

**INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS CONCERNING
LIVING MARINE RESOURCES OF
INTEREST TO NOAA FISHERIES**



**OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS,
TRADE, AND COMMERCE**

2023

**INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS
CONCERNING LIVING MARINE RESOURCES
OF INTEREST TO NOAA FISHERIES**



Office of International Affairs, Trade, and Commerce

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
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PART I:
INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL
MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

ARCTIC OCEAN

Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean (CAOFA)

Basic Instrument

Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean (CAOFA)

Implementing Legislation

Not applicable

Parties to the Agreement

Canada, People's Republic of China, Kingdom of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), Republic of Iceland, Japan, Republic of Korea, Kingdom of Norway, Russian Federation, United States of America, European Union.

Chairperson

There is no Secretariat for this Agreement. The United States is developing a website for the Agreement that will be available in the future.

Ms. Nadia Bouffard
Chairperson
Email: nadiabouffard55@gmail.com

U.S. Representation

The United States delegation is led by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and is further represented by the Department of State, United States Coast Guard, the Inuit Circumpolar Council-Alaska, and participants from Non-Governmental Organizations.

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

The objective of the CAOFA is to prevent unregulated fishing in the high seas portion of the central Arctic Ocean through the application of precautionary conservation and management measures as part of a long-term strategy to safeguard healthy marine ecosystems and to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of fish stocks.

The Agreement covers fishery resources including fish, molluscs, and crustaceans except those belonging to sedentary species as defined in Article 77 of the Convention.

B. Organizational Structure:

The Agreement comprises a Conference of the Parties (COP), Scientific Coordinating Group (SCG), and other subsidiary bodies established by the COP, currently in the form of Working Groups under the SCG and COP. The COP consists of one representative from each Party. The COP has the obligation to establish conservation and management measures for exploratory fishing and the authority to establish any interim conservation and management measures.

The Scientific Coordinating Group is composed of scientific advisors from the Parties. It provides the best available scientific information on the ecosystem and fish stocks to the COP.

The work of the SCG and COP is carried out with the assistance of the Data Sharing Protocol Working Group (DSP-WG), the Monitoring and Mapping Working Group (MM-WG), Working Group on the Exploratory Fishing Questions (EFQ-WG), and the Ad Hoc Working Group on Exploratory Fishing (EF-WG). All established working groups with the exception of the EF-WG are under the SCG. The EF-WG is under the COP. The Data Management Working Group (DM-WG) replaced the DSP-WG at the COP2.

The EF-WG and DM-WG are chaired by the United States. The SCG is also chaired by the United States.

C. Conservation and Management Measures:

At this time, the COP has not adopted any conservation and management measures (CMMs). Under the Agreement, the Parties have until June 25, 2024, to establish CMMs on exploratory fishing. The COP established the Ad Hoc Working Group on Exploratory Fishing (EF-WG) to develop CMMs on exploratory fishing for consideration and adoption at the COP3.

D. Joint Program of Scientific Research and Monitoring:

The Agreement required the Parties to establish a Joint Program of Scientific Research and Monitoring (JPSRM) as well as a data-sharing protocol by June 25, 2023, with the aim of improving their understanding of the ecosystems of the Agreement Area and, in particular, of determining whether fish stocks might exist in the Agreement Area—now or in the future—that could be harvested on a sustainable basis as well as the possible impacts of such fisheries on the ecosystems of the Agreement Area. This JPSRM will guide the work of the SCG under the Agreement and be instrumental to guide management of living marine resources. The first meeting of the SCG endorsed a JPSRM Framework, which includes a data-sharing protocol. At its June 2023 meeting, the COP2 adopted the JPSRM Framework. The work products from the Mapping and Monitoring Working Group (MM-WG) and the Data Sharing Protocol Working Group (DSP-WG) form this Framework.

E. Activities and Meetings:

The inaugural meeting of the COP was hosted by Korea in November, 2022. The second meeting of the COP was held June 12-14, 2023 in Incheon, Korea. The third meeting of the COP is scheduled for June, 2024, hosted by the Republic of Korea, date and location to be determined by the host. The SCG will hold a virtual meeting in the autumn of 2023, followed by an in-person meeting in early February, 2024 hosted by Canada. The working groups will meet intersessionally and by correspondence in 2023/24. Norway and Japan have offered to host COP4 and COP5, respectively.

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ATLANTIC OCEAN

International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (Basic Instrument for the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT))

Basic Instrument

International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (TIAS 6767), 20 U.S.T. 2887, 1969, which was signed on May 14, 1966.

In 2012, ICCAT established the terms of reference for a Convention Amendment Working Group ([Rec. 12-10](#)). The work of this group was completed in 2019, when ICCAT adopted a comprehensive Convention amendment protocol to bring its Convention into line with modern fisheries management standards and principles, clarify ICCAT's mandate to manage certain shark and ray species, ensure that all key fleets targeting ICCAT species are bound by its rules, in particular by ensuring the full participation of Taiwan, and modernizing and streamlining decision making processes and procedures (see [Rec. 19-01](#); [Res. 19-13](#)). Parties that had secured their necessary signatory authority, including the United States, signed the Convention Protocol during a special session in November 2019. The final signed protocol was sent to the Convention depositary, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which will transmit it to Contracting Parties for their approval, ratification, or acceptance. The protocol must be ratified by three quarters of ICCAT Parties before it enters into force.

Implementing Legislation

Atlantic Tunas Convention Act of 1975 ([16 U.S.C. 971 et. seq.](#))

Members and Cooperating Parties, Entities and Fishing Entities

There are currently 52 Contracting Parties: Albania, Algeria, Angola, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Canada, Cape Verde, China (People's Republic), Côte d'Ivoire, Curaçao, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, European Union (EU), France (in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon), Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea (Republic of), Honduras, Iceland, Japan, Korea (Republic of), Liberia, Libya, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Philippines, Russian Federation, Sao Tome and Principe, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa (Republic of), Syria, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Türkiye, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

There are currently five Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties, Entities, or Fishing Entities: Bolivia, Chinese Taipei, Suriname, Guyana, and Costa Rica.

Commission Headquarters

International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
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Executive Secretary: Mr. Camille Manel
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Budget

The Commission approves a biennial budget during each regular meeting. At its 2021 Annual Meeting, the Commission adopted a budget of 4.7 million Euros for 2022 and 5.1 million Euros for 2023. The U.S. contribution for 2023 was approximately 255,000 Euros, which includes a contribution for the electronic bluefin tuna catch document (BCD) system.

U.S. Representation**A. Appointment Process:**

ATCA provides that not more than three Commissioners shall represent the United States in ICCAT. Commissioners are appointed by the President and serve 3-year terms. Of the three U.S. Commissioners, one can be a salaried employee of any state or political subdivision thereof, or of the Federal Government. Of the two Commissioners who are not government employees, one must have knowledge and experience regarding commercial fishing in the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico or Caribbean Sea and the other must have knowledge and experience regarding recreational fishing. Non-Government Commissioners are not eligible to serve more than two consecutive three-year terms.

B. U.S. Commissioners:**Government**

Kelly Kryc, Ph.D. (Alternate)
Deputy Assistant Secretary for
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Recreational

Mr. Raymond Bogan (Alternate)

Commercial

Ms. Leigh Habegger (Alternate)

C. Advisory Structure:

The U.S. Commissioners are required, under ATCA, to constitute an Advisory Committee to the U.S. National Section to ICCAT. This body shall, to the maximum extent practicable, consist of an equitable balance among the various groups concerned with the fisheries covered by the Convention and is exempt from the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Details on the required composition of the Committee are outlined in the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act of 1975 (16 U.S.C. 971 *et. seq.*). The Commissioners have also established four species working groups, as follows: billfish, swordfish/sharks, bluefin tuna, and BAYS (bigeye, albacore, yellowfin, and skipjack) tunas.

The Chairman of the Advisory Committee is Dr. Walt Golet, The University of Maine/Gulf of Maine Research Institute, School of Marine Sciences, Portland, ME. The Committee's Executive Secretary is Dr. Bryan Keller, Office of International Affairs, Trade, and Commerce, NOAA Fisheries. By law, the Committee must meet at least twice a year, usually in Silver Spring, Maryland, or near Miami, Florida.

Description

ICCAT was established to provide an effective program of international cooperation in research and conservation in recognition of the unique problems related to the highly migratory nature of tunas and tuna-like species. The Convention area is defined as all waters of the Atlantic Ocean, including the adjacent seas. The Commission is responsible for providing internationally coordinated research on the condition of Atlantic tuna and tuna-like species, and their environment, as well as for the development of regulatory recommendations. The objective of such regulatory recommendations is to conserve and manage species of tuna and tuna-like species throughout their range in a manner that maintains their population at levels that will permit the maximum sustainable catch.

Recommendations adopted by the Commission are submitted to Contracting Parties for acceptance. These recommendations become effective for all Parties to the Convention six months after their formal submission to all Parties (unless otherwise stated) provided objections are not made pursuant to Article VIII of the Convention during that period. Objections delay entry into force of a recommendation by at least 60 days for all Parties and do not become binding on the objecting Contracting Party. Each Contracting Party accepting a recommendation has the responsibility for ensuring its implementation and enforcement. Resolutions adopted by the Commission are non-binding.

ICCAT has established five standing committees as follows: (1) the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS), (2) the Standing Committee on Finance and Administration (STACFAD), (3) the Conservation and Management Measures Compliance Committee (COC), (4) the Permanent Working Group for the Improvement of

ICCAT Statistics and Conservation Measures (PWG), and (5) the Standing Working Group to Enhance Dialogue between Fisheries Scientists and Managers. It also undertakes relevant work through various *ad hoc* working groups.

Panels established by the Commission are responsible for the species under their purview: Panel 1 covers tropical tunas (bigeye, yellowfin, and skipjack); Panel 2 covers North Atlantic temperate tunas (western Atlantic bluefin, eastern Atlantic/Mediterranean bluefin, North Atlantic albacore and Mediterranean albacore); Panel 3 covers South Atlantic temperate tunas (southern bluefin and South Atlantic albacore); and Panel 4 covers other species, including swordfish, billfishes, sharks, seabirds, and sea turtles.

Panel 1 - Bigeye, Yellowfin and Skipjack Tunas

Bigeye, yellowfin, and skipjack are tropical tunas most often found in the eastern Atlantic as mixed stocks in their juvenile phase. Mature fish are known to migrate across the Atlantic where they are important components of the fisheries of various countries, including the United States. The high proportion of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin catches by some surface fleets targeting skipjack and the consequent impacts on yields has remained a concern for many years.

A 2018 assessment concluded that the Atlantic bigeye stock is overfished, with overfishing occurring. The next stock assessment in 2021 determined that bigeye tuna was overfished ($B/B_{msy} = .94$) with no overfishing occurring ($F/F_{msy} = 1.00$). The 2021 stock assessment was conducted using similar assessment models to those used in 2018, updating the data until 2019, but with some significant changes in data treatment. The SCRS noted that more optimistic outlook presented in the 2021 assessment compared to the one obtained in 2018 is the result of a combination of factors: updates to the data and biological parameters, changes in the methodology and data used for the joint longline index, use of the buoy index, changes to the fleet structure in the stock synthesis models, and the relatively low catches of BET for 2020 and 2021. Many of these changes also served to increase the uncertainty associated with the assessment results. Yellowfin tuna was assessed in 2019; stock biomass relative to B_{msy} was estimated to be 1.17 (not overfished) while the fishing mortality rate relative to F_{msy} was .96 (no overfishing occurring). Catches of yellowfin have exceeded the TAC in recent years. Skipjack tuna was assessed in 2022; the stocks are not overfished with no overfishing occurring.

Management measures have been in place for bigeye tuna since the 1970s and TACs, allocations, capacity limitations, and other, more robust approaches began to be adopted in the 1990s and 2000s. In particular, a time/area closure off West Africa, first adopted in 1999, has been modified several times. Management measures for yellowfin tuna were added in 2011, including an annual TAC of 110,000 t, and expanded monitoring, control, and surveillance measures in the tropical tunas fishery, including new logbook requirements for purse seine and baitboats and management plans for the use of fish aggregating devices (FADs). In 2014, the measure for tropical tunas was revised, extending management to the eastern stock of skipjack tuna ([Rec. 14-01](#)).

Under [Rec. 15-01](#), ICCAT reduced the bigeye TAC to 65,000 t and implemented a quota reduction. Minor harvesters without a specific quota, including the United States, that are not developing coastal States "shall endeavor" to maintain their annual catch at less than 1,575 t. Rec. 15-01 also specified that if the catch of bigeye tuna of any developing coastal CPC without a specified catch limit exceeds 3,500 t, a catch limit will be established. In 2016, ICCAT's *Ad Hoc* Working Group on FADs produced its findings on the use and impacts of FADs, as well as its recommendations on data reporting and analysis. The tropical tuna management measure was amended again in 2016, adopting some of the recommendations of the FAD working group to improve data reporting and adopt some controls on the FAD fishery (Rec 16-01). Under [Rec. 17-01](#), discards of tropical tunas from the purse seine fishery were prohibited with some limited exceptions. In 2018, lack of consensus to adjust the management measure to end overfishing led to its extension for one year.

