

CHAIR'S REPORT
OF THE
SPRING WORKSHOP OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SPECIES WORKING GROUPS

Hilton Hotel Silver Spring
Silver Spring, MD

MARCH 5-6, 2002

John E. Graves, Ph.D.
Advisory Committee Chairman

Drafted by
Erika Carlsen and
Kim Blankenbeker
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service

**CHAIR'S REPORT OF THE SPRING WORKSHOP
OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE SPECIES WORKING GROUPS**

*Silver Spring, MD
MARCH 5-6, 2002*

Summary: The Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) convened its spring Species Working Group (SWG) meeting on March 5-6, 2002, at the Hilton Hotel in Silver Spring, Maryland. The four Species Working Groups (Swordfish, Bluefin Tuna, Billfish, and BAYS or Bigeye, Albacore, Yellowfin, and Skipjack Tunas) are composed of Advisory Committee members and Technical Advisors, as appointed by the U.S. Commissioners to ICCAT.

On March 5, the Committee discussed the 2001 ICCAT meeting results, U.S. implementation of ICCAT recommendations, 2002 SCRS research activities, and NMFS research and monitoring activities. The Committee also heard reports on allocation criteria development, development of the U.S. National Plan of Action on Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported (IUU) fishing, the Endangered Species Act status review of white marlin, and the upcoming activities of the International Bycatch Task Force.

The Advisory Committee met in closed session in the early afternoon of March 5 to discuss the upcoming ICCAT intersessional meetings on combating IUU fishing, using trade measures to promote conservation objectives, and developing integrated monitoring and control measures. Later in the afternoon, the Committee and its Technical Advisors broke into SWGs for detailed discussions. The purpose of the Working Group meetings was to identify management and research priorities which the Advisory Committee might wish to recommend to the U.S. Commissioners. Each SWG was asked to consider previous SWG recommendations, the status of the stocks, the effectiveness of current international conservation and management measures, research and data needs, compliance issues, and any other matters relating to U.S. goals for and responsibilities under ICCAT. The SWGs met again on March 6 to finalize their recommendations.

In addition, the Committee discussed a variety of administrative issues during its two day meeting. The Committee established October 14-16, 2002, as the date for its fall meeting and approved dates and locations for its four regional meetings, to be held in the fall 2002. The Convener of each SWG presented the preliminary results of the working group discussions to the Committee for consideration. The Committee adopted the four SWG reports.

The agenda for the meeting is attached as Appendix 1. The list of participants is included as Appendix 2. The list of materials distributed to the Committee is included as Appendix 3. The final reports of the SWGs are contained in Attachments 1 through 4 (i.e., billfish, BAYS tunas, swordfish, and bluefin tuna, respectively).

I. Opening of the Meeting

1) *Opening Comments and Introductions:* Advisory Committee Chairman John Graves opened the meeting on March 5 by welcoming Committee members and noting that the Commissioners had recently made three interim appointments. Shana Beemer replaced Greg Stone (who resigned his position in 2001) as a bluefin tuna technical advisor. Charlie Witek replaced Jim Donofrio as a bluefin tuna technical advisor. Mr. Donofrio recently moved onto the Advisory Committee in place of Pete Barrett, who resigned in 2001. Lastly, Bob Lucas was appointed to the Committee to finish the term of Bob Hayes. Bob Hayes was recently appointed as the U.S. Recreational Commissioner to ICCAT. The Chairman also noted that Jill Stevenson was in attendance as the Maryland *ex officio* Committee member and Bob Pride was representing the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council on the Committee. A participant list is attached as Appendix 2. Dr. Graves reviewed the process and goals for the meeting, noting the need to develop specific research and management recommendations for the Commissioners.

Dr. Graves announced that Rolland Schmitten had resigned his position as U.S. Government Commissioner to ICCAT. Mr. Schmitten will be succeeded by Dr. William Hogarth, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries. Mr. Schmitten addressed the Committee and commented that ICCAT had a number of successes, such as the rebuilding plans for western bluefin tuna and northern swordfish, and the adoption of allocation criteria. He stressed, however, that more work on issues, such as eastern bluefin tuna management, is critical. He also noted that ICCAT was in need of structural changes. He stressed the need for assessment cycles with time frames of 3 years or longer that are staggered, so that the Commission would not have to consider management for all ICCAT species every year. He felt that the ICCAT annual meeting could be shortened to one week if longer range management plans were developed and PWG and Compliance issues were held in advance of the Commission session. Mr. Schmitten also addressed the issue of compliance, stating that the Commission had to be firm with those that did not comply, whether members or non-members. The Commission should be prepared to use trade measures as appropriate to encourage compliance.

Dr. Hogarth thanked Mr. Schmitten for the years he had devoted to ICCAT issues and noted that Mr. Schmitten would complete the ongoing negotiations with the European Community regarding bluefin tuna. Dr. Hogarth expressed pleasure at once again being involved in ICCAT issues and working with the Committee. He noted his readiness to lead the United States on these important matters.

The Committee and private sector Commissioners expressed sadness that Mr. Schmitten was leaving ICCAT while fully welcoming Dr. Hogarth to the U.S. Federal Government Commissioner position.

2) *Adoption of the Agenda:* The Committee expressed a desire to complete its agenda as quickly as possible. The agenda was adopted by the Committee with a target completion date and time of

Wednesday, March 6, in the early afternoon. The revised agenda is attached as Appendix 1.

3) *Appointments*: The Chair appointed a convener and a rapporteur for each SWG. Viridin C. Brown was appointed as the BAYS Working Group convener and Kim Blankenbeker was appointed rapporteur. Gail Johnson was appointed as the Swordfish Working Group convener and Erika Carlsen was appointed rapporteur. Brad Chase was appointed as the Bluefin Tuna Working Group convener and Rachel Husted was appointed rapporteur. Given that the 2001 Billfish Working Group convener was unavailable due to his recent change in status, John Graves agreed to serve as interim convener of the Billfish Working Group. Dave Kerstetter served as rapporteur.

II. 2001 ICCAT Meeting Results

The Chair gave a presentation highlighting the accomplishments of the 2001 ICCAT meeting. Overhead slides from this presentation are available from the Committee's Executive Secretary upon request.

