



2005 Market Street, Suite 1700  
Philadelphia, PA 19103-7077

901 E St., NW, 10th Floor  
Washington, DC 20004-2008  
[www.pewenvironment.org](http://www.pewenvironment.org)

Square du Bastion 1A boîte 5  
1050 Brussels, Belgium

Studio 10, Tiger House Burton Street  
London WC1H 1BY, United Kingdom

**The Pew Charitable Trusts**  
**Statement to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission**  
**11<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Scientific Committee**  
**5-13 August 2015, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia**

The Pew Charitable Trusts thanks the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) for the opportunity to participate in the 11<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Scientific Committee (SC) as an observer. Pew urges SC11 to provide:

- Recommendations on appropriately ambitious timelines for the implementation of the harvest strategies approach for tuna species, including the adoption of interim target reference points for skipjack and south Pacific albacore tunas at WCPFC12.
- Scientific advice to end overfishing of bigeye tuna, considering the latest scientific analysis presented to the SC;
- Recommendations to improve the management of the Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) associated purse seine fishery, including information that can inform the progress of the WCPFC FAD Working Group;
- An evaluation of the status of operational data and its impact on the provision of ‘best practice’ scientific advice;
- Advice to the Northern Committee and International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) on ensuring that the 2016 Pacific bluefin tuna assessment includes projections of a wide range of candidate management scenarios and comprehensive sensitivity analyses that adequately represent the assumptions in the assessment; and
- An assessment of whether CCM’s have submitted management plans for all targeted shark fisheries, as required by CMM 2014-05.

**Harvest strategies**

The Commission last year took a significant step toward ensuring that fisheries in the Western and Central Pacific become and/or remain healthy and profitable when it adopted CMM 2014-06. The measure commits the Commission to develop and implement a six-part harvest strategy approach for each of the key fisheries or stocks under its management according to the process set out in the measure. One of the requirements is for the Commission to agree on a workplan and indicative timeframes for the adoption of harvest strategies no later than the 2015 annual meeting. **SC11 should advise on the adoption of a harvest strategy workplan complete with appropriately ambitious timelines, including by providing detailed feedback on Australia’s draft workplan outlined in MI-WP-01; as well as providing commentary regarding the implications of the use of fishery- or stock-based approaches to harvest strategies development.**

Pew strongly supports continued development of reference points as part of the adoption of comprehensive harvest strategies. The Parties to the Nauru Agreement have proposed a target

reference point for skipjack ( $0.5 SB_{F=0}$ ) that is suitably precautionary, and based at or around the current levels of biomass. Similarly, the participants in the Tokelau Arrangement are developing a target reference point for south Pacific albacore ( $0.7 B_0$ ). **Recognizing that SC previously recommended keeping the skipjack tuna stock at or around current levels and noted trends of increasing effort and catch of south Pacific albacore, SC11 should recommend the prioritization of the adoption of a skipjack and south Pacific albacore target reference point this year, even if only on an interim basis.**

Annex I, Paragraph 6 of CMM 2014-06 directs the Scientific Committee to provide advice on the acceptable levels of risk associated with breaching limit reference points and deviating from target reference points. Both the UN Fish Stocks Agreement and WCPFC Convention recommend the risk of breaching a limit reference point be set very low, particularly in cases of greater uncertainty. “Very low” has been defined as less than 10 percent probability in other international fora (e.g., CCAMLR)<sup>1</sup> and based on the best available science.<sup>2</sup> **SC11 should advise the Commission to set the acceptable level of risk of breaching a limit reference point at no greater than 10 percent probability. The SC should also advise the Commission on a similarly precautionary risk level for not meeting the target reference point, for example less than/equal to 25 percent.**

### **Bigeye tuna**

Bigeye tuna is overfished and overfishing is known to have been occurring for many years. The objective of tropical tuna conservation measure 2014-01 is to reduce fishing mortality on bigeye to the level that would support maximum sustainable yield by the end of 2017. **As it has in prior years, SC11 should provide clear advice on the required reduction in mortality to end overfishing of bigeye. In addition, SC11 should evaluate the longline and purse seine fisheries’ most recent catches against the likelihood of meeting the objectives in CMM 2014-01.**

### **Fish Aggregating Devices**

In the purse seine fishery, bigeye is taken almost exclusively on sets on floating objects. Increasing use of FADs also has contributed to record-high catches of skipjack. Recognizing the Commission has created a FAD Working Group to recommend a way forward on FAD management options, SC11 should:

- **Reiterate and strengthen SC support (since SC8) for the reduction of FAD sets to a level no greater than 2010 levels and provide advice on any additional information that would be required to implement appropriate FAD set limits in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean in 2016;**
- **Comment on the likelihood of management mechanisms other than FAD set limits in ending bigeye overfishing;**
- **Evaluate the impact of FADs on purse seine effort, and the likelihood of ‘effort creep’ in the skipjack fishery, and the impact of FADs on the sustainability of that fishery; and**

---

<sup>1</sup> Antarctic Climate & Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre. A presentation on the CCAMLR implementation of the ecosystem approach on the high seas. [http://www.un.org/depts/los/consultative\\_process/documents/7\\_constable.pdf](http://www.un.org/depts/los/consultative_process/documents/7_constable.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Sainsbury, K. Best practice reference points for Australian Fisheries. 2008.