In 2019, negotiations focused on the nature and extent of the time/area closure, FAD deployment limits, observer provisions, and bigeye TAC and allocations, including the treatment of small harvesters, developing States, and small-scale, artisanal fishermen. [Rec. 19-02](#) established the TAC for bigeye tuna at 62,500 t for 2020 and 61,500 t for 2021. An interim catch limit scheme for 2020 required CPCs with bigeye tuna catch limits greater than 10,000 t to reduce catches by 21%. Other CPCs were required to reduce catches by a certain percentage tied to recent catches: 17% for those with recent catches > 3500 t and 10% for those with recent catches >1,000 t. CPCs with recent catches <1,000 t were encouraged to keep their catch and effort at recent levels. The measure includes an

Atlantic-wide FAD closure for two months in 2020 (Jan-Feb) and three months in 2021 (Jan-March), as well as FAD deployment limits of 350 FADs per vessel in 2020 and 300 in 2021. 100% observer coverage is required on purse seine vessels. Observer coverage was raised to 10% on longline vessels > 20m length overall (LOA), to be implemented by 2022 using human observers or electronic monitoring systems, with electronic monitoring protocols to be developed by 2021. In 2021, after difficult negotiations, the TAC was set at 62,000 t, the FAD closure was reduced to 73 days, and all other measures were rolled over ([Rec. 21-01](#)). A similar dynamic in 2022 led to another rollover ([Rec. 22-01](#)). Negotiations for an updated, comprehensive tropical tuna measure were ongoing at the time of publication.

Panel 2 - North Atlantic Bluefin Tuna and Albacore

Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna: At its 1998 meeting, ICCAT adopted a rebuilding program for western Atlantic bluefin tuna with the goal of reaching MSY in 20 years. The TAC of 2,500mt, inclusive of dead discards, was initially shared by the United States, Japan, and Canada; later allocations were specified for three minor harvesters: the United Kingdom (in respect of Bermuda), France (in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon), and Mexico. The 2014 assessment showed an improvement in the status of the stock, with overfishing no longer occurring. [Rec. 14-05](#) increased the annual TAC to a level within the range of scientific advice, allowing for continued growth of the spawning stock biomass under either a high recruitment scenario or low recruitment scenario.

A 2017 stock assessment provided advice based on fishing mortality reference points rather than biomass based reference points given the significant uncertainties in some population characteristics, such as the stock-recruit relationship, that resulted in highly divergent stock status estimates in previous assessments. The United States tabled a proposal to establish interim conservation and management measures for western Atlantic bluefin tuna (2018-20) that was responsive to the scientific advice while recognizing the need for a transition between the 20-year rebuilding program adopted in 1998 and a future approach to managing the stock that relies on management procedures, tested through Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE), to meet Convention objectives. ICCAT adopted a modified version of the U.S. proposal that rolled over most existing provisions of the rebuilding program while increasing the annual TAC to 2,350 t for 2018-20 ([Rec. 17-06](#)).

In 2020, SCRS updated the stock assessment for western bluefin tuna, providing a wide range of TAC advice to the Commission. ICCAT adopted a measure to extend [Rec. 17-06](#) ([Rec. 20-06](#)) that followed one of the SCRS management advice scenarios; it maintained the TAC for 2021 at 2,350 t and, unless otherwise decided by the Commission based on a new assessment in 2021, required endorsement of a substantial TAC reduction starting in 2022 to address overfishing. A new assessment was agreed to ensure the best available recruitment-related data inputs could be taken into account given the relationship between recruitment and catch advice under an $F_{0.1}$ management strategy. The outcome of the 2021 assessment was more optimistic than in 2020, but, given uncertainties and considering the advice of an external reviewer, the SCRS noted that the Commission should use the quantitative advice from the assessment with caution. In light of this, the SCRS provided qualitative input to the Commission concerning the TAC, advising that a “moderate” increase over the 2021 level of 2,350 t could be implemented. The Commission adopted a 16% TAC increase (2,726 t) as reflected in [Rec. 21-07](#). The agreed TAC for 2022 was consistent with scientific advice and maintained a high probability of avoiding overfishing while also providing for stability in the fishery and for its sustainability in both the short- and long-terms. The new TAC provided more than a 5% quota increase for the United States.

At the 2022 ICCAT annual meeting, the Commission adopted a management procedure, tested through MSE, that establishes TACs for both western and eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna starting in 2023. The MP recommendation ([Rec. 20-09](#)) is discussed further below. The TAC for western bluefin tuna resulting from application of the MP, including application of a 50 t minimum TAC change provision, for each year of the 2023-2025 period remains at the 2022 level of 2,726 t. Taking into account the adoption of the MP, the United States tabled and the Commission adopted a proposal for a western Atlantic bluefin tuna conservation and management plan ([Rec. 22-10](#)) that would replace the interim plan adopted in 2017. The U.S. proposal referenced the MP recommendation and incorporated the TAC resulting from the application of the MP. The U.S. proposal also maintained the existing quota allocation scheme and brought the provisions of the prior recommendation up-to-date, including updating the research provisions in line with activities identified by the SCRS. In particular, language was included supporting the priority scientific work, such as close-kin mark-recapture, needed to facilitate the reconditioning of the MSE operating models and supporting review of the MP by 2028. The U.S. total quota for

each year of the 2023-25 period remained unchanged from the 2022 level of 1,341 t.

Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Bluefin Tuna: ICCAT began adopting measures to limit harvests of eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna, including TACs and country specific quotas, in the mid to late 1990s due to concerns about the status of the stock. In light of growing evidence of stock mixing, the United States urged the adoption of strong conservation measures in the east. However, for many years, eastern harvesters failed to follow scientific advice on TAC levels and other actions and largely failed to implement ICCAT recommendations effectively despite adopting a “rebuilding plan” in 2006. Between 2008-2010, ICCAT began to take more serious steps to strengthen monitoring and control measures in the eastern bluefin tuna fishery and to establish measures that more closely aligned with scientific advice. Since that time, compliance has improved, with total reported catches remaining at or below the TAC in recent years. Improved management and compliance has also led to improvements in the status of eastern bluefin tuna.

In 2017, the eastern stock was assessed, and similar to the assessment for the western stock, advice was provided based on fishing mortality reference points rather than biomass based reference points given the significant uncertainties in some population characteristics, particularly the stock-recruit relationship. The assessment indicated that overfishing of the eastern bluefin stock was not occurring, but the SCRS could not advise on whether or not the stock was overfished as this determination depends on assumptions made for longer term future recruitment. At the 2017 annual meeting, negotiations on a measure to substantially revise the rebuilding plan, including transitioning it from a recovery plan to a management plan, broke down. Instead, the Commission adopted a Chair’s proposal for a one year measure that rolled over many of the provisions of the recovery plan to allow discussions for more ambitious changes to continue. The Chair’s proposal did provide for stepped increases in the TACs (28,200 t for 2018; 32,240 t for 2019 and 36,000 t for 2020), an adjustment to Algeria’s allocation, and establishment of a small unallocated reserve quota for 2019-20. Given dissatisfaction with the allocation arrangement in the 2017 measure, an intersessional meeting was held to consider reallocation of part of the reserve quota.

In 2018, after extensive negotiations to develop a more comprehensive revision to the eastern bluefin tuna rebuilding plan, ICCAT adopted [Rec. 18-02](#). Revisions included numerous changes to provisions such as minimum size, fishing and farming capacity limits, rules for vessels harvesting eastern bluefin tuna as bycatch, and open seasons. Many of the agreed changes loosened management requirements and complicated their implementation and enforcement, but eastern harvesters argued that such changes were needed in order to be able to catch the increasing TAC. The new Recommendation also included a revised allocation arrangement that distributed the unallocated reserve portion of the previously-agreed TAC, consistent with recommendations from the 2018 Panel 2 intersessional meeting. This measure was extended with minor changes in [Rec. 19-04](#). In 2020, Panel 2 adopted [Rec. 20-07](#) revising [Rec. 19-04](#) in light of the outcome of a new stock assessment. Taking into account suggestions of a Working Group on Bluefin Tuna Control and Traceability Measures ([Res. 19-15](#)), the proposal also included revisions to strengthen control and traceability of bluefin tuna fisheries, particularly with respect to eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna destined for farms, to help prevent IUU fishing activities and the trading of illegal bluefin tuna. In 2021, ICCAT adopted further revisions to the eastern bluefin tuna management plan ([Rec. 21-08](#)) primarily to improve its clarity.

In 2022, the Panel adopted [Rec. 22-08](#) updating the eastern bluefin tuna measure. Revisions comprised some minor clarifications of existing text, new text on growth rates of farmed bluefin tuna, and most significantly, incorporation of a new, higher TAC for the east of 40,570 t resulting from the application of the management procedure (MP) adopted in 2022. The MP is discussed further below. In light of the quota increase, a number of parties sought increases in their allocations. Some adjustments were made to allocations, and the revised quota table was adopted. Given dissatisfaction with the allocations by some, it was agreed that allocations for future years would be discussed intersessionally in 2023 and, as appropriate, the issue would be considered at the 2023 ICCAT annual meeting.

Bluefin Tuna Management Procedure based on MSE: After many years of development, the Commission adopted a management procedure, tested through MSE, that establishes total allowable catches (TACs) for both western Atlantic and eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna management areas starting in 2023 ([Rec. 22-09](#)). An MP tested through MSE allows both stocks to be managed more effectively in the face of identified uncertainties, such as recruitment potential and stock mixing, and in line with the objective of the Convention. Key elements of the bluefin tuna MP advanced during intersessional Panel 2 meetings and decided during the annual meeting included: specifying operational management objectives covering stock status, safety, stability, and yield, and related

performance statistics; agreeing to the length of the management cycle for setting TACs under the MP; describing the selected MP; specifying a minimum threshold for TAC changes; and determining the timing of review of the MP and the related question of the potential reconditioning of the MSE operating models. Adoption of the bluefin tuna MP was a major accomplishment for ICCAT. The TACs resulting from application of the MP, including application of a 50 t minimum TAC change provision for the west and 1000 t for the east, for each year of the 2023-2025 period are as follows: the annual western Atlantic bluefin TAC remains at the 2022 level of 2,726 t; and the annual eastern Atlantic/Mediterranean bluefin tuna TAC increased 12.5% to 40,570 t.

North Atlantic (Northern) Albacore: Based on a 2009 assessment indicating that the stock was overfished with overfishing occurring, the Commission adopted a rebuilding program that included a 28,000 t TAC aimed at stock recovery by 2020. [Rec. 15-04](#) defined the management objectives for northern albacore and outlined the process by which SCRS would identify and test candidate biological reference points (i.e., threshold and limit biomass levels and the target fishing mortality rate) and associated harvest control rules (HCR). In 2016, the stock was found to be rebuilt with no overfishing occurring.

As a precursor to adoption of a Management Procedure, ICCAT adopted an interim HCR for 2018-2020 in [Rec. 17-04](#), with established reference points. The 3-year constant annual TAC resulting from application of the interim HCR was 33,600 t for 2018-2020. The SCRS was asked to develop criteria for the identification of exceptional circumstances, initiate a peer review of the MSE, and test several variants of the interim HCR. Rec. 17-04 called for the Commission to consider refinements of the interim HCR based on that peer review with a view to adopt a long term HCR. In 2020, Panel 2 adopted two complementary NALB recommendations. Rec. 20-03 ensured expiring provisions of the conservation and management plan (Rec. 16-06) were extended for one year. Rec. 20-04 extended Rec 17-04 for one year, applying the interim harvest control rule to obtain a TAC of 37,801 t for 2021. This TAC, consistent with scientific advice, was a 12.5% increase from the prior TAC of 33,600 t. Despite the absence of an allocation key for NALB, a *pro rata* increase in allocations was implemented for 2021.

At the 2021 annual meeting, a proposal for a comprehensive management measure was introduced that included establishing a management procedure (MP), and after significant debate, the measure was adopted. [Rec. 21-04](#) did three things: (a) combined the relevant elements of the two existing recommendations for that stock (i.e., Rec. 17-04 - the interim harvest control rule (HCR) and Rec. 16-06 - the conservation and management program) and made some revisions to certain elements, (b) codified the approach to the stock assessment as specified by the 2020 report, and (c) incorporated a protocol for exceptional circumstances. The TACs for 2022 and 2023, generated via the application of the MP, remained unchanged from the 2021 level.

Mediterranean Albacore Tuna: ICCAT adopted a first-ever measure for Mediterranean albacore in 2017 with the goal of maintaining catches below MSY, consistent with SCRS advice. It limits the number of vessels authorized to fish for Mediterranean albacore and establishes a closed fishing season ([Rec. 17-05](#)). In 2021, the SCRS conducted a new stock assessment. In response to the scientific advice, the Commission adopted a 15-year rebuilding plan ([Rec. 21-06](#)). Among other things, it established a 2,500 t TAC for 2022, with a view to achieving B_{MSY} by 2036 with 60% probability, and a working group to develop an allocation scheme for the fishery.

Panel 3 - South Atlantic Bluefin and Albacore Tunas

South Atlantic (Southern) Bluefin Tuna: No management measures have been established by ICCAT for southern bluefin tuna. This stock is distributed among the Indian, Pacific, and Atlantic Oceans. Stocks are assessed and managed by the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tunas (CCSBT). Given the overlap of distribution of this species, ICCAT collaborates with CCSBT, as appropriate.

South Atlantic (Southern) Albacore: A 2020 stock assessment found that the stock is likely not overfished, nor undergoing overfishing. In 2022, the TAC was set at 28,000 t through 2026 ([Rec. 22-06](#)).