III. U.S. Implementation of ICCAT Decisions

Dr. Christopher Rogers, Chief of NMFS' Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management Division, noted that a rulemaking would be necessary to implement ICCAT recommendations from the 2001 meeting, including the swordfish and bigeye tuna statistical document programs. He also noted the ongoing efforts to implement ICCAT recommendations from the 2000 meeting.

IV. Research and Monitoring

Dr. Jerry Scott of the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) gave a presentation on the schedule of ICCAT scientific meetings for 2001. Copies of this presentation were distributed to the Committee and are available from the Committee's Executive Secretary upon request.

Dr. Scott reminded everyone that SCRS meetings are open to scientists only if they are invited by the working group or if they are presenting a scientific paper at the meeting. He reviewed the process for contributing scientific papers to the SCRS through the U.S. Delegation, noting that titles and summaries are due about a month before a particular meeting and that a draft of the paper is due to the SEFSC no later than two weeks before the meeting unless prior arrangements have been made. He noted that a detailed description of this process had been circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting.

A Committee member noted that the 2002 bluefin tuna assessment should not be split into an assessment of the east and a separate assessment of the west – particularly in light of the recent tagging information. It was noted that SCRS was to look at the stock boundary issue for swordfish at this year's assessment. Dr. Scott commented that the Japanese might have some

information that could shed light on this issue. The Committee expressed general frustration about the lack of data reporting by certain ICCAT members.

V. Research and Monitoring

Dr. Rogers noted that a document had been produced in response to a request by the Committee in 2001 on various research and monitoring activities taking place within and outside NMFS. In the interests of time, the Committee agreed that distribution and discussion of the document should occur in each SWG.

VI. Reports and Updates

1. *Allocation Criteria Development*: Rollie Schmitten reported on the successful outcome of the allocation criteria development process, largely due to the diligence of the United States. He noted that the resolution of this issue should eliminate arguments that the criteria development process must be complete before conservation and management measures can be developed. The Committee recognized that the finalization of the allocation process was a significant achievement. A Committee member noted that this allocation process may well mean that the United States and other countries will have to reduce harvests in the future in order to make room for new entrants.

2. *IUU NPOA Development*: Deirdre Warner-Kramer of the Department of State reported on the development of the U.S. IUU NPOA. She announced that a draft National Plan of Action for IUU fishing should be ready later this year (possibly in May or June) and that public input would be sought. She indicated that the NPOA could be finalized as early as the fall or winter 2002. She noted that the United States has a large number of tools to help in the IUU fight, such as the Lacey Act and the ability to close markets. She also noted that regional organizations to which the United States is a member are developing compliance and monitoring measures.

With regard to capacity building, Ms. Warner-Kramer noted that there is interest in helping other countries improve their monitoring and control measures. She announced that a workshop on enforcement will be held in east Africa for countries to help control IUU fishing. Spain has also announced its intent to hold a meeting on IUU fishing in November 2002. Finally, Ms. Warner-Kramer drew the Committee's attention to a proposed ICCAT resolution that provides a further definition on the scope of IUU fishing. She noted that the resolution, if adopted by postal vote as expected, could provide a tool for enhancing the use of trade sanctions to combat IUU fishing and that it would be evaluated *vis a vis* the U.S. NPOA on IUU fishing. Regarding this last item, the Committee expressed support for implementing the ICCAT resolution, once adopted. Ms. Warner-Kramer indicated that the U.S. trade agencies would be reviewing the resolution to see what could be done domestically to implement it.

3. *ESA Status Review of White Marlin*: David Cottingham, NMFS Office of Protected Resources, discussed the progress of the petition to list the Atlantic white marlin as threatened or

endangered under the Endangered Species Act. NMFS made a 90-day finding that the Atlantic white marlin petition presented substantial scientific and commercial information indicating that a listing of Atlantic white marlin may be warranted. Mr. Cottingham told the Committee that the review team would be announced soon and would be composed of State and Federal government experts. One Committee member expressed her concern that the review team would not include experts on white marlin from the private scientific community. Other Committee members were concerned about a possible listing of white marlin because U.S. sources of mortality have little effect on the stock. A Committee member questioned whether the limited impact that an ESA listing will have on overall mortality is considered when reviewing a petition. Mr. Cottingham replied that there is no provision in the ESA for taking into account transboundary considerations.

4. *International Bycatch Task Force*: Patrick Moran from the NMFS International Fisheries Division reported on the development of an Action Plan for the International Bycatch Task Force on sea turtles, sharks, and seabirds. The actions outlined in the plan include demarches to appropriate countries on the issue of sea turtle bycatch in longline fisheries and requests for relevant information regarding sea turtle bycatch. Mr. Moran announced that a Sea Turtle Bycatch Technical Workshop is tentatively planned for March 2003 and will bring together gear specialists as well as representatives from longlining countries to discuss possible gear modifications or other methods to reduce sea turtle bycatch in longline fisheries. Along with the demarches on sea turtle bycatch, communication with other countries will also discuss the development of National Plans of Actions for seabirds and sharks.

Committee members responded to Mr. Moran with concern that longline fisheries were the sole target of this effort and that other gear types also contribute to sea turtle bycatch. Rachel Husted of NMFS responded that although other gear types are of concern, the impetus behind this effort is to seek international agreements to establish standards and measures for bycatch reduction that are comparable to those applicable to U.S. fishermen, as called for by Section 202(h) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Moreover, turtle bycatch issues for certain other gear types have received significant attention over the years, such as in the shrimp trawl fishery where the use of TEDS is required.

