



2005 Market Street, Suite 2800 P 215.575.9050  
Philadelphia, PA 19103-7077 F 215.575.4939

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901 E Street NW, 10th Floor P 202.552.2000  
Washington, DC 20004 F 202.552.2299  
[pewtrusts.org](http://pewtrusts.org)

**Statement to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission  
13th Regular Session of the Northern Committee  
28 August - 1 September 2017 – Busan, South Korea**

The Pew Charitable Trusts looks forward to participating in both the upcoming 13<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Northern Committee (NC13) of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and the Joint Working Group Meeting on Pacific bluefin tuna conservation management. These meetings are key opportunities for members of the WCPFC and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) to finally agree on a long-term rebuilding target and recovery plan for Pacific bluefin. Despite clear indications that the Pacific bluefin population is severely depleted, repeated calls to implement policies that would end overfishing and rebuild the population to healthy levels have been rejected in the past.

The Pacific bluefin population will not recover to healthy levels under current management measures. But that does not mean that the population cannot rebuild in the future. A recent study showed that a combination of catch reductions and shifting of catch from small to large fish will allow the population to recovery quickly<sup>1</sup>. At this year's meetings, we urge members of both the WCPFC Northern Committee and IATTC to agree on science-based, sustainable measures that fulfill the mandate of the Commissions and that are desperately needed to return the Pacific bluefin population to healthy levels.

**The WCPFC and IATTC must not delay further in taking action. These RFMOs must immediately adopt a Pacific-wide rebuilding plan that puts measures in place that will return the population to a healthy level or commit to a moratorium on all commercial fishing for Pacific bluefin tuna until such a plan is in place.**

The latest stock assessment for Pacific bluefin, released in 2016, found that the population has been reduced to just 2.6 percent of its historic unfished size by nearly a century of overfishing that continues today. Further, both Japan and Mexico exceeded their annual catch quotas in 2017, and the Japanese government discovered that over a hundred tons of Pacific bluefin catch went unreported or was harvested illegally by its fishermen<sup>2</sup>. These overages and IUU fishing further threaten the future viability of the already severely depleted Pacific fishery and population.

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<sup>1</sup> Rice, Joel. Projections based on the 2016 Pacific Bluefin tuna assessment.

[http://isc.fra.go.jp/pdf/PBF/ISC17\\_PBF\\_1/ISC\\_17\\_PBFWG\\_IP\\_Rice.pdf](http://isc.fra.go.jp/pdf/PBF/ISC17_PBF_1/ISC_17_PBFWG_IP_Rice.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Japan Report on CMM 2016-04 (Pacific bluefin tuna). <https://www.wcpfc.int/system/files/WCPFC-NC13-DP-05%20%5BJapan%20-%20PBF%20Report%20-%2031July2017%5D.pdf>

Both the WCPFC and IATTC have set formal deadlines for their members to adopt rebuilding plans, targets, timelines and management measures<sup>3</sup>. In light of the unprecedented level of depletion, and in order to begin the process of rebuilding the population for the future, members of the WCPFC Northern Committee and IATTC must find agreement on a harmonized recovery plan that includes:

- A secondary rebuilding target of 20%SSB<sub>0</sub> by 2034;
- Catch limits that immediately end overfishing;
- Provisions for penalties for, and payback of, any quota overages;
- An agreement to immediately reduce catch levels if the probability of reaching the initial rebuilding target falls below 60 percent;
- A timeline for agreeing on management objectives, performance indicators, limit and target reference points;
- Agreement to implement long-term harvest control rules based on the results of a management strategy evaluation that avoid breaching limit reference points and have at least a 75 percent chance of achieving target reference points; and
- A timeline for development of an electronic catch documentation scheme for mandatory use by 2020 that will increase traceability and improve enforcement of domestic and international regulations.

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<sup>3</sup> CMM 2016-04 and Resolution C-16-08, respectively.