Panel 4 - Swordfish, Billfish, Sharks, and Other Species

North Atlantic Swordfish: Concern about the status of North Atlantic swordfish led ICCAT to begin management of this stock in the early 1990s, including catch limits and a minimum size. When the stock was found to be overfished with overfishing occurring, ICCAT adopted a rebuilding program designed to rebuild the stock within 10 years. A

U.S. closed area in the Florida Straits, implemented to complement ICCAT measures, offered additional protection to juvenile swordfish. ICCAT adopted adjustments to its rebuilding program in the late 2000s, including greater access to the resource for some ICCAT members—largely due to U.S. flexibility given its quota underharvest. A stock assessment in 2009 concluded that the stock was fully rebuilt. In 2010, ICCAT adopted a new recommendation that provided several developing States with an allocation from the TAC (rather than fishery access based on available underharvest).

The 2017 stock assessment for North Atlantic swordfish indicated that the stock remains rebuilt but has lower productivity than previously estimated. [Rec. 17-02](#) reduced the TAC slightly while maintaining existing allocations and quota carryforward provisions through 2021. Some quota transfers were codified in [Rec. 19-03](#) and [Rec. 20-02](#). Recs. 21-02 and 22-03 extended the provisions of Rec. 17-02 through 2022 and 2023, respectively. ICCAT also adopted [Res. 19-14, which](#) provides a basis for development of initial operational management objectives for North Atlantic swordfish, with the goal of adopting them in 2022. MSE development is underway and a Management Procedure, which will set the TAC for 2024 and beyond, is expected to be adopted at the 2023 Annual Meeting. .

South Atlantic Swordfish: ICCAT established management measures for South Atlantic swordfish for the first time in 1994. Initial measures limited countries to catch levels consistent with certain reference years. [Rec.17-03](#) slightly reduced the annual TAC for 2018-21, in line with scientific advice. Rec. 21-03 extended the provisions of Rec. 17-03 through 2022. Rec. 22-04 further reduced the TAC in line with scientific advice and adjusted catch limits through 2026.

Mediterranean Swordfish: [Rec. 03-04](#) required CPCs to reduce the mortality of juvenile swordfish and prohibited the use of driftnets in fisheries for large pelagics in the Mediterranean. In 2007, a time/area closure was established. A stock assessment in 2016 found that the stock was overfished and subject to overfishing. [Rec. 16-05](#) established a new suite of measures, including catch limits, extension of the time/area closure, increasing the minimum size, limiting the use of hooks at a certain depth, designating a port log scheme, requiring observers, and monitoring recreational fisheries; allocations were agreed intersessionally.

Billfishes:

Blue Marlin and White Marlin: In 2000, ICCAT adopted a two-phase plan to rebuild Atlantic blue and white marlin stocks, but for many years was unable to move beyond Phase 1. The measure was revised several times, and in 2012, ICCAT established an Atlantic-wide landings limit for each stock with country-specific quotas, recreational minimum sizes, and a ban on the sale of recreationally caught marlin. The SCRS was also directed to review existing data and information collection programs for artisanal billfish fisheries, including those of other regional and sub-regional fisheries management organizations, and to develop a plan to improve data collection with particular emphasis in the Caribbean and West Africa. A 2018 stock assessment found that blue marlin remained overfished and subject to overfishing, while a 2019 assessment found that white marlin was no longer subject to overfishing but was still overfished.

In 2019, ICCAT adopted the first-ever rebuilding programs for blue marlin and white marlin stocks ([Rec. 19-05](#)). Roundscale spearfish are included as part of the white marlin species complex per SCRS advice. The measure, a compromise text co-sponsored by Brazil, EU, Panama, and the United States, reduced the annual limit for blue marlin from 2,000 t to 1,670 t, a level that will stop overfishing immediately, and has a greater than 50% probability of rebuilding the stock by 2028. The annual limit for white marlin/roundscale spearfish is set at 355 t, consistent with scientific advice. These limits take into account the mortality associated with reported dead discards. The annual U.S. landings limit of 250 individual blue and white marlin (combined) was maintained. The measure maintains a live release provision for purse seine and longline vessels as well as a minimum size and other measures for recreational fisheries. The SCRS is directed to study the effect of hook type and hook size, as well as fishing practices, that could help to reduce bycatch and bycatch mortality for marlins.

Sailfish: A stock assessment in 2016 found that the eastern stock of sailfish is overfished with overfishing possibly occurring, while the western stock is likely not overfished or subject to overfishing. In light of the scientific advice, [Rec. 16-11](#) requires CPCs to take or maintain appropriate measures to limit sailfish mortality; such measures could include releasing live sailfish, encouraging or requiring the use of circle hooks or other effective gear modifications, implementing a minimum size, and/or limiting days at sea. If in any year the total catch of either stock of Atlantic

sailfish exceeds the level corresponding to 67% of the average estimate of maximum sustainable yield (i.e. 1,271 t for the eastern stock and 1,030mt for the western stock), the Commission will review the measure. A stock assessment took place in 2023; the Commission will consider the need for additional conservation and management measures for sailfish at its 2023 annual meeting based on the new scientific advice.

Sharks:

Shark Finning: In 2004, ICCAT adopted a binding measure for sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT (Rec. 04-10). The decision was taken by consensus and was the first time ICCAT ever asserted management authority over sharks. To address the issue of shark finning, the measure requires full utilization of shark catches. Fishermen must retain all parts of the shark except the head, guts, and skins to the point of first landing. Countries are required to ensure that their vessels retain on board fins that total no more than 5% by weight of sharks onboard up to the first point of landing. [Rec. 04-10](#) also (1) established requirements for data collection on catches of sharks, (2) called for research on shark nursery areas, and (3) encouraged the release of live sharks, especially juveniles. Since 2009, a proposal has been introduced annually to prohibit the removal of shark fins at sea and require that all sharks be landed with their fins naturally attached (fully or partially) through the point of first landing of the shark. This proposal is designed to increase the enforceability of ICCAT's shark finning ban and strengthen data collection efforts by improving species identification. The proposal has received broad support within ICCAT, but consensus has so far not been reached.

Retention Prohibitions: ICCAT has adopted prohibitions for several shark species that are caught in association with ICCAT fisheries, including bigeye thresher ([Rec. 09-07](#)), oceanic whitetip ([Rec. 10-07](#)), hammerheads ([Rec. 10-08](#)), and silky shark ([Rec. 11-08](#)).

Blue Shark: A 2015 assessment for blue shark found that the stocks are not subject to overfishing and not overfished although there is substantial uncertainty surrounding the results. In 2019, ICCAT established a TAC of 39,100 t for North Atlantic blue shark with specific allocations for EU, Japan, and Morocco, and 870 t set aside for "other" CPCs, including the United States ([Rec. 19-07](#)). A TAC has also been established for South Atlantic blue sharks ([Rec. 19-08](#)). A stock assessment took place in 2023; the Commission will consider the need for new conservation and management measures in light of the new scientific advice.

Porbeagle Shark: [Rec. 15-06](#) requires CPCs to release any incidental catches of porbeagle sharks that are alive when brought alongside the vessel. Additional conservation measures will be considered if catches of porbeagle sharks increase beyond 2014 levels.

North Atlantic Shortfin Mako Shark: In 2017, a stock assessment indicated that North Atlantic shortfin mako shark was overfished and subject to overfishing. The SCRS advised that catches should be reduced to 500 t or less. With several competing proposals, ICCAT adopted a compromise measure ([Rec. 17-08](#)) that (1) prohibited retention of live North Atlantic shortfin mako sharks and requires vessels to release them in a manner that causes the least harm; (2) allowed retention of dead sharks if there is an observer or electronic monitoring system on board, if the shark is over a certain size, or in some other limited cases; and (3) created reporting and biological sampling requirements to improve the availability of scientific information.

In 2019, the SCRS carried out new projections for the North Atlantic shortfin mako stock through 2070 (two generation times) at the Commission's request. These showed, among other things, that a TAC of 700 t would end overfishing immediately with a 57% probability, a TAC of 500 t, including dead discards, has a 52% probability of rebuilding the stock by 2070; and to have at least a 60% probability of rebuilding the stock by 2070, the realized TAC has to be 300 t or less. Further, SCRS advised that to accelerate the rate of recovery and increase the probability of success, the Commission should prohibit retention of North Atlantic shortfin mako as it has done for other shark species. In 2019, CPCs were unable to reach consensus, and ICCAT adopted a Chair's proposal to roll over Rec. 17-08 for one year ([Rec. 19-06](#)), while discussions on a longer term approach continued. In 2021, Rec. 21-09 was adopted to implement a rebuilding program for the stock. As a first step in rebuilding the stock, retention was prohibited in 2022 and 2023. Consistent with that objective, the measure established a total fishing mortality limit of 250 t, which, if exceeded, would result in a retention limit of 0 t. Other provisions include an emphasis on data reporting, safe handling and live release procedures, and scientific and research activities.

South Atlantic Shortfin Mako: In 2022, a proposal was adopted for this stock (Rec. 22-11) that mirrored many aspects of the North Atlantic shortfin mako measure, including setting a total mortality limit following the 2024 stock assessment and then quantifying any permissible retention pursuant to scientific advice. To get agreement, a proposed no retention provision was replaced by individual retention allowances by reducing each CPC's average catch level (based on a 2012-2021 baseline), resulting in a total retention allowance of 1,295 t. This total retention allowance was intended to result in a total mortality limit, including post-release mortality, in line with scientific advice. The measure provides that shortfin mako can only be retained when the shark is dead at haulback and with observers or EMS on the vessel. The entry into force of this provision was delayed until after the 2024 stock assessment.

Bycatch and Discards

Sea Turtles: In [Rec. 10-09](#), ICCAT required the following: (1) purse seine vessels avoid encircling sea turtles to the extent practicable and release turtles that are encircled or entangled, including on FADs; (2) that pelagic longline vessels carry on board safe handling, disentangling and release equipment capable of releasing sea turtles in a manner that maximizes the probability of survival; and (3) that fishermen on pelagic longline vessels use the equipment and be trained in its proper use. [Rec. 13-11](#) provides additional specificity in safe handling practices required for incidentally caught sea turtles (e.g., concerning best practices for the use of line cutters and de-hooking devices). In 2017, SCRS advised that pelagic longline fisheries in the ICCAT Convention area interact with substantial numbers of sea turtles. The United States presented a proposal reflecting SCRS advice to strengthen bycatch mitigation, but it was not adopted. After years of negotiations, Rec. 22-12 was adopted as a result of strong U.S. leadership. It included a menu of options for reducing bycatch mitigation, including (1) use of large circle hooks; (2) use of finfish bait; or (3) other measures considered effective by the SCRS. The new measure also streamlined existing ICCAT sea turtle bycatch requirements in Rec. 10-09 and 13-11.

Seabirds: In 2007, ICCAT adopted a recommendation requiring line weighting or use of tori lines on vessels fishing south of 20°S, for purposes of seabird bycatch mitigation. [Rec. 11-09](#), applicable in waters south of 25°S, requires use of at least two mitigation measures (night setting, bird scaring lines, or line weighting). The SCRS has been tasked with evaluating the effectiveness of current mitigation measures although this effort has been slowed by a lack of data from CPCs. The Commission is expected to consider the harmonization of these two measures, taking into account any new SCRS advice in 2024.

Permanent Working Group (PWG)

The PWG focuses on reviewing the implementation of technical measures, particularly monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) measures, with a view to improving their effectiveness through revision or other means and, where needed, developing new recommendations. Together these measures provide a suite of tools to help deter illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Many of ICCAT's MCS measures are developed through its Working Group on Integrated Monitoring Measures (IMM), including flag state duties ([Rec. 03-12](#)) and data recording systems for fishing vessels authorized to fish for species managed by ICCAT ([Rec. 03-13](#)).

As a part of its suite of MCS measures, ICCAT has adopted several trade programs, including an electronic Bluefin Catch Document System (eBCD) and paper-based statistical document programs for swordfish and frozen bigeye tuna. ICCAT's other monitoring and control measures include those that maintain the ICCAT authorized vessel list, and those rules that allow the identification and listing of IUU vessels, including via at-sea sightings reports, on an ICCAT IUU vessel list. Like other RFMOS, ICCAT also has adopted minimum standards for port inspections, in alignment with the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), and in addition, established an Expert Group for Capacity Building and Assistance, which is conducting on-site country assessments, developing an ICCAT-specific port inspection training program, and coordinating training. ICCAT has also adopted standards and rules related to controlling and monitoring transshipment activities, chartering arrangements and access agreements, vessel monitoring systems (VMS), and scientific observer programs.

Compliance Committee

The Compliance Committee (COC) evaluates compliance and cooperation with ICCAT measures by members and non-members through an annual review of compliance with ICCAT statistical data requirements and management

measures. This process includes a review of any alleged infractions submitted by third party sources. There is an opportunity for each Contracting Party to ask questions, provide information and clarify the record, and submit missing information or reports. The Secretariat compiles a compliance summary table to facilitate a substantive discussion of compliance failures and corrective actions. The Compliance Committee implements a number of ICCAT recommendations, including requirements for quota overharvests to be repaid in full within a specified timeframe and for additional quota or other penalties to be assessed for repeated quota overharvests. Since 2011, an *ad hoc* review group has assisted the Compliance Committee Chair in assessing relevant information and recommending actions to address implementation and compliance concerns related to both members and non-members. Several proposals have been adopted to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of COC operations and help ensure recommended decisions are more transparent, fair, and consistent (see [Res. 16-22](#) and [Res. 16-17](#)).