VII. Discussions of Upcoming 2002 Intersessional Meetings

Deirdre Warner-Kramer and Kim Blankenbeker (NMFS International Fisheries Division) reported that ICCAT had agreed at its 2001 meeting to hold intersessional meetings on combating IUU fishing, on the use of trade measures to promote conservation, and on the development of integrated monitoring and control measures. Japan offered to host the meetings in Tokyo from May 27-June 1, 2002. The agendas for these meetings were still under development at the time of the Committee meeting. Generally speaking, Japan has indicated an interest in seeking effective ways to cut the business relationships between companies and vessels engaged in IUU fishing activities. Japan has proposed that the bulk of the intersessionals be devoted to this issue. Canada is interested in reviewing ICCAT's instruments that contemplate the use of trade measures, to consider the criteria used by ICCAT to impose and lift trade sanctions, and to

improve both the instruments and processes, as necessary, in light of GATT/WTO requirements. Finally, the EC proposed the establishment of the monitoring working group in 2000. It met for the first time in 2001 and developed an outline for integrating ICCAT's existing monitoring and compliance regimes as well as identifying additional needs, particularly in light of the requirements under UNCLOS and the UN Agreement on Straddling and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. The second meeting of this working group will have little time for its work (perhaps 2 days) and may not be able to do more than finalize the outline begun in 2001. Future meetings of this working group will be necessary as it begins to substantively develop the issues in the outline.

VIII. Moving Forward after the November 2001 ICCAT Meeting

In the interests of time, the Chair proposed that this issue be taken up by each SWG. The Committee agreed with this suggestion.

IX. Species Working Group Meetings

On the afternoon of March 5, each of the SWGs met separately in closed session to develop research and management recommendations for consideration by the Advisory Committee as a whole. Once agreed, these recommendations will be transmitted to the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries and the U.S. Commissioners to ICCAT. The final reports of these Working Groups are attached. Attachment 1 is the Billfish Working Group Report. Attachment 2 is the BAYS Tunas Working Group Report. Attachment 3 is the Swordfish Working Group Report. Attachment 4 is the Bluefin Tuna Working Group Report.

X. Advisory Committee Business

The Advisory Committee considered the following operational issues:

a. Funding/Budget: The Chair presented the Committee's budget. The Committee is currently in good shape financially. A copy of the budget is available from the Committee Chairman.

b. Date of Fall Meeting: The Chair proposed that the Committee schedule its fall meeting on October 14-16, 2002, (Monday through Wednesday). The Committee agreed with the Chair's suggestions.

c. Regional Meetings: The Committee agreed upon the following dates and locations for the 2002 regional meetings: September 3 in Atlantic City, NJ; September 4 in Boston, MA; September 17 in Charleston, SC; September 18 in Miami, FL.

The Chairman indicated that every effort would be made to finalize the schedule of the meetings as soon as possible so that there would be ample time to advertise them to the public. He emphasized that each Committee member had a responsibility to ensure that all interested

members of the public are aware of these meetings. Attendance by Committee members at these meetings would be structured and funded as in past years.

D. Other Issues: No other issues were discussed.

XI. SWG Meetings Continued

On the morning on Wednesday, March 6, the SWGs met again in closed sessions to finalize the recommendations to be made to the full Advisory Committee.

XII. Preliminary Reports of the Species Working Group Discussions

The conveners of each Species Working Group presented to the full Advisory Committee the preliminary recommendations of their groups. The final versions of these reports, the recommendations of which were adopted by the full Committee, are attached to this report. Attachment 1 is the Billfish Working Group Report. Attachment 2 is the BAYS Tunas Working Group Report. Attachment 3 is the Swordfish Working Group Report. Attachment 4 is the Bluefin Tuna Working Group Report.

Billfish: John Graves presented the results of the Billfish Working Group meeting. A Committee member suggested that a more appropriate term for the recreational release fishery was “hook and release” or “live release” and not “catch and release.” Several members of the Committee expressed interest in seeing an increase in the use of observers to ensure marlins are released from longline gear consistent with ICCAT’s rules.

BAYS Tunas (and other species): Viridin Brown presented the recommendations of the BAYS working group. A Committee member suggested the United States not report its BAYS data as provisional as this could cause problems – particularly relative to allocation negotiations. There was no consensus to change the recommendation.

A Committee member commented that the U.S. limitation on northern albacore was unfair and that more specific instructions should be developed on this issue before the 2002 ICCAT meeting that takes into consideration the specifics of the U.S. fishery – particularly the fluctuations in stock availability and abundance. A similar comment was made with regard to bigeye tuna. It was also suggested that 100 percent observer coverage be mandated at all times for the Gulf of Guinea fishery.

Regarding the issue of ICCAT’s future, it was reported that Congress might be interested in conducting an oversight hearing. This was seen to have some merit provided the objective was clearly defined.

Swordfish: The Swordfish Working Group recommendations were presented to the full Committee by Gail Johnson. After some discussion on the swordfish rebuilding plan, the

Committee endorsed these recommendations. Committee members expressed concern that ICCAT issues were not receiving enough high level attention in the U.S. Government-- particularly considering the actions of the EC. Several government representatives assured the Committee that these issues were being discussed at appropriately high levels within the Department of State and the Department of Commerce.

Bluefin Tuna: The Committee expressed concern about bluefin tuna farming and the difficulties it was causing with respect to quota calculations and trade tracking. Some Committee members stressed the need for a bycatch allowance of eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna in the directed swordfish fishery. Concern was expressed about possible harvests of bluefin tuna in directed fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. Improving ICCAT's observer coverage was discussed. An advisor expressed concern regarding the lack of forage fish for bluefin tuna. A Committee member stressed that the 8 percent small fish allowance in the western Atlantic was unfair and should be renegotiated. An analysis of altering this provision in the rebuilding program to determine a possible resource neutral shift was requested.

XIII. Other Business

International ICCAT Issues: Rolland Schmitten reported on the eastern bluefin tuna issue. He indicated that, prior to the annual ICCAT meeting, the United States will seek a commitment from the EC that they will support reducing the eastern bluefin tuna TAC to a sustainable level with a view to rebuilding it. Mr. Schmitten stressed that getting the EC to cooperate on bluefin tuna was critical and could indicate the type of future cooperation we can expect from that party.

XIV. Adjournment

Chairman Graves expressed his sincere appreciation to government and VIMS personnel for their excellent support of the meeting and quality presentations. He also thanked the Species Working Group conveners and rapporteurs for their hard work. He emphasized that all of these efforts contribute to the productivity and success of the Committee's meetings. Consistent with Committee wishes, the Chairman adjourned the spring 2002 Advisory Committee meeting early – at 2:15 pm on March 6, 2002.

