



COMMISSION

Tenth Regular Session

2nd December – 6th December 2013

Cairns, AUSTRALIA

**POSITION STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL GAME FISH ASSOCIATION
FISHING HALL OF FAME & MUSEUM**

WCPFC10-2013-OP06

3 December 2013



International Game Fish Association

Fishing Hall of Fame & Museum

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The International Game Fish Association (IGFA) is a non-profit organization that represents recreational anglers throughout the world. IGFA was established in 1939, has active members in over 100 countries, is the governing body for international recreational fishing, and provides rules for ethical angling practices. Many of IGFA's members target the highly migratory species managed by WCPFC, especially marlin, sailfish and spearfish (i.e. billfish) which are primarily caught and released.

IGFA has great concern about how highly migratory species are being managed on a global level for recreational anglers. The lack of data and accurate reporting on billfish catch is of particular concern. As an organization that is committed to the conservation of game fishes, IGFA has deployed 81 pop-up satellite archival tags in marlin and sailfish around the world in the last two years, 51 of which have been in waters under this organization's purview. The information gained from this exercise is available to your scientific committee via our website at <http://igmr.igfa.org>.

The following are IGFA's recommendations for the 10th Regular Session of the WCPFC:

Billfish

- Although primarily a commercial bycatch species, billfish are highly sought after recreational species that are primarily caught and released. We urge the WCPFC to manage all billfish at higher abundance levels than MSY for recreational anglers.
- The WCNPO stock of striped marlin is overfished and experiencing overfishing. Reducing fishing mortality would likely increase spawning stock biomass and may improve the chances of higher recruitment. We recommend fishing at a constant catch of 2,500 mt that would lead to potential increases in spawning biomass of 133% to 223% by 2017
- Although not currently overfished or experiencing overfishing, we recommend that fishing mortality not be increased for blue marlin so that the stock can rebound to levels in excess of MSY.
- No formal stock assessments exist for sailfish and black marlin. Better data collection is necessary for these species so that their true abundance can be accurately estimated.
- IGFA further recommends implementing a prohibition on Pacific billfish entering into international trade. Similar legislation has recently been passed, at the request of IGFA, in the United States that now bans importation of marlin, sailfish and spearfish into the continental United States.
- We also recommend all countries be required to report dead discards and use circle hooks in their longline fisheries.

Tuna

The latest stock assessment indicates that Pacific bluefin tuna have been reduced to only 3.6% of their virgin biomass, necessitating the following actions:

- Adopt a rebuilding plan for Pacific bluefin tuna that will return the population to $25\%SSB_{\text{recent},F=0}$ within the next 10 years.
- Establish a quota that includes all sources of Pacific bluefin tuna mortality, including artisanal fisheries and bycatch.
- Establish allocation keys so that each member has a specific quota under which to manage its fishery.
- Reduce the catch of juvenile Pacific bluefin tuna by adopting a minimum size limit that will prevent

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overfishing of all age classes and allow more fish to reach maturity and contribute to the next generation.

- Implement an effective monitoring program and enforcement process with 100% observer coverage.
- If effective management measures for catch reductions are not adopted in 2013, direct commercial Pacific bluefin fisheries should be banned until these measures are put in place.

Bigeye tuna is currently overfished. IGFA recommends the following actions:

- Longline catch limits should be set at levels low enough to result in a real reduction in fishing mortality.
- Eliminate the use of FADs in the purse seine bigeye fishery.
- Establish fishery-specific quotas for bigeye tuna.

Sharks

- IGFA recommends that WPCFC prohibit the removal of shark fins at sea to improve the enforcement of the shark finning ban.
- We recommend banning wire traces on all longlines

IUU

- IGFA recommends that WPCFC strengthen the controls against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

General

- Recreational angling is an established and important economic entity in developed countries and a growing sector in many developing nations. As such, we ask that WCPFC recognize both its relevance and that it may necessitate alternate management objectives than those used in commercial fisheries. IGFA kindly offers its consultation to WCPFC on recreational fisheries issues.
- Managing fisheries on the basis of MSY is an excessively risk-prone approach. As such, we suggest that WCPFC adopt a target objective below MSY to compensate for biological, environmental and data uncertainties. Many recreational fisheries are catch and release in nature, where anglers prefer to catch more and bigger fish rather than to harvest fish. Managing stocks on the level of MSY not only reduces the abundance of fish but also their average size. Maintaining stocks at higher abundances also benefits recreational anglers that release their fish and contributes to the substantial economic value of these fisheries. We feel this is especially true with bycatch species such as marlin and sailfish that have little commercial value but great economic value to recreational anglers.
- The prevalence and importance of artisanal fisheries within the WCPFC's purview must be taken into consideration. Better catch data from these fisheries is necessary to evaluate their impact on HMS fisheries.