Trade Measures Instrument: Under [Rec. 06-13](#), if an ICCAT member or non-member is found to be diminishing the effectiveness of ICCAT, that party is “identified” and ICCAT sends a letter notifying them of the identification, explaining the reasons behind the decision, and asking them to rectify the situation. An identified party has the opportunity to respond to ICCAT at least 30 days prior to the next annual meeting to explain its non-compliance and any actions taken in response. Failure to rectify the identified activity may result in penalties including, for example, quota reduction or, as a last resort, non-discriminatory trade restrictive measures. In 2022, the Commission adopted a [Schedule of Compliance Issues and Corresponding Actions](#), establishing a framework and common standards for application of corrective actions and sanctions for a range of possible infractions.

No data-no fish: [Rec. 11-15](#) requires parties to submit information on how they are meeting data reporting obligations and states that in cases where Task I (catch and effort) data are not reported or are not reported completely, members and cooperating non-members will be prohibited from retaining the species in question until the data are sent to ICCAT. [Res. 15-09](#) established guidelines for the application of [Rec. 11-15](#), including how CPCs will report zero catches.

Cooperating Parties: ICCAT continues to encourage non-members interested in harvesting ICCAT species to become Cooperating Parties, Entities, or Fishing Entities ([Rec. 03-20](#)). Currently, ICCAT has six cooperating non-members: Bolivia, Chinese Taipei, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guyana, and Suriname.

Check Sheets: [Rec. 18-06](#) outlines a process and requirement for CPCs to report on their implementation of all shark measures through the submission of a check sheet. [Rec. 18-05](#) established a similar requirement for billfish.

Online Reporting Technology Working Group: Many CPCs have highlighted difficulties in complying with reporting requirements and requested mechanisms to streamline the reporting process. [Rec. 16-19](#) established the Online Reporting Technology Working Group to coordinate development of an online reporting system. This system will facilitate the timely and accurate submission of required information as well as simplify the process of compiling, reviewing, and assessing that information for the purpose of evaluating compliance with ICCAT obligations. ICCAT adopted [Rec. 19-12](#) to continue the development of the system in collaboration with the SCRS.

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Convention for the Conservation of Salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean (Basic Instrument for the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization – NASCO)

Basic Instrument

[Convention](#) for the Conservation of Salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean (TIAS 10789), 1982

Implementing Legislation

Atlantic Salmon Convention [Act](#) of 1982 (16 U.S.C. 3601)

Members

Canada, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union (EU), Norway, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Russian Federation. Iceland left the organization in 2009 as a result of the financial crisis and has recently indicated its intention to rejoin NASCO in early 2024.

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Budget

The Convention provides that 30 percent of the Organization's budget will be borne equally by the Parties; 70 percent will be based on their recent nominal catches of Atlantic salmon.

NASCO's 2024 budget totals £661,550--of which the U.S. contribution is £25,866. The 2024 budget is a slight decrease over the 2023 budget of £663,180. Overall, the budget keeps the organization in a strong financial position.

U.S. Representation

A. Appointment Process:

The Atlantic Salmon Convention Act of 1982 provides that the United States shall be represented on the Council and Commissions by three U.S. Commissioners, appointed by and to serve at the pleasure of the President. Of the Commissioners, one must be an official of the U.S. Government and two must be individuals (not officials of the U.S. Government) who are knowledgeable or experienced in the conservation and management of salmon of U.S. origin. Under certain circumstances, the Department of State is authorized to designate alternate Commissioners pending appointment of a regular Commissioner by the President.

U.S. Commissioners:

Federal Government Commissioner:

Shannon Dionne
Assistant Regional Administrator

Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA
Gloucester, MA 01930

Non-Federal Commissioners:

Patrick Keliher
Maine Department of Natural Resources

Stephen Gephard
Fisheries biologist, retired

A. Advisory Structure:

The U.S. Section to NASCO was formally constituted to provide the U.S. Commissioners with advice on the international conservation and management of Atlantic salmon, with particular reference to development of U.S. policies, positions, and negotiating tactics. Membership of the U.S. Section includes public and *ex officio* members. Public members are appointed by the Commissioners and serve for a term of 2 years with eligibility for an additional 2-year term. Public members are limited to 15 in number and must be persons knowledgeable or experienced in the conservation and management of salmon of U.S. origin.

Ex officio members include:

- (1) the Chair (or designee) of the New England Fishery Management Council;
- (2) a representative of the fishery agency of each of the States of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut;
- (3) the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and Space or her representative;
- (4) a representative of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce; and
- (5) a representative of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior.

In addition, the U.S. Commissioners established the U.S. Atlantic Salmon Assessment Committee, which is composed of staff from State and Federal fisheries agencies. The work of this body focuses on assessing New England stocks of Atlantic salmon, proposing and evaluating research needs, and serving the U.S. Section to NASCO. This body meets each year to produce an assessment document for the use of the U.S. Commissioners.

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

The Convention applies to the salmon stocks that migrate beyond areas of fisheries jurisdiction of coastal States of the Atlantic Ocean north of 36 degrees N latitude throughout their migratory range. The purpose of NASCO is to promote (1) the acquisition, analysis, and dissemination of scientific information pertaining to salmon stocks in the North Atlantic Ocean and (2) the conservation, restoration, enhancement, and rational management of salmon stocks in the North Atlantic Ocean through international cooperation.

B. Organizational Structure:

NASCO consists of: (1) the Council; (2) three regional Commissions (North American Commission or NAC, West Greenland Commission or WGC, and North-East Atlantic Commission or NEAC); and (3) the Secretariat. The Council, which consists of representatives of all Contracting Parties: (1) provides a forum for the study, analysis, and exchange of information on salmon stocks subject to the Convention; (2) provides for consultation and

cooperation concerning salmon stocks beyond Commission areas; (3) coordinates the activities of the Commissions; (4) establishes working arrangements with the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and other fisheries and scientific organizations; (5) makes recommendations concerning scientific research; (6) supervises and coordinates the administrative, financial, and other internal affairs of the Organization; and (7) coordinates the Organization's external relations.

The three Commissions each have the following functions: (1) to provide for consultation and cooperation among their members; (2) to propose regulatory measures for intercepting salmon fisheries; and (3) to make recommendations to the Council concerning scientific research.

Canada and the United States are members of the NAC. Canada, the EU, the United States, the UK, and Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), are members of the WGC. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the EU, the UK, and Norway, and the Russian Federation are members of the NEAC. In the case of the NAC, the EU may submit and vote on proposals for regulatory measures concerning salmon stocks originating in the territories of its Member States. Canada and the United States each have similar rights in the case of the NEAC. Iceland will be a member of the NEAC once it rejoins NASCO, which is expected in early 2024.

C. Programs:

Scientific Advice: ICES provides scientific advice to NASCO. To facilitate the process of requesting scientific information, the NASCO Council established a Standing Scientific Committee (SSC) in 1992, composed of a scientist and a management representative from each of NASCO's three geographic Commissions, to formulate requests for future scientific advice from ICES. The SSC is designed to ensure that questions to the scientific working groups are formed to reflect accurately the information desired by managers. Initial consideration of NASCO scientific questions and compilation of catch statistics and other information are undertaken by the Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon. The results of this work are reviewed and considered by the ICES Advisory Committee on Atlantic Salmon (ACOM) and formal scientific advice is issued in the ACOM report to NASCO in advance of each annual meeting.

Non-Contracting Party Fishing: At the 1992 meeting held in Washington, D.C., the Council approved a protocol to the NASCO Convention for signature by non-Contracting Parties (NCP) to NASCO due to concerns about fishing for Atlantic salmon by certain NCPs. The protocol was designed to provide NCPs with a legal instrument for the creation and enforcement of domestic legislation and regulations. It calls upon non-members to prohibit the fishing of Atlantic salmon stocks beyond the areas of fishing jurisdiction of coastal States and to take appropriate actions to enforce the provisions of the protocol. The NASCO Council also approved a resolution calling upon NASCO Parties to encourage NCPs fishing for salmon on the high seas to comply with the protocol and to obtain and compile information on such fishing. The NASCO Secretariat was given the task of devising a mechanism by which Parties to the NASCO Convention may approach any State whose flag vessels have been observed fishing on the high seas for Atlantic salmon contrary to the protocol.

To date, no NCPs have become bound by the protocol although certain NCPs (i.e., Panama and Poland) took action to address the problem of their flag vessels that were harvesting Atlantic salmon. There have been no sightings of NCPs fishing for salmon since February 1994; however, there have been few surveillance flights conducted over the winter and spring periods preceding NASCO annual meetings. Past estimates of catch taken by NCP vessels fishing in international waters has been 25-100 metric tons (mt).

Unreported Catch: The Council has expressed continuing concern over the years about the level of unreported catch and has taken steps to try to reduce it. In 2007, NASCO convened a Special Session at its Annual Meeting to provide an opportunity for exchange by the Parties on: methods used to estimate unreported catches; trends in estimates of unreported catches; the source of unreported catches; and the measures being taken to minimize them. In general, sources of unreported catch include illegal target fishing; bycatch in directed fisheries for other species in riverine, estuarine, and marine environments where it is illegal to retain salmon; and under-reporting in legal recreational and aboriginal fisheries. All parties agreed that it is difficult to quantify unreported catches given that they result primarily from illegal fishing, and many Parties indicated that where legal salmon fisheries are allowed, surveys by, and local knowledge of, enforcement authorities have been used to quantify unreported catches. Also, local management groups and associations have often been approached to gather information. Additional methods

for estimating unreported catch include analyses and comparison of catch statistics over multiple years and analyses of catch per unit of effort from different netting sites or stations. In some cases, catch statistics from local anglers have been compared to catch statistics from foreign anglers which appear to be more accurate.

While it is agreed that the precise size of unreported catch in the jurisdictions of respective Parties is difficult to ascertain, as of the review in 2007, trends in the level of unreported catch and related violations across jurisdictions suggest a decline in the amount of unreported catch. In some jurisdictions declines appeared to correspond to increases in successful prosecutions and the severity of penalties imposed. Also, there are instances where sources of unreported catch in some aboriginal fisheries are now included in reported catch due to negotiated agreements. In some jurisdictions, regulatory measures such as area closures, onboard or at site observers, tagging and documentation of catch, sale, transfer or disposal by fishery proprietors or operators, and logbooks for recreational angling have been implemented. Public outreach, education, and notices have also appeared to help reduce unreported catch.

The Council agreed to revisit the matter of unreported catch in the future, has encouraged the Parties to maintain and continue efforts to reduce and eliminate unreported catch, and has recommended that Parties include actions related to unreported catch in their Implementation Plans and Annual Progress Reports (APRs), begun as part of the “Next Steps” process. In that regard, the Council has requested that statistics on reported and unreported catch estimates be provided at the lowest possible level (in river, estuarine, coastal habitats) to assist in assessing progress in fisheries management. In addition, the SSC has included a question to ICES seeking clarification of the levels of unreported catch in the West Greenland fishery since 2002.

Research Fishing: At its 1995 Annual Meeting, NASCO first considered conditions under which research fishing by Contracting Parties might be undertaken. While all agreed that harvesting salmon for scientific research purposes could provide valuable management information, some were concerned that such research fishing could be contrary to Article 2 of the NASCO Convention. At the 1996 Annual Meeting, the Parties adopted a resolution setting forth a procedure to allow research fishing. The measure does not distinguish where such fishing occurs (i.e., within areas of national jurisdiction or on the high seas) and allows research fishing provided certain safeguards are observed. Since the adoption of the resolution, NASCO has approved research-fishing proposals from several of its members.

International Atlantic Salmon Research Board (IASRB): Due to concerns about marine survival of Atlantic salmon, the Council agreed at its 2000 meeting to set up a working group to develop ideas for an international cooperative research program to identify and explain the causes of increased marine mortality of Atlantic salmon and to consider ways to counteract this problem. The resultant IASRB was established in 2001 and has been meeting regularly to identify and coordinate needed research and consider funding sources. The IASRB receives advice from its Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) and maintains an inventory of research relating to salmon at sea. The inventory has been made available to ICES and others to assist in the identification of data deficiencies, monitoring needs and research requirements.

In 2005, the IASRB adopted the SALSEA (Salmon at Sea) Program to advance the coordination of needed Atlantic salmon research. It comprised three main areas of work: developing technologies, early migration and distribution, and migration at sea (the marine survey component). The 2008 IASRB research inventory included three significant new projects: SALSEA-Merge, SALSEA-North America, and SALSEA-West Greenland. SALSEA-Merge was launched in April 2008. This three-year public-private partnership included multi-year marine surveys conducted by Irish, Faroese, and Norwegian vessels. Under SALSEA-North America, a Canadian research vessel conducted sampling in the Labrador Sea. U.S. scientists participated in the Canadian survey and facilitated processing of samples obtained during the cruise. Related to SALSEA-West Greenland, enhanced sampling programs in the West Greenland fishery from 2009 through 2011 were undertaken. Additional information on SALSEA, including findings from the research, can be found at www.nasco.int/sas/.

The IASRB continues to meet annually. In 2015, the Board recognized the valuable data that the SALSEA Program has generated over the years and encouraged all Parties to continue to contribute to the metadatabase, which is available on the IASRB website. In addition, the Board adopted a resolution on research at sea and terms of reference for a telemetry workshop—resulting in development of a large-scale international collaborative project called SALSEA-Track. This project has the ultimate objective of providing information on migration paths and quantitative estimates of mortality during phases of the marine life cycle of salmon. SALSEA-Track is a novel,

exciting and high profile project dependent upon extensive international collaboration and partnerships -- with collaborators focused on a variety of other marine species that utilize the North Atlantic and Arctic Oceans. In 2023, the IASRB revised its Terms of Reference to provide clarity about its vision, scope and purpose, which were adopted by the Council, [ICR\(23\)18](#). Additional information on SALSEA and the IASRB more generally can be found at www.nasco.int/sas/.