Agenda

**2002 Spring Species Working Groups Meeting of the
Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to ICCAT
Location: Hilton Hotel - Silver Spring, MD**

Tuesday, March 5 (*Open to the Public Unless Otherwise Noted*)

John Graves, Advisory Committee Chairman, presiding

9:00 *Registration*

9:30 *Opening of the Meeting* (Graves)

- 1) Opening Remarks and Introductions
- 2) Adoption of the Agenda
- 3) Appointment of Conveners/Rapporteurs

9:45 *2001 ICCAT Meeting Results* (Graves)

10:00 *U.S. Implementation of ICCAT Decisions* (Rogers)

10:15 *2002 SCRS Research Activities and U.S. Participation* (Scott)

10:45 *NMFS Research and Monitoring Activities* (Rogers)

11:15 *Reports and Updates:*

1. Allocation Criteria Development (Schmitt)
2. IUU NPOA Development (Warner-Kramer)
3. ESA Status Review of White Marlin (Cottingham)
4. International Bycatch Taskforce (Moran)

11:55 *Other Open Session Business*

12:00 *Lunch*

Afternoon Session: Closed to the Public

1:15 *Upcoming 2002 ICCAT Intersessional Meetings* (NMFS/DOS)

1. Working Group on Combating IUU Fishing and on the Use of Trade Measures to Promote Conservation (Warner-Kramer)
2. Working Group to Develop Integrated Monitoring Measures (Blankenbeker)

1:45 *Moving Forward After the Events of the Nov. 2001 ICCAT Meeting* (Graves)

2:30-?? *Species Working Group Meetings*

Advisory Committee Spring 2002 Meeting Agenda Cont.

Wednesday, March 6 (*Open to the Public Unless Otherwise Noted*)

8:00 *Advisory Committee Business* (Graves) **(Closed to the Public)**

- a. Funding/Budget
- b. Dates of Fall Meeting
- c. Regional Meetings
 - Dates, Location, and Participation
- d. Other Issues

8:30 *SWG meetings* (Adoption: report/recommendations) **(Closed to the Public)**

10:30 *Preliminary Report of SWG Discussions* (*Conveners*)

- Billfish
- BAYS Tunas
- Swordfish
- Bluefin Tuna

1:45 *Other Business* (Graves)

2:15 *Adjournment*

LIST OF PARTICIPANTSU.S. Commissioners to ICCAT

Glenn Delaney	Commercial Commissioner
Bill Hogarth	Federal Government Commissioner
Bob Hayes	Recreational Commissioner

Advisory Committee Members

Nelson Beideman	Blue Water Fishermen's Association
Viridin Brown	Caribbean FMC
Brad Chase	Mass. Division of Marine Fisheries
Maumus Claverie	Gulf of Mexico FMC
Jack Devnew	The Flagship Group
James Donofrio	Recreational Fishing Alliance
Bob Eakes	Red Drum Tackle Shop
Willie Etheridge	Etheridge Seafood
Peter Foley	L. Boone
John Graves	VA Institute of Marine Science
Gail Johnson	F/V Seneca
Molly Lutcavage	New England Aquarium
Ellen Peel	The Billfish Foundation
Bob Pride	Mid-Atlantic FMC
Rich Ruais	East Coast Tuna Association
Steve Sloan	Confed/Assoc of Charterboats & Capts.
Jill Stevenson	<i>Ex-Officio</i> - State of Maryland
Randi Parks Thomas	U.S. Tuna Foundation
Steve Weiner	Bluefin Tuna Fisherman
David Wilmot	Ocean Wildlife Campaign

Committee Members not in Attendance:

<i>David Borden</i>	<i>New England FMC</i>
<i>John Mark Dean</i>	<i>South Atlantic FMC</i>
<i>Mike Genovese</i>	<i>F/V White Dove Too</i>
<i>Robert Lucas</i>	<i>Attorney at Law</i>
<i>Ellen Pikitch</i>	<i>Wildlife Conservation Society</i>
<i>Peter Weiss</i>	<i>General Category Tuna Association</i>

Technical Advisors

Shana Beemer	National Audubon Society
Steve Berkeley	University of Santa Cruz, AFS
Eleanor Bochenek	Rutgers University
James Budi	Predator Packouts
Phil Goodyear	Consultant
Elizabeth Lauck	Wildlife Conservation Society
Putnam MacLean	Bright Eye Fishing Corp.
Bob McAuliffe	McAuliffe Fishing, Inc.
Don Nehls	Lindgren-Pittman, Inc.
Dave Secor	University of Maryland
Greg Skomal	Mass. Division of Marine Fisheries
Bob Zales II	Panama City Boatmen Association
Charles Witek	Angler - NY

Technical Advisors not in Attendance

<i>Warren Cannon</i>	<i>F/V Linnea C</i>
<i>Ernie Panacek</i>	<i>Viking Village, BWFA</i>
<i>Vince Pyle</i>	<i>A Fisherman's Best</i>

Government Personnel

Kim Blankenbeker	NMFS International Fisheries
Erika Carlsen	NMFS International Fisheries
David Cottingham	NMFS Office of Protected Resources
Jack Dunnigan	NMFS Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Director
Rachel Husted	NMFS International Fisheries
Mariam McCall	NOAA GCF
Pat Moran	NMFS International Fisheries
Christopher Rogers	NMFS HMS Division, Chief
Rolland Schmitten	NMFS Office of Habitat Conservation, Director
Gerry Scott	NMFS SEFSC
Deirdre Warner-Kramer	Department of State

Other Attendees

David Kerstetter	VIMS
Andrew Loftus	Consultant
Dick Stone	SFF

Handouts

The following materials were distributed to the Committee during the spring 2002 meeting. Copies of these materials are available from the Committee's Executive Secretariat upon request.