<http://www.daff.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/fisheries/environment/bycatch/best-practice-references-keith-sainsbury.pdf>

- **Recommend adoption of a system of gathering data on FADs that would complement the pilot project -- planned for implementation in 2016 in the waters of the members of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement – that would receive the same satellite tracking data already transmitted by FAD buoys to industry.**

### **Operational data**

The SC last year recommended all operational data should be available for future stock assessments. Several CCMs have cited domestic legal impediments to explain why they are not providing operational data for their longline fleets 10 years after the WCPFC Convention entered into force. An agreement reached at WCPFC11, as referenced in footnote 12 of CMM 2014-01, provides a grace period of three years to China, Chinese Taipei, Korea and the Philippines. Some additional data have been provided intersessionally. **SC11 should evaluate the status of operational data provided to the Commission and comment on any limitations in data in hampering the Commission from receiving ‘best practice’ scientific advice.**

### **Pacific bluefin tuna**

At just 4.2 percent of unfished biomass, Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF) is by far the most imperiled stock under WCPFC’s jurisdiction. The ISC Pacific Bluefin Working Group recently determined that recruitment in 2014 had fallen below 2012 levels and may now be at historically low levels.<sup>3</sup> According to another ISC analysis, the size of the bluefin stock will continue to decline through 2018, even with the stricter management measures adopted for the western and eastern Pacific last year.<sup>4</sup> These scientists also found that over the next decade there is a one in three chance the Pacific bluefin tuna population will fall to its lowest level ever recorded.

While PBF assessments are conducted by the ISC rather than the WCPFC Scientific Provider, SC11 still has the opportunity to provide input on the assessment. The results from the next PBF assessment, scheduled for early 2016, will be used to determine additional management measures necessary to rebuild the stock, so it is imperative that it is as robust as possible. **SC11 should advise the ISC on including a full range of management scenarios to evaluate in the projections and a broad suite of sensitivity analyses. The sensitivity analyses should take into account feedback provided by the Center for Independent Experts on the 2012 stock assessment, particularly with regard to age to first maturity, natural mortality, and steepness.**<sup>5</sup>

### **Sharks**

Pew would like to draw SC participants’ attention to CMM 2014-05 on the conservation and management of sharks that states: “For fisheries that target sharks in association with WCPFC fisheries, CCMs must develop a management plan for that fishery that includes specific authorisations to fish such as a licence and a TAC or other measure to limit the catch of shark to acceptable levels. These management plans must be developed by 1 July 2015, if possible and no later than 1 December 2015 and submitted to the Commission. These plans must explicitly demonstrate how the fisheries aim to avoid or reduce catch and maximizes live release of

<sup>3</sup> ISC. Report of the Pacific Bluefin Tuna Working Group intersessional workshop. April, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Fukuda, H. et al. Updates of recruitment and harvesting scenario for the future projection of Pacific bluefin tuna. April 2015. [http://isc.ac.affrc.go.jp/pdf/PBF/ISC\\_2015\\_PBF\\_1/ISC\\_15-1\\_PBFWG\\_10\\_Fukuda.pdf](http://isc.ac.affrc.go.jp/pdf/PBF/ISC_2015_PBF_1/ISC_15-1_PBFWG_10_Fukuda.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Review of the 2012 Pacific bluefin tuna stock assessment. [https://swfsc.noaa.gov/2012\\_PBF\\_PeerReview/](https://swfsc.noaa.gov/2012_PBF_PeerReview/)

specimens of highly depleted species such as silky and oceanic whitetip sharks caught incidentally. Those management plans submitted by 1 July shall be provided to the SC11 for review, before discussion at WCPFC 12.”

**Pew urges SC11 to give adequate time to review the submitted plans and evaluate whether the proposed catch of sharks is sustainable.** For those CCMs that do not submit plans that will allow the sustainable management of sharks, we encourage them to reduce shark mortality and avoid all shark catch wherever possible, by prohibiting the retention of sharks and banning the use of wire leaders and shark lines.