Precautionary Approach: In 1997, the Council agreed to establish a working group to consider how the precautionary approach might be applied to NASCO's work. Its first meeting was held in January 1998 and representatives of ICES and FAO were invited to attend. At its 1998 annual meeting, NASCO adopted an agreement on adoption of the precautionary approach, which was largely developed at the 1998 intersessional. The key provisions of the agreement were: (a) NASCO and its Contracting Parties agree to adopt and apply a precautionary approach; (b) NASCO and its Contracting Parties should apply the precautionary approach to the entire range of NASCO salmon conservation and management activities; and (c) the application of the precautionary approach should focus on (1) management of North Atlantic salmon fisheries, (2) the formulation of management advice and associated scientific research, and (3) introductions and transfers including aquaculture impacts and possible use of transgenic salmon. To further this work, NASCO adopted the Action Plan for the Application of the Precautionary Approach to Salmon Management at its 1999 meeting. The action plan provides a framework to further implement the precautionary approach in NASCO and established a standing committee to oversee this work. The action plan addresses such issues as: management of fisheries; socioeconomic issues; unreported catches; scientific advice and research requirements; stock rebuilding programs; introductions, transfers, aquaculture and transgenics; habitat issues; and bycatch. The agreement by NASCO to apply the precautionary approach to its work represents a significant milestone in cooperation by the Parties. The NASCO Parties recognized that ultimate development of the precautionary approach will take many years and will seriously challenge the resources of the organization and its members. Progress has been made on a number of fronts, however, including the development of a decision structure for use by the Council and Commissions as well as by relevant authorities of NASCO members in the management of single and mixed stock salmon fisheries; a plan of action for the application of the precautionary approach to the protection and restoration of Atlantic salmon habitat; revision and broadening of the Oslo Resolution, including incorporating into it all other NASCO measures addressing introductions, transfers, aquaculture and transgenics (i.e., the guidelines on transgenic salmon, the NAC protocols, and the NEAC resolution, and the guidelines on containment). In addition, guidelines on stocking were developed and appended. The new and improved resolution was dubbed the Williamsburg Resolution. In addition, progress has been made in the area of socio-economics through the adoption of guidelines for incorporating social and economic factors in decisions under the precautionary approach.

Liaison Group and Aquaculture issues: NASCO has recognized the need to involve the salmon farming industry in efforts to protect the wild stocks through improved salmon farming management. Toward that end, NASCO established a Wild and Farmed Salmon Liaison Group with the International Salmon Farmer's Association (ISFA) to effect closer cooperation with the salmon farming industry. The group met several times over the years, sharing information on a variety of topics, including area management initiatives, escape issues, controlling disease, etc. Until its 2007 meeting, NGOs were not invited to participate. In considering the results of the 2007 Liaison group meeting and a discussion document presented by industry, the Council decided that a Joint Technical Task Force should be established to consider matters further. Membership would be from the Secretariat and two or three nominated expert participants from NASCO and ISFA. The Terms of Reference for this Group were as follows: taking account of the findings in the 2005 ICES/NASCO Bergen Symposium, the Joint ISFA/NASCO Trondheim Workshop and any other relevant scientific information regarding impacts from aquaculture on wild stocks; and identify and agree on a series of best practice recommendations to address the continuing impacts of salmon farming on wild stocks (e.g. escapes, interbreeding, sea lice infestations, disease transfers to and from the wild). The Task Force was intended to at least temporarily replace the NASCO/ISFA Liaison Group. In communicating this decision to ISFA, that organization responded that it was eager to continue the relationship with NASCO and preferred to maintain the Liaison Group. The Council determined that it was not ready to reconvene the Liaison Group and proposed proceeding with the Task Force.

The Task Force met in Boston in March 2009 and reviewed national and international initiatives on best practice guidance and measures. It was the view of the Task Force that the Williamsburg Resolution remains valid, but it needs to be strengthened in its interpretation and application, particularly in terms of defined goals and assessment of outcomes. The Task Force developed 'Guidance on Best Management Practices to address impacts of sea lice and

escaped farmed salmon on wild salmon stocks.’ The Guidance includes an international goal for both sea lice and escaped salmon, best management practices to help achieve those goals, reporting to track progress towards that goal, and identification of factors facilitating implementation. The Task Force recommended that NASCO include reference to the Best Management Practice matrix in the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the upcoming review group and ask that Parties report on progress toward achievement of the international goal. The Liaison Group met immediately after the Task Force meeting and ISFA accepted the interim report of the Task Force. At its 2009 annual meeting, the Council supported the continued work of the Task Force and also its recommendation that the TORs for the upcoming FAR incorporate the Guidelines on Best Management Practice developed by the Task Force.

There has been an ongoing discussion within NASCO concerning the appropriate extent of NASCO’s role with respect to aquaculture, introductions and transfers, and transgenics issues. During the intersessional meeting of the Parties, held in London in February 2013, the role of NASCO with regard to aquaculture and the future of the Liaison Group were discussed. The Parties concluded that aquaculture would remain a focus area for NASCO in terms of concerns over impacts on wild Atlantic salmon and progress toward the containment and sea lice goals would be tracked as implementation plans and annual reports are submitted. The Parties recognized that, in general, NASCO has established international goals and some guidance on measures that may reduce or avoid adverse impacts to wild stocks from aquaculture activities, but it is the responsibility of the Parties to identify and implement appropriate measures to meet the performance standards. This determination was not inconsistent with the recommendations of the external performance review panel although it did not go as far as that recommendation (i.e., the Parties did not agree to seek revision of its Convention to allow binding decisions to be taken in the area of aquaculture and related activities). With regard to the Liaison Group, the Parties concluded that, while there was not a need for a permanent body, there remained the option to convene a joint *Ad Hoc* group if the need arose. The Parties also agreed that an item should be retained on the Council agenda to allow for an exchange of information between ISFA and NASCO on issues concerning impacts of aquaculture on wild salmon.

Next Steps for NASCO: On the occasion of its 20th anniversary, NASCO decided to undertake a review of the Organization (in essence, a performance review) in order to ensure that it was properly positioned to be able to address the current and future issues facing Atlantic salmon in the North Atlantic. Through an intensive working group process that included public scoping meetings, NASCO comprehensively reviewed its Convention, rules of procedure, decision making, structure, and operations. The Working Group developed a Strategic Approach that articulated the vision for NASCO, framed future activities of NASCO, and laid out a clear approach for moving forward in addressing challenges and implementing the recommendations. The Council endorsed the work of the Working Group, calling for speedy implementation of some recommendations and setting up processes to consider implementation aspects for the more complicated issues, including those surrounding improving implementation of and reporting on Contracting Party commitments. A Public Relations Working Group was created to develop a strategy to raise the profile of the Organization and generally to improve public relations and outreach. A Task Force met intersessionally to develop improved reporting procedures to enhance compliance and accountability with NASCO agreements. Developing improvements to the transparency and inclusiveness of the organization, including by considering modification of the rules governing observers at NASCO meetings, was also a key recommendation. Advancements in all the areas identified for improvement have been made. Relevant information on the task force recommendations follows:

Transparency: Regarding transparency, revisions to NASCO’s rules of procedures concerning NGOs were developed which increased their level of involvement, including allowing them to take the floor more frequently during NASCO meetings and participate in working groups. This move helped resolve a longstanding difference between NASCO and at least two North American NGOs whose observer status in the organization had been suspended. In addition, more debate on issues occurs in plenary rather than in Heads of Delegation meetings so that the rationale for decisions is more clearly understood.

Accountability/Implementation Plans: During its 2005 annual meeting, NASCO agreed that one way to improve implementation, commitment, and accountability was to have each Party produce an Implementation Plan (IP) and report annually on progress in achieving the objectives contained therein. The Next Steps Task Force met intersessionally before the 2006 Annual meeting and developed guidelines to assist the Parties in preparing the IPs and to provide a proposed process and schedule for review and finalization of IPs, as well as for annual progress reports under the IPs. The Council refined this work at the 2006 annual meeting. At the 2007 NASCO meeting, the

Council held an open “Special Session” on the Report of the *Ad Hoc* Review Group appointed in 2006 to evaluate the IPs. At this stage, the review focused on the structure of the plans and how well they conformed with the guidelines for development of the plans not the adequacy of their substantive content. The plans were resubmitted for final review on November 1, 2007.

The second phase of review of the Next Steps Process was to develop reports for review and assessment in key Atlantic salmon management areas. The first focus area report was on the fisheries management aspect of the IP. After a formal review process, the final report of the Fisheries Management Focus Area Review Group was presented at NASCO during the special session. The Group recommended that the Council formally adopt the draft guidance on best practice as a way of providing clarification for the guidelines, agreements and definitions relating to fishery management or revisit these agreements and guidelines. There was significant discussion during the special session in terms of characterization of the best practice document and the document was revised and characterized as guidelines (NASCO Guidelines for the management of salmon fisheries).

The second focus area report on habitat protection and restoration was presented in 2009 by The Habitat Focus Area Review Group. Similar to the previous review of implementation plans, Parties did not necessarily score high marks if they had pristine salmon habitat, but rather on the extent to which their Habitat reports were consistent with the NASCO Habitat Plan of Action. The final work of the review group was presented at the 2010 NASCO meeting. Guidelines for the Protection, Restoration, and Enhancement of Atlantic Salmon Habitat were adopted and are intended to assist Parties in the effective implementation of NASCO agreements and to aid future reviews of reports on this topic.

The third focus area report was on aquaculture, introductions and transfers, and transgenics. During the period between the 2009 and 2010 NASCO meeting, completed aquaculture FARs were evaluated by a review group and that report was considered by the Liaison Group. It was then presented and discussed at a special session held during the 2010 annual meeting. During the 2010-11 intersessional period, the review group report was finalized and its findings were reported to NASCO at its 2011 meeting, having been previously considered by the Task Force and the Liaison Group. Although significant information was provided, no jurisdiction had met the goals of the BMP guidance of: (1) 100% of farms having effective sea lice management such that there is no increase in sea lice loads or lice-induced mortality for wild salmonids attributable to the farms; and (2) 100% of farmed fish are retained in all production facilities.

After the first full cycle of Implementation Plan and Focus Area reporting was completed, the Council agreed to take a comprehensive look at the processes in place to improve implementation and accountability. The results of this review, including a discussion of NASCO’s external performance review and adjustments to reporting on implementation of NASCO agreements, is discussed later in this document.

Public Relations Group: As part of the Next Steps process, the Council agreed in 2006 to establish a Public Relations Group to advise on implementation of public relations/outreach issues. Terms of reference were adopted. The Public Relations Group met in London in December 2006. The Group developed recommendations for a strategy to enhance NASCO’s profile and increase publicity for its work, including development of an annual ‘State of the Salmon’ report, undertake a major enhancement of the Organization’s website, and potentially employ an Information Officer with good public relation skills. In order to carry out some of the tasks identified by the PR group, the Council decided to allocate 25,000 Pounds Sterling (approximately USD\$50,000) to upgrade and improve the website of NASCO and the IASRB, and produce possible formats for a “State of the Salmon” report. The State of the Salmon report was identified as an aspect of the communications strategy that is a critical element of enhancing public understanding. Such a report would be posted on the website and updated as necessary to provide accessible information to the public on the current health of salmon stocks in the North Atlantic. The Group recommended that in addition to the State of the Salmon report, other fact sheets should be accessible via the website to encourage greater transparency and information accessibility.

Moreover, there was general agreement that the organization should be developing a communications rather than a public relations strategy. In 2009, the Council received a report from a Public Relations Group, which met during the Annual Meeting. The Public Relations Group stressed the importance that Parties consider their commitment to improving public relations and communication given the significant effort that would be required to truly invest in the process. Related to this point, the Public Relations Group requested that if the Parties were committed to this

process, a communications representative from each of the Parties would be necessary and the use of new communications media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr were suggested.

During the 2009 Council meeting, most of the recommendations of the Public Relations Work Group were agreed upon although no final decision was taken concerning the use of new communications media and an information officer has not been hired. To date, NASCO's website has been revamped and information from NASCO's rivers database has been reflected, including maps. In addition, NASCO has updated and developed new pages containing relevant socio-economic information associated with wild Atlantic salmon.

Socio-Economic Working Group: For a number of years, NASCO has been considering the issue of how to effectively incorporate social and economic factors into salmon management—including what role NASCO should play in this regard—most recently as part of the Next Steps process. Part of the difficulty in advancing the issue has been in developing a shared understanding of the concept. Early efforts included the potential development of a bio-economic model, which has since been put on hold, and also to gather basic types of socio-economic data and information from NASCO Parties, such as the number of salmon fishing licenses issued by jurisdiction, for inclusion on the NASCO website. A sub-group on socio-economics was formed to help progress the issue, including continuing development of the “State of the Salmon” report. In addition, NASCO adopted guidelines a few years ago to assist Parties in incorporating social and economic factors into salmon management. Implementation of these guidelines and reporting on how Parties consider and include social and economic factors into salmon management has been limited—no doubt in part because of a lack of a common understanding of the issue.

