



**TO ALL COMMISSION MEMBERS, COOPERATING NON-MEMBERS,
PARTICIPATING TERRITORIES AND OBSERVERS**

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WCPFC15 Priorities

Dear Colleagues,

With just under a month left until we convene in Honolulu for WCPFC15, I write to draw your attention to some key issues to consider in preparation for our discussions.

South Pacific Albacore

For several years now, members have been working toward strengthening existing management measures for the South Pacific Albacore fishery, including the development of a Target Reference Point (TRP) in more recent years. Discussions have continued throughout 2018 and the Commission at its 14th Regular Session in Manila agreed to adopt a TRP at its 2018 session.

Ms. Sarah Williams (New Zealand) has been leading intersessional work to advance discussions on a South Pacific albacore TRP and SPC has also done some work to support these discussions in Honolulu. I anticipate that members will come prepared to adopt a TRP for South Pacific albacore and to advance progress on management of this fishery.

Harvest Strategies

The complexity of a harvest strategy framework and the time required to fully understand and discuss the various elements does not lend itself well to the annual meeting setup. After the Management Options Workshops ended, we have tried to provide dedicated time in Commission meetings through small working groups which yielded some results, but nowhere near what is required in order to make reasonable progress on harvest strategy development.

At WCPFC15, we will be guided by our harvest strategy work plan on the agenda items for discussion, but I want to flag some points for you to factor into your preparations on these discussions:

- Management Objectives logically serve as the foundation of a harvest strategy and the Commission has only been able to consider objectives for the tropical purse seine fishery, thus far (WCPFC13). The only comprehensive document reflecting discussion on management objectives is still the “strawman” proposal that arose out of the Management Options Workshops, which was accepted as a starting point for Commission discussions but is in no way a reflection of recorded management objectives for purposes of current and future harvest strategy discussions.

- TRP discussions are complex and require consideration of a wide range of factors. An interim skipjack TRP is in place and the Commission has agreed to adopt a South Pacific albacore TRP at the December session. Development of a yellowfin and bigeye TRP, respectively, will require substantial time and more than will be available to us in December, though initial discussions will take place.
- SPC's limited human and financial resources are carefully planned to meet the needs of its member countries as well as the WCPFC, as our Science Service Provider. In 2018, SPC has had additional resources available to conduct some work around harvest strategies and they have provided a number of resource papers to support our December discussions. These papers will help us to have initial discussions on the range of harvest strategy tasks that we've agreed to address in the harvest strategy work plan.
- At the request of WCPFC14, SC14 considered and provided recommendations to WCPFC15 on the possibility of establishing a Science-Management Dialogue to focus solely on the development of the Commission's harvest strategy. This initiative comes from a recognition by the Commission that a dedicated, Commission-endorsed forum is required in order to meaningfully consider the complex elements of a comprehensive harvest strategy. We will take the necessary time to consider this issue in December to ensure that we can settle on a viable way to progress harvest strategy development in the future.

Compliance Monitoring Scheme

CMM 2017-07 will expire at the end of 2018 but it is also under review through the Intersessional Working Group process led by Mr. Glen Joseph (RMI). The IWG was tasked to review the report of the CMS Review Panel and has been working on the development of a revised CMM for the CMS, which was the focus of a one-day IWG meeting ahead of TCC14.

As with other intersessional tasks, more work remains to be done and we will ensure that the necessary time is given in December to considering the future of the CMS.

Comprehensive Measure for Sharks and Rays

WCPFC currently has five different shark CMMs and none on rays. For several years now, the TCC has struggled to assess compliance with shark CMM provisions because of the lack of reliable and available data. The result is that the Commission's shark and ray management framework lacks robustness and continues to fall short of fulfilling one of the Commission's key functions to minimize impacts on associated or dependent species.

Under the leadership of Mr. Shingo Ota (Japan), an intersessional working group (IWG) has been working throughout the year to progress a comprehensive draft CMM for the consideration and adoption by WCPFC15. With five of the Commission's six key tuna species in relatively sustainable positions, the Commission has an important opportunity this year to adopt a strong management framework for shark and ray species and further advance WCPFC's efforts toward meeting its objectives.

Tropical Tuna Bridging Measure

CMM 2017-01 will be reviewed in December as several provisions are effective for 2018 only, and some others require review and updating following SC14 advice and other intersessional work. SPC as the Science Service Provider has prepared its evaluation of the effectiveness of CMM 2017-01 in meeting its objectives and we will consider this alongside the required reviews of relevant provisions.

CMM 2017-01 commits the Commission to agreeing on high seas limits by 2019 so we will also need to have a discussion on the process for how this work will be carried out in 2019.

Other Issues

1. Designation of North Pacific blue shark and North Pacific striped marlin as a northern stock: This has been a repeat issue in the Commission, SC, and NC. SC14 has proposed some criteria for the Commission to consider when making a determination as to the appropriate designation of these stocks and I ask that you give some attention to these criteria and be prepared to make a decision in December.
2. Review of specific CMM provisions recommended by the CMS process: As a result of challenges arising from TCC14's review of the draft CMR, the following CMMs are forwarded to the Commission for review and revision, as appropriate:
 - a. CMM 2005-03, paragraph 2;
 - b. CMM 2014-02, paragraph 4;
 - c. the equivalent of paragraphs 14, 16, 18 and 22 of CMM 2016-01 in CMM 2017-01;
 - d. CMM 2016-01, and subsequent versions, in relation to charters;
 - e. CMM 2016-04, paragraph 3 (2).

Further details on these provisions are contained in the Provisional CMR, which remains in the non-public domain until it is adopted by the Commission. I hope that we can make some decisions about these specific provisions as requested by TCC14 so that we aren't facing repeat issues year-to-year.

Of course, there are many more issues under consideration at the upcoming December meeting and the list of issues raised in this letter in no way diminishes the importance of those other issues to the Commission's work.

I look forward to seeing all of you in Honolulu in December and to having productive discussions that move the Commission forward.

Sincerely,



Rhea Moss-Christian
CHAIR

cc: Feleti P. Teo, WCPFC Executive Director
Jung-re Riley Kim, WCPFC Vice Chair