- 1) 2002 Contact List of ICCAT Commissioners, U.S. Advisory Committee Technical Advisors, and Government Personnel
- 2) Report of the Forth Meeting of the ICCAT Working Group on Allocation Criteria
- 3) Petition to list Atlantic White Marlin under the Endangered Species Act
- 4) HMS Research Projects
- 5) Presentation by Gerald Scott on SCRS activities and meeting dates
- 6) 2002 Species Working Group Break Out Sessions - Draft Agenda
- 7) Report to the ICCAT Working Group to Develop Integrate Monitoring Measures
- 8) XVII Ordinary Meeting - Panel 4 - Opening Statement
- 9) SEFSC & U.S. ICCAT Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Monitoring and Research Activities - Discussion Draft
- 10) Letter from Commission Chairman, Jose Baranano, regarding Eastern Bluefin Tuna Management Measures for 2002 with attached proposed recommendation on catch limits for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean.
- 11) Proposed management measures not adopted at 2001 ICCAT meeting

Report of the Billfish Working Group
Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to ICCAT
2002 Advisory Committee Spring Meeting

Hilton Silver Spring
March 5-6, 2002

John Graves, *Convener*
David Kerstetter, *Rapporteur*

The Billfish Working Group discussed the ICCAT management of billfish under the “Recommendation by ICCAT to Amend the Plan to Rebuild Blue Marlin and White Marlin Populations” (PA4-089) that was approved by Panel 4 at the November 2001 meeting in Murcia, Spain. (Due to the adjournment of the meeting prior to formal approval of the panel report by the Commission Plenary, ICCAT members are voting on this measure via mail.) The group was briefed on the current status of the stock assessment schedule, specifically that at least the white marlin assessment will be conducted in 2002. However, the SCRS assessment schedule may also include blue marlin depending on the results from mail voting of the ICCAT members.

The working group also discussed the Billfish Working Group report from the 2001 Advisory Committee Spring Meeting. During 2001, U.S. scientists addressed many of the research priorities identified by the group, and it was noted that some of these projects were funded in cooperative research arrangements with NMFS. A review of the management priorities was also conducted, and the limitations of the 2001 western Atlantic sailfish stock assessment were discussed. It was dryly noted that the lack of quantifiable elements in the assessment was one of several reasons why a detailed report of the assessment has not yet been published.

Research

The following areas were identified as research priorities:

1. Continue efforts to describe the post-release survival of white marlin and blue marlin caught by commercial longline and recreational gear. The group was briefed on the results of collaborative research projects between 1999 and 2001 that examined post-release survival of blue marlin. Several working group members noted that the preliminary results obtained before the Morocco meeting had a positive effect on the negotiations for the release of live billfish, and further noted that such results with white marlin may have similar effects at the 2002 ICCAT meeting in Bilbao, Spain. While still

acknowledging that full, ocean-wide assessments of post-release survival rates (percentage) on all gear types would be extremely expensive, the group felt that this research should be continued.

2. *Identify habitat preferences of white marlin and blue marlin.* In the course of research into post-release survival of blue marlin, it was noted that improved satellite tag technology also provides detailed information on the time-at-depth and time-at-temperature for released fish. In concert with efforts to determine post-release survival, the working group considered it important to use these tags to obtain detailed habitat preference data.

3. *Continue evaluation and testing of the assumptions inherent in the habitat standardization model.* The working group discussed the habitat standardization model and noted that many of the underlying biological assumptions and effects of potential biases remain unanalyzed. The group noted that quantification of these assumptions would likely be an important contribution to the stock assessment process.

4. *Develop a more generalized surplus production model that would accommodate the effect of age structure with catch and effort data.* The current stock assessment uses a surplus production model fitted with ASPIC and Fishlab software. This model fits a logistic model to catch and weighted catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) time series data, but cannot account for the age structure of the population. The working group agreed that a generalization of this model to incorporate age-structured effects would allow for more robust billfish stock assessments.

5. *Continue research into methodologies to minimize billfish encounters and mortality in each targeted fishery that catches billfish.* Methodologies could include, but are not limited to, such measures as gear modifications and changes in the use of the gear (e.g., setting or hauling practices) for both the recreational and commercial fisheries.

6. *Continue work identifying basic billfish biological parameters.* Because stock assessments are sensitive to several biological parameters, the group supported additional biological research consistent with the 2000 ICCAT Recommendation. This should include research such as age-growth studies, gut content analyses, and reproduction.

Management:

1. *Promote measures to ensure compliance with current and future ICCAT billfish Recommendations.* The working group observed that the heart of any stock rebuilding measure was its adherence, i.e., compliance, with ICCAT Recommendations. The group suggested that standard reporting mechanisms and other avenues be explored to create an atmosphere of willing compliance with accepted binding recommendations, especially those regarding the discarding of live billfish.

2. *Encourage accurate data collection and recommended fisheries observer coverage.* It was noted several times that stock assessments are based on self-reported data, yet many of these data are incomplete. The working group agreed that encouraging better data collection would eventually allow for better future stock assessments.

3. *Recommend designated “Species Years” for ICCAT plenary meetings.* The working group observed that the proliferation of new stock assessments and quota restructuring at the annual plenary meetings has created a chaotic atmosphere that is ineffective for fisheries management. The group further noted the success during those plenary meetings in which the United States publicly affirmed before the meeting that only one (or few) ICCAT stocks would be at the table for management consideration. Based on these experiences, the group suggested that ICCAT redistribute stock assessments so that no more than two major species are assessed in any given year. It was also noted that many feel that the SCRS is over-tasked due to the plenary obligations, and that this requirement of no more than two major species at any one time would also allow for more detailed assessments.

4. *Task the SCRS to undertake catch-rate analyses of white marlin and blue marlin at 1°x1° resolution.* The group noted that several nations already provide data to ICCAT at one-by-one degree resolution, thereby making this analysis possible.

5. *Explore proposed development of an “International [Fisheries] Observer Corps” for ICCAT fisheries.* While perhaps not possible in the immediate future, the working group believed that such an idea had promise worthy of future consideration. The group suggested that perhaps this would eliminate the potential biases of observers on ICCAT vessels. Furthermore, noting the present financial constraints in many fisheries management organizations, this program could be supported using funding obtained by private philanthropic organizations

Other

A White Marlin Status Review Team (SRT) is currently being formed by NMFS to review the September 2001 petition to list white marlin under the Endangered Species Act. The working group noted the importance of this species and the petition to the constituencies represented by the Advisory Committee and requests an intersessional meeting, perhaps during June 2002, of the ICCAT Advisory Committee in conjunction with the SRT.

