

**JOINT IATTC AND WCPFC-NC WORKING GROUP MEETING ON THE
MANAGEMENT OF PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA
SIXTH SESSION (JWG-06)**

ELECTRONIC MEETING
8am-11am, Japan Standard Time
27-29 July 2021

Pacific bluefin tuna fisheries in the Eastern Pacific Ocean

IATTC-NC-JWG06-2021/DP-15

United States of America

U.S.A. Pacific Bluefin Tuna Fisheries in the Eastern Pacific Ocean

COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

Description of U.S. Commercial Fisheries for Pacific Bluefin Tuna

Two U.S. fishery sectors target Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF) in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO): (1) small coastal purse seine¹ and (2) hook-and-line. Both sectors fish within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone. PBF is also caught incidentally in longline, drift gillnet, and troll fisheries. Historically, only purse seine gear is likely to catch greater than 1 metric ton (mt) of PBF in a single trip. The large majority of PBF is caught off of and landed in California, with small quantities landed in Oregon and Washington.

Requirements to Harvest PBF

All U.S. vessels that harvest PBF in the EPO and land on the U.S. West Coast are required to have a U.S. West Coast Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Permit. Purse seine vessels must also be listed on the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)'s Active Purse Seine Regional Vessel Register (RVR). At this time, there are 18 small U.S. purse seine vessels listed on the purse seine RVR.

Management and Monitoring of Commercial PBF Catch Limit

IATTC Resolution C-18-01 established a 600 metric ton (mt) biennial limit for the United States in 2019- 2020, pending addition or subtraction of under-harvest or over-harvest, respectively, from the previous biennial catch limit. The United States added 30 mt to its biennial catch limit for 2019-2020 as a result of under-harvest in 2017-2018. NMFS estimated that the United States caught 275 mt of commercial PBF in 2019 and 225 mt in 2020. For both 2019 and 2020, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) imposed restrictive trip limits: a 15 mt trip limit until catch is within 50 mt of the annual limit, and a 2 mt trip limit afterwards. For 2020, the annual limit was 356 mt; therefore, a 15 mt trip limit was in effect until catch was expected to reach 306 mt. This management framework of reducing the trip limit when catch is within 50 mt of the annual limit is intended to avoid a complete fishery closure, which could result in regulatory discards.

NMFS required that purse seine vessel operators provide a pre-trip notification within 24 hours of departing on a trip that may result in catching greater than 2 mt of PBF. In other words, it was illegal for purse seine vessels to catch greater than 2 mt of PBF without having submitted a pre-trip notification. Additionally, buyers of PBF in California must report the purchase of PBF in an electronic database within 24 hours of each landing.

¹ Note this fleet is different from the large purse seine fleet fishing for tropical tuna in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.

RECREATIONAL (SPORTFISHING) FISHERIES

Description of U.S. Recreational Fisheries for PBF

Recreational anglers in California use rod-and-reel gear to fish for PBF. Low amounts of PBF are caught occasionally by anglers in Oregon and Washington. Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessels (CPFVs) also make trips from Southern California ports into Mexican waters to target PBF. In 2020, U.S. recreational vessels caught 651 mt of Pacific bluefin tuna. From 2015-2020, U.S. recreational vessels have caught an annual average of 468 mt of Pacific bluefin tuna.

Requirements to catch PBF Recreationally

Similar to commercial fisheries, a West Coast HMS permit is required for CPFVs to fish for PBF recreationally.

Management and Monitoring of Recreational PBF Catch

Since 2015, recreational fishermen have been limited to retaining two PBF per day and up to six PBF on multi-day trips. Catch and effort data are collected through state-administered sampling programs or through federal logbooks. California data are provided by the California Recreational Fisheries Survey (CRFS) program. The state of California's mandatory logbook program provides a record of fishing activity for CPFVs. Logbooks also provide catch information on PBF taken in Mexican waters. In addition to logbooks, CRFS data are collected through dockside interviews, as well as telephone surveys in most years. These dockside interviews and telephone surveys are used to estimate PBF catch by private boats. Field surveys or interviews are also conducted onboard CPFVs at sea or dockside to check catch and effort. In Oregon, statistics for recreational fisheries, including private boats and CPFVs, are available from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Ocean Recreational Boat Survey (ORBS) program. The ORBS program collects catch and effort data primarily through field and telephone surveys. In Washington, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's mandatory charter boat tuna logbook program in place since 2005 captures information on CPFV fishing location and effort. Washington's Ocean Sampling Program also captures catch and effort information for recreational fisheries, including private boats and CPFVs.

These recreational catch and effort data on the West Coast are compiled into a single Recreational Fisheries Information Network² database and/or are available in the highly migratory species Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation³ documents, available to fisheries scientists, managers and the public.

² <https://www.recfin.org/>

³ <https://www.pcouncil.org/safe-documents-2/>