To facilitate greater understanding, the Sub-Group on socio-economics proposed that a Special Session be held to provide for a more detailed exchange of information on how jurisdictions are incorporating socio-economic factors into decisions relating to fisheries management, habitat protection, aquaculture, and related activities. The idea was to have a limited number of case studies presented that illustrate different concepts of how socio-economics are used in salmon management with a view to facilitate discussion. A valuable outcome would be a more common understanding of how socio-economics should be used in salmon management, including a better understanding of the purpose of the NASCO guidelines and a discussion of their usefulness. Initially, NASCO agreed to convene a Special Session on the topic in 2014 but it had to be deferred. In the end, NASCO determined that a more efficient and effective way to get at the issue would be for all Parties to include information on how they take account of social and economic factors when presenting information on key topics, including fisheries management, habitat, and aquaculture and related activities, during Special Sessions.

Review of the “Next Steps” process: NASCO reviewed the status of implementation of the “Next Steps” process in 2011. While recognizing that progress had been made in advancing some challenge areas, in particular relative to process matters, more work was needed. NASCO agreed to update the Strategic Plan and streamline the next Implementation Plans so that details on activities and actions to be taken by each jurisdiction over a five-year period can be included. NASCO also stressed that plans should emphasize monitoring and evaluation of activities and clearly describe identifiable, measureable outcomes, and timescales. NASCO further agreed that future reporting be structured around specific themes and that progress on Implementation Plans be addressed through the Annual Reports. In 2012, NASCO agreed an improved reporting process that focused on outcomes. At the February 2013 intersessional meeting of the Parties, the Next Steps process was further considered and its original goals and objectives continued to be endorsed. The recommendations from the review of the Next Steps process were further discussed in the context of the results of the external performance review (see below) and included as part of an overall action plan for strengthening the organization.

Independent Performance Reviews of the Work of NASCO: The EU made a proposal to the Council a few years ago that NASCO conduct an independent performance review similar to those being conducted by other Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs). Given that the proposal was made before the Next Steps process had completed a full implementation cycle, the Council agreed that the external performance review would be initiated in 2011 as that year would mark the end of the first full Next Steps cycle. It was also acknowledged that the internal process to critically review the Next Steps process would be underway and the results of that work should inform the expert panel. As agreed, three independent experts were empaneled in 2011. In addition to considering the results of the Next Steps process, the Panel took into account the provisions of the Convention, and advancements in international fisheries management, including recent international instruments, in conducting its review of the organization. The performance review report was completed in the spring 2012. At its June 2012

annual meeting, NASCO agreed to convene an intersessional meeting of the Parties to consider the panel's recommendations in detail. The meeting also considered the results of the Next Steps review discussed above and any additional input from members and stakeholders. The overall purpose of the meeting was to discuss a future vision for the organization and consider ways to strengthen it.

At the intersessional meeting, the Parties reaffirmed that priority areas of focus to support the recovery of wild Atlantic salmon continue to be fisheries management, habitat, and aquaculture and related activities. Recommendations by the external performance review panel and some NGOs that NASCO consider amending its Convention, in particular to expand and enhance the organization's ability to take binding decisions, were discussed. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) expressed support for broadening the scope of NASCO's binding authority with its primary interest relating to the management of home water fisheries. The majority of parties, however, felt that there were more effective ways to address these matters. Concern was also expressed about the difficult and time-consuming nature of amending the Convention. As a result, a draft action plan was developed for consideration at the 2013 NASCO annual meeting that (1) identified progress made to date in priority and other areas of NASCO's work that need to be monitored and evaluated, (2) recommended new actions to be undertaken to improve the ability of the organization to meet its objectives, and (3) highlighted that fisheries management was a particular priority that required additional commitment by the parties, including exploring new ways to ensure fairness and balance between conservation actions taken by distant water fisheries and those taken in home water fisheries. At its 2013 meeting, NASCO adopted the Action Plan for Taking Forward the Recommendations of the External Performance Review and the Review of the 'Next Steps' for NASCO. The document represents NASCO's response to the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the Next Steps review process and, as its elements are implemented, will further strengthen the work of the organization. In relation to habitat, aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics, the Council agreed that the ongoing actions in the Implementation Plans and the Annual Progress Reports were the appropriate path forward. In contrast, the Council agreed that further action was needed to strengthen actions on fisheries management. NASCO reviews progress on implementation of the various recommendations in the action plan at each annual meeting.

In 2017, NASCO again reviewed how well parties are meeting their NASCO commitments. Parties submitted their annual progress reports against their previously provided Implementation Plans. These reports were reviewed intersessionally to highlight areas needing further elaboration, and the plans, questions, and responses were then considered during a special public session that allowed parties and NGOs alike to raise additional questions or concerns. There was considerable engagement by all Parties and NGOs in the special session, but there remained considerable variation in the level of detail provided by each jurisdiction in their APRs.

The next cycle of Implementation Plans covers the 2019-2024 period. At the 2017 NASCO annual meeting, the Council established a working group on Future Reporting to (a) review the Guidelines for the Preparation and Evaluation of NASCO Implementation Plans and for Reporting on Progress and advise on any changes required to streamline and further improve reporting in the next Implementation Plan cycle in order to ensure that reports are meaningful and that unnecessary burden is avoided; (b) review the templates for preparation of Implementation Plans and Annual Progress Reports and advise on any changes to streamline and further improve reporting in the next Implementation Plan cycle, including options for including reporting under the Six Tenets for Effective Management of an Atlantic Salmon Fishery; (c) propose a schedule for the development and review of Implementation Plans and submission and review of Annual Progress Reports. Based on the input of this working group, the Council adopted guidelines and terms of reference setting forth a process for submission and review of IPs and APRs during the next 5 year reporting cycle. Work was undertaken in accordance with agreed procedures but difficulties have been encountered by Parties in meeting some of the new reporting requirements and delays have been experienced in approving new IPs. This has, in turn, complicated the submission and review of APRs against the new IPs. The Council held an intersessional meeting in September 2020 to try to resolve identified issues and developed new guidance for the review of IPs and for the submission of APRs. In particular, the Review Group was given additional flexibility to critique IPs, to do so by section, and to provide specific input where areas are unsatisfactory (even if they technically meet the required format for reporting). In addition, to enhance implementation and improve accountability, the Council agreed that the President should right to high level officials within the parties in cases where IPs continue to have sections that are unsatisfactory. Further, IPs and APRs will continue to be considered at special sessions and the Council may consider appropriate actions in cases where a Parties is not meeting its NASCO responsibilities. Special sessions served as an important way to continue to

improve the openness and transparency of NASCO and accountability of its Parties as NGOs and Parties alike are allowed to raise questions directly on relevant issues.

At its 2019 annual meeting, the Council agreed to hold a second external performance review. NASCO adopted terms of reference for the review in 2021 (CNL(21)22) after a one year delay due, among other things, to the COVID-19 pandemic. The panel members were as follows: Jean-Jacques Maguire (Fisheries Science); Philip McGinnity (Salmon Management and Conservation); and Erik Molenaar (Marine/Fisheries Law). The Panel presented a Report ([CNL \(23\)17rev](#)) to NASCO in 2023 in advance of the annual meeting containing 46 recommendations for Council to consider. During the annual meeting, the Heads of Delegation quickly concluded that, in order to effectively prioritize the performance review recommendations, they first needed to carry out a strategic planning process to identify where and how NASCO should focus its efforts to best conserve Atlantic salmon. To do so, the Parties adopted terms of reference ([CNL\(23\)70](#)) to establish a Working Group on the Future of NASCO (WGFON), which will meet during the 2023-24 intersessional period. In carrying out the strategic planning work, the WGFON would review all relevant recommendations from the 2023 performance review and other activities, including the 2019 Tromsø Symposium, a 2023 special session on Climate Change, and more, in order to develop and present a draft NASCO Strategy and related Action Plan to the Council at the 2024 NASCO Annual Meeting. The WGFON would also specifically consider the possibility to implement certain actions in the context of the IP/APR fourth reporting cycle and give consideration to a potential shift towards reporting on the quantitative outcomes of management actions to better describe the current status of salmon stocks and to track progress towards conserving, restoring, enhancing and rationally managing Atlantic salmon.

International Year of the Salmon (IYS): In 2015, NASCO agreed to engage with the North Pacific Anadromous Fisheries Commission (NPAFC) on the International Year of the Salmon (IYS) initiative, an ambitious research and outreach program that has been under development. NASCO has been liaising with NPAFC on development of the initiative. At the 2016 meeting, NASCO expressed broad acceptance for an outline proposal, previously endorsed by NPAFC, for IYS that establishes a general vision for the initiative, including its governance structure. In 2017, NASCO held a special session to further advance the IYS initiative and in 2019, the Council held a regional IYS symposium in conjunction with the 2019 annual meeting of NASCO in Norway. This was in addition to NPAFC's 2018 symposium to launch the IYS initiative. Now that the focal year has passed, NASCO is winding down its IYS work but has retained funds to hold additional symposia in the future as well as update the State of the Salmon report, a prime deliverable during IYS. A concluding symposium was held in 2022.

Climate Change: In 2021, the Council had agreed that a theme-based special session (TBSS) would be held in 2023 on the overarching theme of climate change. In 2022, a Steering Committee was assembled to organize the TBSS. The overarching objective for the TBSS was to exchange information on the current and future impacts of climate change on salmon productivity in the North Atlantic and on management measures being implemented by NASCO Parties / jurisdictions to identify best practices and inform the development of a strategic approach by NASCO ([CNL\(23\)19](#)). Following the TBSS, the steering committee assembled a list of draft recommendations ([CNL \(23\)77](#)). A final report is expected to be finalized in 2023/24 and presented to the Council at the 2024 Annual Meeting. The Council agreed that the recommendations of the Steering Committee would be considered together with the recommendations of the 2023 NASCO Performance Review, as set out in the WGFON Terms of Reference.

Indigenous Peoples: In 2022, NASCO discussed the recommendations arising from the 2019 IYS Symposium in Tromsø to begin to decide how they could be addressed. Enhancing the participation of Indigenous people in NASCO had been identified as a priority area and it was agreed that this should be acted upon this urgently. It was agreed that NASCO would hold a Special Session at the 2023 Annual Meeting on Indigenous perspectives on Atlantic salmon. A small steering committee was formed to organize the session, which was successful. An outcome of the session was to consider options for improving the engagement of indigenous peoples in NASCO, including by looking at NASCO's observer rules to determine how indigenous peoples might be better accommodated through that mechanism. This work was underway at the time of this writing and a proposed way forward is expected to be forwarded for Council consideration in 2024.

Pink Salmon: In the 1950s and again in the mid-1980s, Pink salmon were introduced into rivers in the White Sea basin in northern Russia. Since the 1980s, Pink salmon have spread throughout rivers that flow into the White Sea from Russia up through Norway. Currently, Pink salmon are most abundant in odd years reflecting their life history

traits. More recently, populations of Pink salmon numbers have exploded in the rivers of the White Sea and their range has spread with observations being documented across all three NASCO Commission areas. At the 2022 Annual Meeting, the Parties agreed, through a formal statement (CNL (22)47), to cooperate to minimize adverse effects of pink salmon on wild Atlantic salmon. This cooperation includes, but is not limited to, data and information sharing, initiation of corrective measures to minimize their spread, encouraging further research, and developing and distributing outreach materials to raise awareness. The Parties also agreed to establish a standing working group on pink salmon and adopted terms of reference (CNL(23)69). NASCO also agreed to hold a special session on Pink Salmon at its 2024 Annual Meeting.

Actions Taken by NASCO's Three Regional Commissions:

West Greenland Commission (WGC) Discussions/Actions:

Scientific information and advice: NASCO has adopted management objectives to guide the provision of management advice for the West Greenland fishery. If these objectives are not met, no fishery should be allowed. The advice from ICES for many years has been that West Greenland stock complex is below conservation limits and that there are no mixed-stock fisheries catch options at West Greenland. Some of the stocks contributing the fishery at West Greenland, including salmon of U.S. origin, are critically endangered.

ICES developed a Framework of Indicators (FWI) for the West Greenland fishery in 2007, which was accepted by NASCO that same year. The FWI includes 32 indicator variables that can be used to determine if there has been a significant change in the previously provided multi-annual catch advice. The FWI would be used in January of a given year. ICES would only conduct a full assessment of the mixed stock off West Greenland if the FWI indicated that a significant change had occurred. In the absence of a significant change in the intervening years, a full assessment would be conducted every three years. The FWI was first developed to support multi-year regulatory measures adopted for the period 2006-2008. The FWI and associated process have been working well within the WGC. The application in recent years of the FWI for the West Greenland fishery did not indicate the need for a revised analysis of catch options.

Management: A three-year regulatory measure was adopted in 2018 that set an annual 30 t TAC, inclusive of all harvests (professional and private fishers), required quota payback in case of overharvest, maintained a prohibition on exports, established a maximum fishing season of three months (August – October), prohibited landings to factories, and required stronger monitoring and control measures and timely reporting. The latter included licensing all fishers and requiring catch reports even in the case of nil harvests. Reporting was linked to license renewal. Greenland overharvested its quota in both 2018 and 2019 and implemented the quota payback provision in the following season. Greenland committed to improving monitoring, control, and reporting so that overharvest would not recur in 2020.

In 2021, agreement could only be reached on an interim, one-year measure largely due to Greenland's unwillingness to retain the quota overharvest payback clause included in the previous three-year measure (2018-2020) to account for its 10 t overharvest in 2020. Although lacking the overharvest payback provision, the 2021 regulatory measure established, among other things, a 27 t TAC and retained the majority of important provisions from the 2018-2020 regulatory measure, including the monitoring, control, and reporting requirements.

