



**COMMISSION**  
**ELEVENTH REGULAR SESSION**  
Faleata Sports Complex, Apia, SAMOA  
1 - 5 December 2014

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**IGFA POSITION STATEMENT**

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**WCPFC11-2014-OP15**  
**26 November 2014**

**Paper by International Game Fish Association (IGFA)**



# International Game Fish Association

## Fishing Hall of Fame & Museum

300 Gulf Stream Way, Dania Beach, Florida, 33004 U.S.A.

Phone: (954) 927-2628 • Fax: (954) 924-4299 • Museum Fax (954) 924-4220

### Recommendations to the 11<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

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 162 pop-up satellite archival tags in marlin around the world in the past three years, many of which have been in waters under this organization's purview. The information gained from this exercise is available to your scientific committee.

#### 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 set a target reference rate above  $B_{MSY}$  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  $B_{MSY}$ .
- 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 2014 stock assessment update indicates that Pacific Bluefin tuna have been reduced to only 4% of their virgin biomass. Yet, at the 2014 meeting, the WCPFC Northern Committee agreed to only a 10-year rebuilding target of less than 7% of historic biomass. These actions are insufficient to address the status of Pacific bluefin tuna and will result in the stock remaining in a severely depleted condition for at least another decade. The WCPFC should direct the Northern Committee to establish a target that has a *reasonable likelihood* of rebuilding the stock. The WCPFC should also work closely with the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission to enact Pacific-wide management measures that would restore Pacific bluefin abundance to at least 25% of its historic biomass within 10 years.

*The International Game Fish Association is a not-for-profit organization committed to the conservation of game fish and the promotion of responsible, ethical angling practices through science, education, rule making and record keeping.*

Email: [HQ@igfa.org](mailto:HQ@igfa.org) • Website: [www.igfa.org](http://www.igfa.org)

- According to the 2014 stock assessment, the bigeye tuna stock has been depleted by 84%. Excessive harvest of juvenile fish around FADs by purse seine gear continues to be problematic, as temporary FAD closures have proved largely ineffective. The IGFA urges the WPCFC to enact FAD set limits to reduce juvenile bigeye harvest, as well as to implement measures that will reduce bigeye mortality across all fishing gears in line with scientific advice.
- Pacific skipjack represent the world's largest tuna fishery, yet no target reference points exist. IGFA urges the WPCFC to adopt a target reference point for this fishery this year and also agree to implement target reference points and harvest control rules for all major tuna species.

### **Sharks**

- The IGFA urges the WPCFC to develop a dedicated conservation and management measure for sharks that bans wire traces on all longlines and utilizes precautionary scientific advice to manage them sustainably.

### **IUU**

- IGFA recommends that WPCFC strengthen the controls against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Specifically, we urge the commission to establish a procedure that allows IUU vessels to be listed and removed throughout the year so that a comprehensive list of IUU vessels can be maintained.
- Transshipment at sea facilitates IUU fishing and the IGFA recommends that the WPCFC ban all forms of transshipment at sea until it can be demonstrated that such operations are not contributing to IUU fishing.

### **General**

- Recreational angling is an established and important economic entity in developed countries and a growing one in many developing nations. As such we wish that WPCFC recognize both its relevance and that it may necessitate alternate management objectives than those used in commercial fisheries. IGFA kindly offers its consultation to WPCFC on recreational fisheries issues.
- Managing fisheries on the basis of MSY is an excessively risk-prone approach. As such, we suggest that WPCFC adopt a target objective above  $B_{MSY}$  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 than to necessarily harvest fish. In addition to its inherent uncertainty, managing stocks on the level of MSY not only reduces the abundance of fish but also their average size. Maintaining stocks at higher abundances benefits recreational anglers that release their fish and also 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 WPCFC's purview must be taken into consideration. Better catch data from these fisheries is necessary to evaluate their impact on HMS fisheries.