Attendance

Billfish Working Group Members

Maumus Claverie
Jack Devnew
Peter Foley
Phil Goodyear (Technical Advisor)
John Graves (Convener)
Don Nehls (Technical Advisor)
Ellen Peel
Robert Zales (Technical Advisor)

Other Attendees

David Kerstetter (VIMS, Rapporteur)
Gerald Scott (NMFS)
Jill Stevenson (ex-officio from Maryland)

Attachment 2

**Report of the Bigeye, Albacore, Yellowfin, and Skipjack (BAYS)
Tunas Working Group**

Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to ICCAT
2002 Species Working Group Workshop

Hilton Hotel - Silver Spring
March 5-6, 2002

Viridin C. Brown, Convener
Kim Blankenbeker, Rapporteur

I. Recommendations for BAYS Tunas

A. Data

The BAYS Working Group is convinced that recreational and commercial data in U.S. BAYS fisheries is grossly under-reported. The Working Group recommends the following:

(A) NMFS should develop as a matter of priority improved estimates of catches for the BAYS fisheries for the historical time series (e.g., for the previous 5-10 year period), focusing efforts in 2002-03 on the yellowfin tuna fishery. In support of this activity, the U.S. Federal Government Commissioner and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee should send a joint letter to relevant State fishery directors and Council Chairmen requesting BAYS tunas data be provided as soon as possible and informing them of the possible international repercussions, particularly concerning quota allocations, associated with under-reported statistics for these species. During this process, data gaps should be clearly identified and estimates made.

(B) NMFS should improve and, where necessary, develop new mechanisms to collect data in all regions (including the Caribbean) throughout the year. In so doing, NMFS should consider developing a certification program for state agencies and/or organizations (such as universities) within those states to delegate data collection efforts.

(C) The Advisory Committee should convene a workshop as soon as feasible in 2002 (that could be held in conjunction with a meeting on other issues) to review progress on (A) and (B) above and to consider the need for development of more robust methodology for collecting BAYS statistics. State fisheries directors of affected states should be invited to attend the workshop. During the workshop, NMFS should provide relevant data individually for all states and U.S. territories bordering the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, or Caribbean Sea.

(D) NMFS should continue to report recreational BAYS landings as provisional to SCRS, and these data should not be used for future allocation purposes. Improved data collection and estimation will increase the quality and quantity of the data necessary to resolve this issue, which has been described in several previous reports from this Working Group. All verifiable historical data collected and not previously reported should be incorporated into future statistical reports provided to ICCAT.

In pursuing tasks (A) and (B), NMFS should involve its state counterparts and the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP). In addition, the Working Group took note of the statement appended to the 2001 BAYS Working Group report and agreed with a request by its author that it be incorporated into this report by reference.

B. Research

- 1) The United States should conduct life history studies on BAYS tunas, including age and growth, reproduction, stock structure, and essential fish habitat studies. NMFS is encouraged to have this research conducted by third parties, where appropriate.
- 2) The Working Group noted with pleasure the report of research projects on HMS species provided by NMFS in 2002 in accordance with the 2001 recommendation of the BAYS Working Group. The Working Group recommends such information be provided each year to the Advisory Committee at its spring meeting and that the report be improved, where possible.
- 3) As requested in several past Working Group reports, economic impact and economic benefit studies of recreational fisheries that target BAYS tunas should be conducted. An outline/proposal of the proposed economic impact and economic benefit studies should be provided to the Advisory Committee for discussion at the Spring 2003 Committee meeting.

C. Management

- 1) The United States should pursue international rebuilding programs for all overfished BAYS tuna stocks, in particular northern albacore and bigeye, considering their domestic importance. Given the nature of the U.S. fisheries for BAYS tunas, the United States should only be responsible for a proportional share of the burden associated with rebuilding. In addition, the current ICCAT limit on the U.S. northern albacore fishery does not adequately cover U.S. needs and should be renegotiated at the 2002 ICCAT meeting.
- 2) The United States should ensure that nations harvesting bigeye and yellowfin tunas comply with ICCAT's 1997 recommendation to improve compliance with minimum size recommendations and take steps to accelerate the implementation of existing measures to reduce the harvest of these tunas that are less than the minimum size, including implementing the provisions of the minimum size compliance measure.

3) Recognizing that the Gulf of Guinea is an important area for recruitment in the BAYS tunas fisheries and that this area is where the vast majority of undersized bigeye and yellowfin tunas are harvested, the United States should:

(A) support ICCAT efforts to investigate the Gulf of Guinea fisheries and develop effective measures to reduce the mortality of sublegal fish harvested in this area, including asking SCRS to evaluate the potential impacts associated with gear modifications of the purse seine fishery in the Gulf of Guinea (e.g., increasing net mesh sizes);

(B) continue to support the use of international time/area closures in the Gulf of Guinea and propose an increase in the temporal and spacial coverage of the current closure and an increase in observer coverage to 100% throughout the fishing season. Scientific information on possible alterations to the current time/area closure should be presented and discussed in 2002 at a Committee workshop. In addition, developing standardized observer training protocols within ICCAT should be considered--utilizing the expertise of other fisheries organizations, such as IATTC;

(C) support SCRS efforts to identify spawning grounds and other areas of high concentrations of juvenile BAYS tunas (along with other HMS).

4) Given the importance to U.S. fisheries of controlling the harvest of small bigeye and yellowfin tunas in the Gulf of Guinea, the Advisory Committee should have a special workshop in 2002 (that could be held in conjunction with a meeting on other issues) to consider in more detail the economics that drive the fishery and ways to reduce harvests in this area.

5) The United States should seek a measure that would reiterate the responsibility to provide basic catch data and establish penalties for non-reporting. Specifically, ICCAT could create a process analogous to the IUU process that would identify those ICCAT members egregiously violating catch data reporting requirements.

6) The United States is encouraged to provide technical support/assistance to developing states to assist in the development of effective fishery management practices, including data collection and reporting, in order to facilitate the full participation of these countries in ICCAT and their adherence to ICCAT's conservation and management measures. The Working Group noted support for the initiatives outlined by the Department of State in the discussion of development of the U.S. NPOA on IUU fishing, which are consistent with this recommendation.

