the flag of the vessel where flag-based limits apply within this measure, unless the developing CCM has notified the Commission that the vessel is considered to be a vessel of that host island State or territory.



Nothing in this measure, including how catches or fishing effort by a vessel are counted against flag-based limits for the purpose of a specific CMM, shall prejudice the rights of coastal States to have catches and effort history in their EEZs attributed to them for the purposes of establishing future rights and allocations.

## Reporting

CCMs have an obligation under the various reporting requirements to provide, in a timely manner, complete and accurate data on various aspects of their vessels' fishing activities. These reports to a large degree enable the assessment of the effectiveness of the CMMs. The SC, TCC, and the Commission must have these data before their annual meetings. Assessing the effectiveness of a CMM requires not only catch and effort information but information regarding the implementation of and compliance with the measure. As part of the reporting requirements, CCMs will provide along with their annual report information on the steps taken to implement this measure, e.g. the PNA has implemented the purse seine effort limits by a Vessel Day Scheme in its waters, the level of compliance with this measure, the method used to determine the level of compliance, and any issues regarding this measure that has prevented full implementation and compliance.