



**NORTHERN COMMITTEE  
TENTH REGULAR SESSION**

Fukuoka, Japan  
1-4 September 2014

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**PRECAUTIONARY MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR  
NORTH PACIFIC ALBACORE**

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**WCPFC-NC10-2014/DP-08**

**CANADA**

## Explanatory Note

The purpose of this proposal is to provide for discussion by the Northern Committee (NC) a draft framework for the Precautionary Approach (PA) based management of North Pacific (NP) albacore tuna. This document includes proposed limit and target reference points, as well as clear decision rules that would trigger management actions should those reference points be exceeded.

The imperative for the Commission to undertake the development of such frameworks is clear in *Article VI* of the WCPFC Convention which specifies that the Commission shall seek to establish, based on the best scientific information available, stock-specific reference points as well as actions to be taken if they are exceeded.

The NC has been discussing this concept for a number of years. A proposed approach on a PA framework for all stocks within the purview of the NC was submitted for consideration by Canada at NC6 in 2010 (WCPFC-NC6-DP-02). On the margins of that meeting, a comprehensive workshop was held to discuss a range of issues related to different possible biological reference points for northern stocks.

Since then the NC has progressively advanced this work, with a particular focus on NP albacore. At NC8, specific questions were developed by the Committee, requesting that the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species (ISC) through its NP albacore Working Group (ALBWG) analyzed a range of candidate reference points, including the probabilities that they would be exceeded over a given projection period under varying recruitment scenarios. At NC9, a concept paper, led by the United States, was developed that set out in more detail the different elements of a PA framework.

The ISC has since updated the response to the original request from NC8 based on the 2014 stock assessment for NP albacore, which is appended to the proposal.

As part of its multi-year work programme, the NC is charged with reaching final agreement on the following for NP albacore in 2014:

- (B) Establish a precautionary approach-based management framework, including:
  - (1) recommend appropriate reference points; and,
  - (2) agreeing in advance to actions that will be taken in the event each of the particular limit reference points is breached (decision rules);

It is Canada's view that sufficient information now exists to achieve these tasks. Using the US concept paper as a basis, and taking into consideration the information provided by ISC, this proposal provides a risk-based approach to a PA framework for the stock.

It is envisaged that the proposal be adopted on a three year basis, and be reviewed and updated as necessary following the next stock assessment for NP albacore, expected to occur in 2017.

**The Commission for the Conservation and Management of  
Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean**

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### **Introduction**

At the Sixth Regular Session of the Northern Committee (NC), and consistent with Article VI of the WCPFC Convention, Canada submitted a paper (WCPFC-NC6-DP02) on the development of a precautionary approach based fishery management regime for the northern stocks. Building on this paper, NC7 agreed to a three-year work program to develop a precautionary approach based management framework for North Pacific (NP) albacore.

NC8 determined that it was best to delay discussions on the framework until the completion of the 2014 NP albacore stock assessment. In July 2014, the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) concluded that the NP albacore stock is “healthy and that current productivity is sufficient to sustain recent exploitation levels, assuming average historical recruitment in both the short and long term”. The ISC also provided further advice regarding candidate limit and target reference points (attached).

Based on the advice from the ISC, the NC recommends the following precautionary management framework for NP albacore:

#### **1. Management objective**

The management objective for the NP albacore fishery is to maintain the biomass at its current level in order to allow recent exploitation rates to continue.

#### **2. Biological Reference Points**

Based on ISC’s 2014 stock assessment advice and following the hierarchical approach adopted by the Commission, NP albacore is to be treated as a Level 1 stock<sup>1</sup>. The following reference points are based on the average recruitment scenario:

- The Limit Reference Point (LRP) for this stock is established at  $[B_{MSY}]$  or  $[20\%SSB_{currentF=0}]$ .

This LRP is consistent with the Annex II of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement and recent WCPFC decisions on LRPs for the three tropical tuna species and South Pacific albacore,

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<sup>1</sup> A reliable estimate of steepness is available in the stock recruitment relationship ( $h=0.9$ ), thereby allowing the ISC to reasonably estimate  $F_{MSY}$  for NP Albacore.

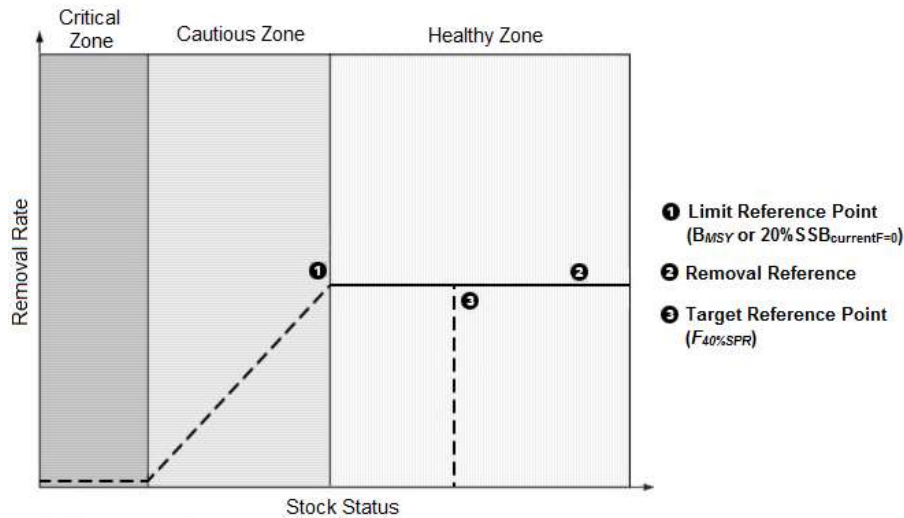
where 20%SSB was adopted as a proxy for  $B_{MSY}$ . If this point is breached, management actions will be taken to return the stock to the healthy zone as outlines in the subsequent section on Decision Rules.

- The Target Reference Point (TRP) for this stock is established at  $[F_{40\%SPR}]$ .

This target allows for current exploitation rates to continue as per the management objective, and if fished at this level for 10 consecutive years, there is only a 31% chance of being below  $20\%SSB_{currentF=0}$  in at least one year in that time period. This presents a reasonable risk-based management approach to the fishery.

### 3. Decision rules

NC recommends a management strategy for the stock that ensures that the risk of the biomass decreasing below the LRP is very low.



**TRP Rule:** In the event that, based on information from ISC, the fishing mortality rate exceeds the TRP by [10%] or more for at least one year, NC will at its next regular session recommend a CMM that can be expected to reduce fishing mortality to the target within two years adoption. When adopting measures to reduce fishing mortality to the target level, NC will consider socio-economic factors, as per UNFA Article 6.c., as well as which NC members, if any, were non-compliant with effort restrictions and contributed to exceeding the TRP.

**LRP Rule:** In the event that, based on information from ISC, the spawning stock size decreases below the LRP at any time, NC will, at its next regular session or intersessionally if warranted, adopt a reasonable timeline, but no longer than [x] years, for rebuilding the spawning stock to at least the LRP and recommend a CMM that can be expected to achieve such rebuilding within that timeline. NC will take into account historical fishing activity and the source of increased fishing mortality when developing management strategies to rebuild the stock, including in establishing effort reductions.

### 4. Future Work

This Framework shall be reviewed following the 2017 ISC stock assessment of NP albacore. In the interim, NC may also support a Management Strategy Evaluation for the stock to yield new information that would enhance the robustness of this framework.