In 2022, following extensive discussions, agreement was reached that allowed for a Total Allowable Catch of no more than 27 tonnes at West Greenland (with an additional 3 t unilaterally set for the East Greenland fishing area); that there would be a multi-year measure; and, that in the first year (i.e. 2022) the fishery at West Greenland would be closed when the registered catch reached no more than 49% of the overall TAC, which equates to the overall weighted average for the 2021 fishery statistics as presented by a newly formed Data Working Group. Greenland set a total quota for all components of the 2022 West Greenland salmon fishery to 30 t (27 t for West Greenland and 3 t for East Greenland). Total reported landings for the 2022 fishing season was 28.3 t (27.7 t for West Greenland and 0.6 t for East Greenland). This was a significant improvement as there has been an average overharvest of over 11 t in 5 out of the previous 7 years (2015-2021). In 2023, Greenland agreed to retain the 49% 'tool' as outlined within the 2022 Regulatory Measure, at least for another year, and the Commission agreed to not request the reconsideration of the Multi-Annual Regulatory Measure. Therefore, the 2022 Regulatory measure continues to apply in 2023.

Sampling: A collaborative “sampling agreement” has been in place for many years to collect genetic and other materials from the West Greenland salmon fishery. The program is essential for monitoring the stocks, including the percentage of U.S., Canadian, and EU stocks contributing to the fishery at West Greenland.

NAC Discussions/Actions: Management advice on catch options from the ICES is only provided for the non-maturing 1SW and maturing 2SW components, as the maturing 1SW component is not fished outside of home waters. Scientific advice indicated that there is a very low probability that the numbers of 2SW salmon returning to the six North American regions will be above the management objectives simultaneously. ICES has advised, therefore, that there were no mixed-stock fishery catch options on 1SW non-maturing and 2SW salmon in North America. A review of the NASCO FWI did not indicate a potential change in the status of the resource which would result in a need to conduct a revised analysis of catch options.

For many years, ICES has noted that wild salmon populations are now critically low in extensive portions of North America and that these populations require alternative conservation actions, such as habitat restoration, in addition to very restrictive fisheries regulation to maintain their genetic integrity and persistence. Given that many stocks in the NAC area, particularly those originating in U.S. rivers, are in a critical state, fishing is not undertaken. The United States has not had a commercial fishery since 1948 and in more recent years, recreational fisheries have been eliminated. Canada has reduced its fisheries substantially over the years, including eliminating its commercial fisheries several years ago. Currently, three groups in Canada exploited salmon: aboriginal peoples; residents fishing for food in the Labrador Sea, and recreational fishers.

Labrador Sampling: Canada has been conducting genetic sampling of its Labrador fishery for several years. Small number of U.S. origin fish have been taken in this fishery in the past, including one fish in 2022. To better characterize the stocks composing the Labrador fishery, ICES has called for improvements in the spatial and temporal sampling. The United States consistently urges Canada to increase sampling in time and space to reach the level of 10% sampling across the whole fishery, as recommended by ICES. We have also asked Canada what further steps it had taken to minimize the take of U.S. origin salmon. In response, Canada has reported on its collaboration with indigenous fishing organizations to discuss net placement, fishing timing, and to request that indigenous groups meet sampling requirements. Canada committed to also continue to encourage increased sampling, especially of large salmon, and when conducting the genetic analysis will work to ensure the samples processed are representative of the catch.

Salmonid Introductions and Transfers: The United States and Canada have been working bilaterally over the past few years to improve cooperation on the management of aquaculture operations—in particular with respect to containment of farmed fish and notification when escapes occur. In light of the significant domestic changes to the management of introductions and transfers in both countries, in 2008 the status of the NAC protocols, the SWG, and the inventory databases were reviewed. Ultimately, the NAC agreed sharing information is important and changes were made in the level of detail to be reported. Both parties retained the obligation to notify the other if any introduction or transfer is inconsistent with the NAC Protocols. While recognizing that there is no longer a need to populate and maintain an international database on introductions and transfers, the need to exchange information annually and more immediately on fish health and breaches of containment was identified. Regarding introductions and transfers, it was determined that information should be provided on any transfers made into the Commission area (including from the west to the east coast and from Europe to North America) on an annual basis. These needs are in addition to the commitment already contained in the MOU between the United States and Canada. These changes to reporting were reflected in the Williamsburg Resolution, and the U.S. and Canada agreed to liaise as needed to address any remaining issues. Each year, both countries have agreed to present relevant information in writing to the NAC, in particular on disease incidences, breaches of containment, and introductions of salmonids from outside the Commission area.

The St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery: For many years, the North American Commission and the Council have been concerned about catches of salmon at St. Pierre and Miquelon (SPM) in light of the low abundance of many North American stocks and given strict harvest restrictions have been introduced throughout the North Atlantic. Reported harvests in recent years have not often exceeded 4 t with 2016 being the second highest on record at about 4.7 t. The cooperation shown by France (in respect of SPM) to NASCO over the years has been inconsistent, and the organization has tried a wide variety of means to enhance this cooperation. Efforts since 2007

to encourage France (SPM) to join NASCO have been unsuccessful although France (SPM) has been attending NASCO meetings as an observer regularly and reports on the outcome of its fishery and sampling activities. Similarly, NASCO has made serious efforts and achieved some success in encouraging France (SPM) to improve the sampling of its catch, including instituting more robust genetics research. Genetics work is essential to understanding the origin of fish taken in the SPM fishery and to quantify the potential effect of the fishery on endangered populations in particular. Such efforts are continuing. NASCO consistently asks France (SPM) to consider strengthening its management of the fishery, including taking effective action to limit catches such as by eliminating its commercial fishery, and to join the organization. France (SPM) continues to prefer to engage with NASCO in an observer capacity. While not agreeing to eliminate portions of its fishery, France (SPM) has also taken some actions to manage it; catches over the last few years have been the lowest on record. The total 2022 reported catch from both the recreational and commercial components of the St. Pierre and Miquelon fishery was 1.24 t compared to approximately 1.6 t in 2021. France (SPM) noted it was increasing efforts to enforce, monitor, and manage the fishery and that the four commercial fishing licenses would be retired when the current license holder no longer fished professionally, which would reduce catches by that component of the fishery in the future.

NEAC Discussions/Actions:

Scientific Information and Advice: ICES has provides catch options for the fishing season in the Faroe Islands (October to May). There have been no catch options that would allow all stock complexes to achieve their conservation limits with a greater than 95% probability for many years. Further, ICES stated that while stocks remain in a depleted state and in the absence of a fishery at Faroe Islands, particular care should be taken to ensure fisheries in home waters are managed to protect stocks that are below their CLs. In the NEAC, as well as the other Commission areas, ICES observed that, despite management measures aimed at reducing exploitation in recent years, there has been little improvement in the status of stocks, and this was attributed to pressures in freshwater and low marine survival.

ICES also delivered an updated FWI in 2023 to be used to support potential multi-annual regulatory measures for this fishery. The FWI identifies if any significant change may have occurred in the status of the stocks which would call into question the previously provided multi-annual management advice. The FWI is similar to the framework used for the West Greenland fishery and did not indicate that a significant change in the status of the stocks had occurred.

Management of Faroese fishery: There has been no commercial fishery at the Faroe Islands since 2000. In 2012, the Commission adopted, for the first time, a multi-year decision for the Faroe Islands fishery that did not set a quota but indicated that the Faroe Islands would manage any fishery on the basis of ICES advice. The multi-year nature of the agreement was made possible by the acceptance of the FWI provided by ICES. In 2015, the NEAC adopted another multi-annual regulatory measure for the Faroes fishery for the 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 fishing seasons. Similar to the 2012 decision, the 2015 regulatory measure did not set a quota but states that the Faroe Islands will manage any fishery on the basis of ICES advice. NEAC extended the measure in 2018, which was applicable to the 2018-2019, 2019-2020, and 2020-2021 fisheries. It extended the measure again in 2021 for the 2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024 fisheries. The regulatory measure will apply in all years depending on the outcome of the FWI.

Other Matters:

Additional information on the work of NASCO can be found on its website (<http://www.nasco.int>).

NASCO held its 37th Annual Meeting on June 1-5, 2020, via WebEx and it was preceded by a month-long correspondence process. NASCO is planning to hold its 38th Annual Meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland, June 1-4, 2021.

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Convention on Future Multilateral Cooperation in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries (Basic Instrument for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization – NAFO)

Basic Instrument

Convention on Future Multilateral Cooperation in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries (entered into force January 1, 1979) – as amended May 18, 2017.

Implementing Legislation

Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Convention Act of 1995 (16 USC 981 et seq.)

Member Nations

Current members of NAFO include: Canada, Cuba, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union (EU), France (in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon), Iceland, Japan, Republic of Korea, Norway, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and the United States. The United States acceded to the Convention on November 29, 1995, and participated for the first time as a Contracting Party at the 1996 Annual Meeting (the United States attended earlier annual meetings as an observer).

Commission Headquarters

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Budget

NAFO adopted a 2024 annual budget of \$2,636,000 CDN (approximately U.S. \$ 1,753,892, and the preliminary US assessment for 2024 will be 310,533 CND).

U.S. Representation

A. Appointment Process:

The Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Convention Act of 1995 provides that not more than three U.S. Commissioners and not more than three U.S. Representatives to the NAFO Scientific Council (see below) shall represent the United States in NAFO. Commissioners and Representatives are appointed by the Secretary of Commerce and serve at his pleasure. Each Commissioner and Representative is appointed for a term not to exceed 4 years, but is eligible for reappointment.

Of the three Commissioners, one (but no more than one) must be an official of the U.S. Government, at least one a representative of the commercial fishing industry, and one a voting (non-government employee) member of the New England Fishery Management Council. Commissioners must be knowledgeable and experienced concerning the fishery resources to which the NAFO Convention applies. Of the three U.S. Representatives to the NAFO Scientific Council, at least one must be an official of the U.S. Government. All Representatives must be knowledgeable and experienced concerning the scientific issues dealt with by the Scientific Council.

B. U.S. Representatives:

U.S. Commissioners:

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Regional Administrator
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
National Marine Fisheries Service
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Eric Reid (representing the U.S. fishing industry)
General Manager, Seafreeze Shoreside, Inc.
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Geoffrey Smith (representing the New England Fishery Management Council)
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The Nature Conservancy
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Representative to the Scientific Council:

Ms. Katherine Sosebee
Resource Evaluation and Assessment Division
Northeast Fisheries Science Center
National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA
166 Water Street
Woods Hole, MA 02543

C. Advisory Structure:

The Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Convention Act of 1995 further requires that the Secretaries of Commerce and State jointly establish a Consultative Committee of not more than 15 members to advise the Secretaries on issues related to the Convention. Each member of the Consultative Committee shall serve for a term of 2 years and shall be eligible for reappointment. The membership of the Committee shall consist of representatives from the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, the States represented on those Councils, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the fishing industry, the seafood processing industry, and others knowledgeable and experienced in the conservation and management of fisheries in the Northwest Atlantic. For information regarding the U.S. Consultative Committee to NAFO, please contact Moira Kelly (see Staff Contacts, below).

Organizational Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

NAFO is the successor organization to the International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries (ICNAF). Its mission is: (1) to provide for continued multilateral consultation and cooperation with respect to the study, appraisal, and exchange of scientific information and views relating to fisheries of the Convention Area and (2) to conserve and manage fishery resources of the NAFO Regulatory Area (NRA), i.e., that part of the Convention Area that lies beyond the areas in which coastal states exercise fisheries jurisdiction. The Convention Area is located within the waters of the Northwest Atlantic Ocean roughly north of 35° N latitude and west of 42° W latitude. The Convention applies to all fishery resources of the Convention Area with the exception of: salmon, tunas, swordfish, and marlins; cetacean stocks managed by the International Whaling Commission or any successor organization; and sedentary species of the Continental Shelf.)

On 28 September 2007, NAFO adopted a comprehensive set of amendments, designed to modernize the Organization, particularly by: incorporating an ecosystem approach to fisheries management, streamlining NAFO's decision-making process, strengthening the obligations of Contracting Parties, flag States and port States, and instituting a formal dispute settlement mechanism. This amended Convention was entered into force (became legally binding) in 2017, following ratification by the required three-fourths of NAFO Contracting Parties.

B. Structure:

NAFO consists of three bodies: the Commission; the Scientific Council; and the Secretariat. The Commission is responsible for the fisheries management, control and enforcement, and financial decisions of NAFO. In order to effectively execute its mandate, the Commission has two Standing Committees. The Standing Committee on International Control (STACTIC) advises the Commission on the annual NAFO Conservation and Enforcement Measures, monitoring, control and surveillance activities, and compliance monitoring and reporting. The Standing Committee on Finance and Administration (STACFAD) advises the Commission on matters relating to the Secretariat, the budget of the Organization, the time and place of meetings of the Organization, and publications of the Organization. Each Contracting Party is a member of the Commission and appoints its own representatives, alternate representatives, experts, and advisors. The Commission may refer to the Scientific Council any question pertaining to the scientific basis for the decisions it may need to take concerning fishery resources, the impact of fishing activities on living resources, and the safeguarding of the ecosystem in which these resources are found.

The NAFO Scientific Council (SC) compiles and maintains statistics and records, and publishes information pertaining to the fisheries including environmental and ecological factors. Upon request, Scientific Council also provides advice for the Commission and Coastal States on stocks and the conservation and management of fishery resources. Like the Commission, the SC employs a range of Standing Committees to advise it and facilitate its work. The functions of the Scientific Council may, where appropriate, be carried out in cooperation with other public or private organizations having related objectives.

