

**JOINT IATTC AND WCPFC-NC WORKING GROUP MEETING ON THE  
MANAGEMENT OF PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA**

FIFTH SESSION

Virtual Meeting  
6-7 October 2020, 7am-10am Japan Standard Time

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

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**IATTC-NC-JWG05-2020/06**

**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 fishery sectors target Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF) in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO): (1) small coastal purse seine<sup>1</sup> 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 20 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 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 274 mt of commercial PBF in 2019. Consequently, the annual limit in 2020 is 356 mt. 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 is 356 mt; therefore, a 15 mt trip limit is in effect until catch is 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 requires 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 is 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

### 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 logbook program provides a record of fishing activity for most CPFVs. Logbooks also provide catch information on PBF taken in Mexico. Statistics for the CPFV fishery are also available from the federal charter logbook program. CRFS data are collected primarily through dockside interviews, as well as telephone surveys in most years. These data are the best available for estimating PBF catch by private boats. In Oregon, statistics for recreational fisheries, including private and CPFV, are available from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Ocean Recreational Boat Survey Program. Beginning in 2005, a mandatory charter boat tuna logbook program was implemented in Washington to provide information on fishing location and effort. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Ocean Sampling Program also captures catch and effort information for recreational fisheries in Washington, including private and CPFV. These recreational catch and effort data are compiled into a single Recreational Fisheries Information Network<sup>2</sup> database and/or are available in the highly migratory species Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation<sup>3</sup> documents, available to fisheries scientists, managers and the public. As a note of comparison to U.S. monitoring of recreational Atlantic bluefin tuna, recreational vessel owners and operators are also required to report all Atlantic bluefin tuna catches to either their state fish and wildlife agency or NMFS. NMFS also administers a survey of Atlantic bluefin tuna catch at the dock, by phone, or by mail on the U.S. East Coast, similar to that of the state administered sampling programs on the U.S. West Coast.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.recfin.org/>

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