II. Recommendations for Other Species:

A. Sharks

The Working Group noted support for the shark resolution negotiated at the 2001 ICCAT meeting, which contains virtually all of the provisions previously called for by the Working Group. The Working

Group recommended that the United States fully support the implementation of the provisions of the ICCAT measure.

B. Dolphin and Wahoo

As previously recommended, the United States should urge ICCAT to improve the collection of Task I data for wahoo and to begin collecting Task 1 data for dolphin fish, so that databases for these species can be established or improved.

III. Other Issues:

A. Monitoring

NMFS should conduct a workshop in 2003 to identify cooperative research with regard to at-sea data collection methods (e.g., observers, VMS, electronic logbooks) with a view to moving these issues into the ICCAT arena in the future.

B. 2002 ICCAT Intersessionals

The United States should attend the 2002 ICCAT intersessionals on IUU fishing, trade, and monitoring in strength.

C. Raising Awareness

1. The Committee Chairman should write a letter to all State fisheries directors inviting them to participate in the Advisory Committee process.
2. The Advisory Committee, its membership, and relevant U.S. Government agencies, such as NMFS/NOAA and the Department of State, should make every effort to improve public awareness of pertinent ICCAT and Advisory Committee activities and issues through written and other types of outreach.

D. Future of ICCAT

1. In recognition that not all Committee members have detailed knowledge of the workings of ICCAT and given the results of the 2001 ICCAT meeting, the Working Group recommends that the Advisory Committee meet with previous U.S. Delegation members to ICCAT at the first opportunity to explore possible approaches for moving forward within the Commission.
2. Pending (1) above, the U.S. Government should use all diplomatic channels available to pursue resolution of the current difficulties facing ICCAT.

BAYS Tunas Working Group Members

Eleanor Bochenek (Technical Advisor)
Virdin Brown (Convener)
John Mark Dean (Absent)
Bob Eakes
Willie Etheridge
Bob McAuliffe (Technical Advisor)
Ernie Panacek (Absent; Technical Advisor)
Ellen Pikitch (Absent)
Greg Skomal (Technical Advisor)
Steve Sloan
Randi Parks Thomas

Other Attendees

Kim Blankenbeker (NMFS, Rapporteur)
Jack Dunnigan (NMFS SF)
Jerry Scott (NMFS SEFSC)

Report of the Swordfish Working Group

Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to ICCAT

2002 Advisory Committee Species Working Group Workshop

Hilton Hotel Silver Spring
March 5-6 , 2002

Gail Johnson, *Convener*
Erika Carlsen, *Rapporteur*

The Swordfish Working Group met on March 5th from 2:30 to 6:00 pm and again on March 6th from 8:25 to 10:30 am during the species working group workshop of the U.S. Advisory Committee for the International Committee for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). A summary of recommendations from the previous workshop was distributed and progress on these recommendations was discussed. The Working Group discussed numerous topics related to Atlantic swordfish and formulated these discussions into the following recommendations.

Research and Monitoring Recommendations

- 1. Stock Assessment.** The United States should support SCRS assessment of North and South Atlantic swordfish in 2002 to determine the status of the population and rebuilding progress. The United States should determine whether swordfish stock assessments should be conducted more frequently than every 3 years and identify possible triggers that would require more frequent stock assessments.
- 2. U.S. Reporting.** The working group appreciates accomplishments in the past year to improve the quality of U.S. swordfish catch data submitted to ICCAT. NMFS should determine an order of magnitude estimate of the recreational swordfish landing and report back to the working group at the spring 2003 meeting and, if warranted, should develop a HMS permit or other appropriate programs for recreational fishermen and hand gear fisheries.
- 3. Observer Coverage (Domestic).** The working group recognizes that NMFS may have reached 5% observer coverage on the longline fleet and supports efforts to keep observer coverage in all HMS fisheries, including the recovering/developing swordfish recreational and hand gear fisheries, at or above 5%.
- 4. Observer Coverage (International).** The United States should request an update and review on compliance of all nations with observer requirements and an IAC review of the quantity and quality of observer program data submitted by each country to SCRS. NMFS should provide the working group

with the status of observer coverage in other countries. If such information is not available, the United States should demand that relevant countries keep their commitment to provide this information. The United States should encourage SCRS to standardize data collection.

5. Stock Structure. The working group supports continued research on stock resolution using all available technologies (i.e., tagging, molecular genetics) because the swordfish stock structure is likely to be more complex than the currently used stock structure. The United States should ensure that the equatorial Atlantic sampling protocol remains appropriate and determine whether an SCRS review is needed.

6. Bycatch Mortality. The working group supports the development of a research program to determine survival rate of released swordfish from all gear types using pop-up tags or other appropriate methodology.

7. Vessel Tracking. The United States should encourage countries to comply with ICCAT VMS recommendation and support evaluation of ICCAT pilot program results.

8. Time/Area Closures. Prepare an evaluation of the effect of time/area closures in reducing catch of undersized swordfish and present at SCRS and be prepared to ask the SCRS evaluate the results.

Management and Conservation Recommendations

1. Rebuilding Plan. The United States should support continuation of the ICCAT stated goal of rebuilding the standing stock of North Atlantic swordfish to a biomass level that will support MSY by 2008 (10-year rebuilding plan initiated in 1999). Specifically, the U.S. should support setting new annual country quotas that ensure that the stock is rebuilding according to the proposed trajectory (based upon the new assessment) with at least 50% confidence that the rebuilding goal will be reached by 2008.

2. Allocation Issues. The United States should aggressively defend its allocated shares for swordfish -- and all species.

3. Reduce Undersized Swordfish Mortality. At the SCRS swordfish working group meeting, the U.S. delegation should be prepared to work with other delegations to identify areas of high catch of undersized swordfish, marlin, and potentially other highly migratory species. SCRS should schedule an intersessional meeting to complete identification of hotspots where specific time and area closures may be appropriate and agree upon data needs and methodology. Finally, the United States should be prepared to introduce or support at the 2002 Commission meeting an ICCAT recommendation for a 2003 intersessional meeting on this topic or a recommendation or resolution requesting additional necessary actions.

4. Trade/Compliance. The United States should expedite the internal review of the new IUU resolution. Continue to pursue additional, more effective strategies that support multi-lateral authority to implement unilateral measures including trade restrictive measures against Parties that do not comply with ICCAT

management measures (e.g., diminished effectiveness of ICCAT measures when trade of a species from a country exceeds that country's quota).

