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ICCAT: 2022 Meeting Outcomes and 2023 Outlook



NOAA HMS AP May 9th 2023

International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)



- Conservation and management recommendations for tunas, billfish, and swordfish, as well as bycatch species, including sharks, sea turtles, and sea birds caught in association with ICCAT fisheries
- Recommendations are binding and resolutions are non-binding; both are typically adopted by consensus
- Currently 52 Contracting Parties (not including the 27 member states of the European Union)
- Membership and fisheries are diverse, complicating negotiations
- NOAA Fisheries' Atlantic HMS Management Division implements ICCAT recommendations



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2022 Annual Meeting

- Met in Vale do Lobo, Portugal, November 2022
 - Successful hybrid meeting
 - First “annual” meeting with an in-person component since 2019
- None of the Recommendations adopted at the 2022 meeting require changes to U.S. regulations

**That said....
a lot happened**



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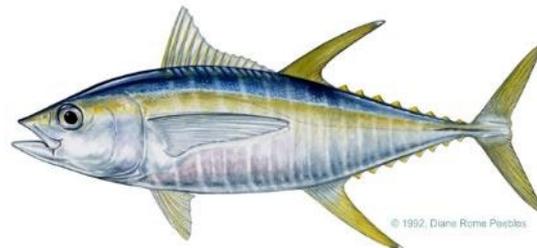
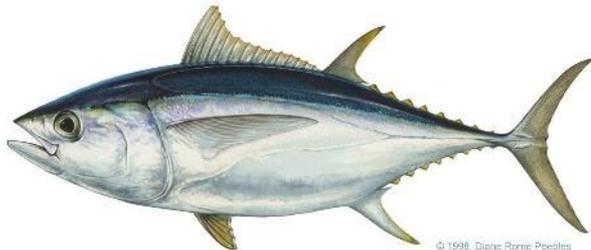
2022 Meeting – Key Outcomes

Bigeye and Yellowfin Tunas

Rec. 22-01, a one-year extension of the 2019 Conservation and Management Plan for Tropical Tunas, maintains its provisions for 2023, including:

- The TACs for bigeye (62,000 mt) and yellowfin (110,000 mt)
- The fish aggregating device (FAD) closure period

Efforts continue to develop new conservation and management measures for adoption in 2023, including at two intersessional meetings of Panel 1 (March and June).



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2022 Meeting – Key Outcomes

Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Management Procedure (MP)

In a historic agreement, ICCAT adopted its first MP for both the eastern and western stocks

Rec. 22-09:

- Applies a pre-agreed framework for actions, such as setting catch limits, designed to achieve specific objectives (re: stock status, safety, stability, and yield)
- Establishes annual total allowable catches (TACs) for 2023 through 2025 for each stock
- Maintains the 2022 TAC of 2,726 metric tons for the western area



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2022 Meeting – Key Outcomes

Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna



Rec. 22-10:

- Includes the TAC established under the BFT MP (2,726 mt)
- Maintains the existing allocations; no change to the U.S. quota of 1,341 mt
- Updated the research provisions in line with activities identified by ICCAT's scientific body, including supporting priority work needed to facilitate the future reconditioning of the management strategy evaluation (MSE) operating models and review of the MP by 2028



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2022 Meeting – Key Outcomes

Mitigating Bycatch of Endangered and Threatened Sea Turtles, Rec. 22-12

- Led by the United States, ICCAT adopted its first measure on gear and bait modifications to mitigate the impacts of fishing interactions on sea turtles
- The adoption of this agreement is a welcome breakthrough that the United States has been promoting at ICCAT for years



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2022 Meeting – Key Outcomes

Mitigating Bycatch of Endangered and Threatened Sea Turtles, Rec. 22-12

- Requires science-based mitigation measures, such as the use of circle hooks in shallow-set longline fisheries, in the Atlantic Ocean
- Will reduce bycatch and increase post-release survival