Other Issues

1. **SEFSC Report.** The SEFSC should prepare a brief overview report to IAC for future spring meetings, with the following information:

- Summary of most recent stock assessment
- Status relative to rebuilding benchmarks
- Status of time-area closures and impacts on stock/fishery
- Status and effectiveness of minimum size compliance
- International closed areas analysis
- Pertinent research results from NMFS and academic science
- Bycatch estimates

2. **Decision Analysis and Risk Assessment.** Decision analysis and risk assessment could be valuable to the commission in evaluating the inherent risk in SCRS recommendations. The working group suggests a workshop be held for IAC on decision analysis and risk assessment to establish the working concept of this technique as applied to SCRS recommendations. The United States should be prepared to introduce this recommendation at the SCRS and ICCAT meetings.

Swordfish Working Group Members

Gail Johnson (Convener)
Putnam MacLean (Technical Advisor)
Elizabeth Lauck (Technical Advisor)
David Wilmot
Nelson Beideman
Steve Berkeley (Technical Advisor)
Bob Pride
Vincent Pyle (Technical Advisor, absent)

Other Attendees

Erika Carlsen (NMFS, Rapporteur)
Gerry Scott (NMFS)
Chris Rogers (NMFS)

Report of the Bluefin Tuna Working Group

Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to ICCAT
2002 Species Working Group Workshop

Hilton Hotel - Silver Spring
March 5-6, 2002

Bradford Chase, Convener
Rachel Husted, Rapporteur

Research Recommendations:

- 1. Central Atlantic Research.** The Working Group strongly supports the continuation of cooperative research on bluefin tuna in the Central Atlantic. There are critical questions on the relationship of these aggregations to the stock structure and life history of Atlantic bluefin tuna. The ongoing collaborative research provides an important opportunity to test multiple hypotheses with regard to stock structure, migration patterns, reproductive biology, habitat, and other life history relationships to Central Atlantic aggregations.
- 2. Stock Structure Research.** The Working Group recommends continued support of ongoing efforts using genetics and otolith microconstituents. We also encourage the Advisory Committee and constituents to assist in developing a communication network to identify opportunities for collecting young-of-the-year and 1-year bluefin tuna.
- 3. Tagging Efforts.** The Working Group strongly recommends continued high level support for conventional and electronic tagging studies to identify migration in the North Atlantic. Nations fishing in the East Atlantic should continue to develop and expand tagging activities. We also urge the incorporation of these data into future stock assessments. We urge the development of a framework to coordinate east and west tagging efforts.
- 4. Alternative Stock Structure Hypotheses.** The Working Group endorses the results of the 2001 ICCAT Intersessional on mixing, which considered the latest evidence from conventional and electronic tag research programs, as well as the latest results of genetic research on the stock structure of bluefin tuna.
- 5. Gulf of Mexico Spawning Stock Research.** Due to uncertainty in the status of the Gulf of Mexico spawning stock, the working group suggests research, monitoring, and further analysis of catch data to

evaluate trends in abundance, demographic attributes, reproductive condition, and spawning potential of adult bluefin tuna in the Gulf of Mexico and Florida straits. Increased observer coverage in existing fisheries on the Gulf of Mexico spawning grounds is recommended to evaluate potential affects of the fisheries on the bluefin spawning stock biomass. Electronic tagging should be continued in the Gulf of Mexico.

6. Stock-Recruitment Functions. The development of complementary stock recruitment functions for the West and East Atlantic stocks is critical in projecting stock abundances and evaluating mixing effects. Due to continued uncertainty in E. Atlantic landings data, particularly for small bluefin tuna (<3 years), we suggest that an E. Atlantic VPA be fitted using Mediterranean and East Atlantic CPUE and catch at age data for ages greater than 3 years. We also suggest that stock recruitment functions fitted to ages greater than 3 years are applied to the West Atlantic stock VPA in order to make complementary analyses of stock projections and mixing effects.

Management Recommendations:

1. U.S. Catches in the East Atlantic. Ask NMFS to correct the standardized reporting form so that the origin of bluefin tuna caught east of 45 degrees can be accurately identified. The United States should present a paper with the long-term time series of catches east of 45 degrees (based on historical logbook data) to the SCRS. Upon review of this information, the U.S. Delegation should consider requesting a small allocation of east Atlantic quota on this historical basis.

2. Upcoming GFCM Meeting. We request that NMFS report any results and recommendations relative to Atlantic bluefin tuna from the GFCM meeting in April 2002 to the Advisory Committee as soon as possible following the meeting.

3. Allocation of Small Bluefin in the West Atlantic. We reiterate our request to NMFS in 2001 to evaluate possible ways to increase the 8% cap by shifting mortality from larger school bluefin to smaller bluefin tuna in a manner that is resource-neutral. If a resource-neutral shift is feasible, the U.S. Delegation should consider seeking an increase in the cap as part of any renegotiation of the 20-year rebuilding program.

4. Monitoring of Tuna Farming/NEI Catch. The SCRS should resume the practice of estimating NEI catch (Not Elsewhere Included) on the basis of data from the BSD program. NEI was not estimated in 2001 due to concern that the estimates were not accurate because of the difficulty in tracking farming operations.

5. Achieve Sustainable Levels of Fishing in the East Atlantic. The SCRS should develop rebuilding projections for the East Atlantic stock as part of the 2002 assessment, and insist that the TAC for this stock be consistent with the scientific advice in order to develop a long-term rebuilding program.

6. Application of Allocation Criteria. The Working Group commends the Commissioners and Delegation on the agreement of allocation criteria after four meetings. We believe that a strong defense

of US historical shares of ICCAT species can be made in light of the new criteria. We recommend that the Advisory Committee hold a workshop to review allocation criteria and construct rational arguments to support the US position at the upcoming 2002 meeting.

Bluefin Tuna Working Group Members

Brad Chase (Convener)
Jim Donofrio
Mike Genovese (absent)
Molly Lutcavage
Rich Ruais
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Shana Beemer (Technical Advisor)
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David Secor (Technical Advisor)
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Other Attendees

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