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2022 Meeting – Key Outcomes

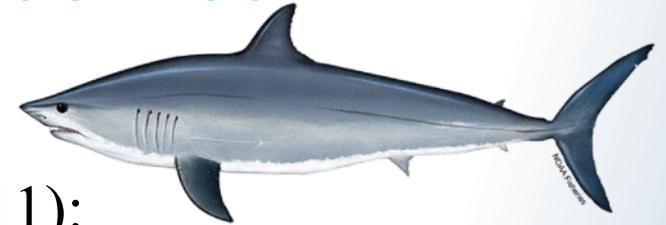
Mitigating Bycatch of Endangered and Threatened Sea Turtles, Rec. 22-12

- This measure helps with “leveling the playing field” for the U.S. fisheries
- The measure requires specific reporting on the mitigation measures used, so we will be able to better understand the fleets of other CPCs
- Delayed implementation for the Mediterranean
- Deep-set longline provisions and other fisheries
- More work to be done on hook size and other provisions of the measure



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2022 Meeting – Key Outcomes



Sharks

South Atlantic shortfin mako (Rec. 22-11):

- Total retention allowance of 1,295 mt for 2023-2024 with individual CPC allowances
- Total mortality level to be established following 2024 assessment to maintain health stock status
- Many provisions mirror North Atlantic shortfin mako Rec. 21-09, including establishing a process to evaluate future retention allowance

Fins naturally attached

- The United States and many other parties advocated for adoption of this proposal, but it was ultimately blocked



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North Atlantic shortfin mako

- Recs. 21-09 and 22-11 calls for a 2023 intersessional meeting of Panel 4 to share best practices for reducing shortfin mako encounters
- The SCRS will advise the Commission in 2024 on the most effective measures to reduce fishing mortality
- Meeting postponed to early 2024
- Under a separate requirement, the United States is submitting an info paper describing domestic efforts to reduce shortfin mako mortality (by 30 April)



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2022 Meeting – Key Outcomes

North Atlantic Swordfish

Rec. 22-03, a one-year rollover recommendation:

- Extends the current management measures from Recommendation 17-02 through 2023, including the current TAC of 13,200 mt
- Maintains the U.S. quota of 3,907 mt
- Scientific work continues on developing management strategy evaluation (MSE) for this important stock; three Panel 4 intersessional meetings in 2023 on MSE planned (March, June, and October)



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2022 Meeting – Key Outcomes

Climate Change (Res. 22-13)

- ICCAT adopted a U.S.-led proposal that calls on the Commission to account for the impacts of climate change on ICCAT-managed species and related ecosystems
- The proposal kick-starts a process to identify available information, data gaps, and research needs that will better inform the Commission's future management of ICCAT species
- In July 2023, ICCAT will convene a joint meeting of scientists and managers, Chaired by the United States, to begin this important conversation



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2022 Meeting – Key Outcomes

Improvement of Fisheries Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance to Combat Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated (IUU) Fishing

ICCAT adopted several proposals that will:

- Require ICCAT parties to investigate and take action to address allegations of IUU fishing by their citizens
 - will cover those *benefitting from or supporting* IUU fishing activity
- Provide common standards (Schedule of Compliance Actions) for evaluating severity of non-compliance incidents and applying responsive actions in a fair and transparent manner
 - will further strengthen ICCAT's compliance process
- Require e-reporting for certain scientific and compliance-related data
 - will improve the efficiency of operations/accessibility of information



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2022 Meeting – U.S. Priorities Addressed

High Seas Boarding and Inspection (HSBI)

- Progress on developing a joint HSBI scheme for the ICCAT Convention Area
- Although no consensus was reached, the discussions represented a significant step forward in efforts to adopt a crucial tool to combat IUU fishing and monitor compliance with ICCAT rules in international waters
- Further discussions to occur this year at the Integrated Monitoring Measures meeting in Osaka, Japan



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ICCAT - Work Ahead

Other

- The United States will continue to push ICCAT and its parties to be forward leaning and to prioritize the implementation of measures to conserve and manage ICCAT species

Key 2023 Intersessional Meetings:

- Panel 1 (tropical tunas) – TAC, allocation, and other management measures; western skipjack MSE
- Panel 2 (bluefin tuna) – exceptional circumstances protocol; eastern allocations
- Panel 4 (swordfish, etc.) – North Atlantic swordfish MSE
- Climate Change Joint Experts Meeting



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Incredible Staff/Teamwork:



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National Marine Fisheries Service



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