The NAFO Secretariat provides administrative services to the Organization. Its chief administrative officer is the Executive Secretary who is appointed by the Commission. The duties of the Secretariat include: making all arrangements necessary for the Commission and Scientific Council meetings; preparation and transmission of draft provisional and provisional agendas; addressing communications to the Depository Government (Canada); receiving the credentials of the representatives and of observers at annual and special meetings and reporting thereon to the Commission as required; and performing such other functions as may be assigned by the Commission, its Chair, or the Chair of a committee.

Each of the three NAFO constituent bodies have rules of procedure designed to ensure effective implementation of their mandates. More information on these bodies and their basic documents can be found on the NAFO website (<http://www.nafo.int>). NAFO also maintains a number of working groups designed to address specific challenges within the Organization. More information on these sub-fora is also available through the NAFO website.

C. General Programs:

Species managed: The principal species managed by NAFO are cod, flounders, redfish, American plaice, Greenland halibut (turbot), capelin, hake, skates and shrimp. Occasionally, a significant squid fishery occurs in the Regulatory Area as well. NAFO still wrestles with a legacy of decades of unregulated fishing by non-members, over-harvesting, under-reporting and fishing under formal objection by members. Thus, despite its modernized Convention and a range of steps to improve its management regime, NAFO-imposed moratoria continue for 8 of the 20 NAFO-managed stocks in 2023 (with two additional species TACS set at 0). The 2024 NAFO Annual Quota Table can be found on the NAFO website. Details on current U.S. allocations from NAFO as well as fishing opportunities for other species (including yellowtail flounder resulting from a harvesting arrangement with Canada) are provided in the allocation section below.

Conservation and Management Measures: NAFO has established and maintained conservation and management measures in the NRA since 1979. In addition to adoption of annual total allowable catches (TACs) and member nation quotas by species, NAFO also maintains and establishes: 1) general and fishery-specific conservation and management measures (e.g., bycatch, minimum size and gear requirements); 2) measures to prevent significant adverse impacts of bottom fishing activities on vulnerable marine ecosystems; 3) control measures (e.g., fishing authorizations, vessel registry, and chartering requirements); 4) monitoring requirements (data recording and reporting, vessel monitoring system (VMS) and observer requirements). In addition, NAFO maintains a scheme of joint international inspection and surveillance in the NRA, Port State measures, and a scheme to promote compliance by non-Contracting Parties (including a listing mechanism for tracking and sharing information on IUU fishing vessels). The full text of the current NAFO Conservation and Enforcement Measures (NAFO/COM Doc. 23/1) can be found on the NAFO website at: <http://www.nafo.int>.

D. Current Issues of Interest:

2023 NAFO Annual Meeting: The 45th Annual Meeting of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) took place from September 18 -22, 2023, in Vigo, Spain. The United States continued to advocate for strong science-based and transparent decision making processes, and seek opportunities for U.S. fishermen. Additionally, the United States successfully advanced proposals aimed at addressing climate change, and forced labor in NAFO fisheries. A meeting summary is available from the NAFO website.

U.S. Allocations for 2024: At the 2023 NAFO Annual Meeting, the United States received fish quota allocations for two NAFO stocks to be fished during 2024. These stocks were: Division 3M redfish (69mt) and Subareas 3 & 4 *Illex* squid (453mt). U.S. fishermen are also entitled to harvest, on a first-come-first-served basis, any allocation for which an “Others” category has been designated, provided there is not a country-specific allocation to the United States for that fishery. For 2024, “Others” category allocations available to U.S. fishermen include: Div. 3M cod (46.8mt); Div. 3LN redfish (109mt); 3M redfish (124mt); Div. 3O redfish (100mt); Div. 3NO witch flounder (34mt); Div. 3NO white hake (59mt); and Div. 3LNO skates (258mt). Fishing is halted by NAFO when the “Others” allocation for a particular stock has been fully harvested.

Yellowtail Flounder: In 2008, the United States and Canada initiated a 10-year arrangement through which Canada transferred (upon request) 1000mt of NAFO Div. 3LNO yellowtail flounder for use by U.S. vessels. This transfer was memorialized annually through a footnote in the NAFO Quota Table. Immediately following this agreement, an exchange of letters took place to record the intent of the two parties to work cooperatively to obtain a permanent U.S. allocation of NAFO Div. 3LNO yellowtail flounder. Following the 2018 expiration of the this arrangement, the United States solicited and received an *ad hoc* transfer of yellowtail flounder in order to maintain its fishing operations during 2019. In 2020, the United States shifted from a 1-year to a 5-year permitting period when soliciting interest to fish in NAFO. This timeframe coincided with the most recent 3LNO yellowtail flounder arrangement with Canada and allowed vessel owners the opportunity to plan in advance and secure contracts with fish buyers. Thus, it is likely that U.S. fishing activity in NAFO will continue.

U.S. Fishing Activities: Since 2009, the United States has annually solicited expressions of interest from U.S. vessels to fish Div. 3LNO yellowtail flounder under the arrangement with Canada. Between 2009 and 2011, the United States received a number of expressions of interest in this fishing opportunity, but changes in the yellowtail flounder market, fuel prices, and other economic considerations made fishing operations on the Grand Banks impossible for U.S. vessels. However, individual U.S. vessels have successfully harvested yellowtail flounder under the arrangement most years since 2012. Additionally, a second U.S. vessel harvested Atlantic halibut beginning in 2014. These operations represent the first U.S. fishing activity for NAFO species in the NAFO Regulatory Area since the United States joined the Organization in 1995. They also represent a positive step toward establishing the case for a permanent U.S. allocation for yellowtail flounder from NAFO. In 2023, the United States did not receive an expressions of interest relative to yellowtail flounder, Atlantic halibut and other NAFO species. Thus, no U.S. fishing occurred in 2023.

Future Meetings

The 46th Annual Meeting will take place in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada during September 16 - 20, 2024.

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Convention on the Conservation and Management of Fishery Resources in the Southeast Atlantic Ocean (SEAFO)

The [Southeast Atlantic Fisheries Organization \(SEAFO\)](http://www.seafo.org/) manages fishery resources on the high seas of the Southeast Atlantic Ocean, but not those under national jurisdiction or highly migratory species. The objective of the [Convention](#) on the Conservation and Management of Fisheries Resources in the South East Atlantic Ocean is to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fishery resources in the Convention Area through the effective implementation of the Convention.

The initiative to establish a regional fisheries management organization (RFMO) in the region came from Namibia in 1995 and was shared with and gained support from coastal states of Angola, South Africa and United Kingdom (on behalf of St. Helena and its dependencies of Tristan da Cunha and Ascension Islands). Various meetings of coastal states took place between 1995-1997 where the initial ideas to form a basis for negotiations were discussed and eventually presented to the first meeting that included other participants with real interests in the fishery resources of the South East Atlantic Ocean. The negotiations for the Convention took place between 1997-2001 with several meetings held within the region and beyond.

The Convention was signed in April 2001 in Windhoek by Angola, the European Community, Iceland, Namibia, Norway, Republic of Korea, South Africa, United Kingdom (on behalf of St. Helena and its dependencies of Tristan da Cunha and Ascension Islands) and the United States of America. It entered into force in April 2003 after the deposit of instruments of ratification by Namibia and Norway and approval by the European Community as required under Article 27 of the Convention. States that have participated in the negotiations but have not signed the Convention are Japan, Russian Federation and Ukraine. The United States has not ratified the Convention because there is no U.S. fishing activity in the Convention Area at present.

From the date of signatures in 2001, the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources in Namibia acted as an Interim Secretariat. In March 2005 and with the appointment of the staff, the permanent secretariat was opened in Walvis Bay, Namibia.

SEAFO is comprised of the Commission, the Scientific Committee and the Compliance Committee as subsidiary bodies, and the Secretariat. The Compliance Committee was established in 2007. The Commission may establish other subsidiary bodies from time to time to assist in meeting the objective of the Convention. The Commission has an oversight responsibility of the Organization. The Scientific Committee provides scientific advice on the status of fishery resources and on setting harvesting levels taking into consideration, among other things, ecosystem and precautionary approaches. The institutions are designed to function according to the principles of cost-effectiveness and to expand only at the same pace as its workload.

The Convention Area covers a sizeable part of the high seas of the South East Atlantic Ocean. It covers all waters beyond areas of national jurisdiction in the region bounded by a line joining the following points along parallel of latitude and meridians of longitude: beginning at the outer limit of waters under national jurisdiction at a point 6° South, thence due west along the 6° South parallel to the meridian 10° West, thence due north along the 10° West meridian to the equator, thence due west along the equator to the meridian 20° West, thence due south along the 20° West meridian to a parallel 50° South, thence due east along the 50° South parallel to the meridian 30° East, thence due north along the 30° East meridian to the coast of the African continent.

Economically important fish species under the purview of the Convention include sedentary, discrete, and straddling stocks such as alfonso, orange roughy, oreo, dories, armorhead, sharks, deepwater hake, and red crab.

Web address: <http://www.seafo.org/> or <http://www.fao.org/fishery/rfb/seafo/en>

The 19th Annual Commission Meeting was convened at the Hansa Hotel, Swakopmund, Namibia, from November 30 to December 1, 2022. The meeting report can be found at: <http://www.seafo.org/MeetingsDetails?MeetingID=b84989d4-1417-48cf-bd85-9b046c397b74>

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Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC)

Basic Instrument

Article VI-1 of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Constitution. Resolution 4/61 of the FAO Council at its Sixty-first Session in November 1973. Statutes amended by FAO Council in December 1978 and revised statutes in 2006 with Resolution 1/131.

Implementing Legislation

None.

Member Nations

Membership is open to coastal States whose territories are situated wholly or partly within the area of the Commission or States whose vessels engage in fishing in the area of competence of the Commission that notify the Director-General of the Organization in writing of their desire to be considered as members of the Commission.

Member nations include: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, European Union (EU), France, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Japan, Korea (Rep. of), Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Spain, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, United States, and Venezuela.

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U.S. Representation

The U.S. delegation usually consists of representatives from the Department of State; NOAA Fisheries Office of International Affairs, Trade, and Commerce; NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region; NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center; and the Caribbean Fishery Management Council.

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

The general objective of the Commission is to promote the effective conservation, management and development of the living marine resources of the area of competence of the Commission, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and address common problems of fisheries management and development faced by members of the Commission. The Commission provides management advice, but it has no regulatory powers.

The work of the Commission is guided by the following three principles:

- Promote the application of the provisions of the FAO Code of Conduct on Responsible Fisheries and its related instruments, including the precautionary approach and the ecosystem approach to fisheries management;

- Ensure adequate attention to small-scale, artisanal and subsistence fisheries; and
- Coordinate and cooperate closely with other relevant international organizations on matters of common interest.

B. Organizational Structure:

The Commission, composed of all Members, is the central policy forum. The Commission has four Subsidiary Committees: (1) Working Party on Assessment of Marine Fishery Resources; (2) Working Party on Fishery Economics and Planning; (3) Committee for the Development and Management of Fisheries in the Lesser Antilles; and (4) the Ad hoc working groups.

Working Groups, as of the 18th session of the Commission in 2022 include the following:

1. Working Group on Spiny Lobster
2. Working Group on Recreational Fisheries
3. Working Group on Queen Conch
4. Working Group on Fisheries using Anchored Fish Aggregating Device (aFADs)
5. Working Group on Flyingfish, Dolphinfinch and other Pelagics
6. Working Group on the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries
7. Working Group on Spawning Aggregations
8. Working Group for the Conservation And Management of Sharks in the Wider Caribbean Region
9. Regional Working Group on IUU Fishing
10. Working Group on Shrimp and Groundfish in the Northern Brazil-Guianas Shelf
11. Regional Fisheries Data and Statistics Working Group

Most working groups are joint working groups with other regional partner institutions. Fishery scientists, experts, managers and decision-makers of member countries, regional partner organizations and NGOs participate in the working groups, which have specific terms of reference.

WECAFC currently operates as a regional fisheries body under Article VI of the FAO Constitution. WECAFC is considering alternatives for a possible strategic reorientation from an advisory body to a regional fisheries management entity or arrangement with the following main objectives: to ensure the sustainability of the resources in the area of competence, increase regional cooperation, strengthen management of shared/transboundary stocks and improve data collection.

Recent Developments

WECAFC 18

The 18th meeting of the Commission took place July 26 - 29, 2022. The Government of Nicaragua was the official host, but the meeting was held virtually (based on a lack of in-person participation) under the leadership of the U.S. Chair, Deirdre Warner-Kramer (State Department, Office of Marine Conservation). Seventeen members of WECAFC participated in the meeting: Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Dominica, EU, France, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, United States of America, and Venezuela. Several international, regional and sub-regional organizations were in attendance, including the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), and the Organization of Fisheries for the Central American Isthmus (OSPESCA).

At the meeting, the Commission endorsed several important non-binding documents and recommendations that had been developed by the relevant Working Groups of the organization with U.S. participation. These included a Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF), which provides guidance for standardized data collection on key indicators and species in the region. This was based on an interim DCRF adopted at the 2019 Commission meeting; the FDS Working Group Chair subsequently held a series of virtual meetings for the WECAFC membership during the intersessional period that allowed further development and refinement. Information

submitted by WECAFC Members pursuant to the DCRF will contribute to a regional database (Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Information System, or “WECAFIS”) and provide WECAFC with the minimum information needed for monitoring of priority species, conducting stock assessments and management based on the best available science. The Commission agreed that the DCRF will be a “living document” to be further refined over time and implemented incrementally.

A related recommendation adopted by the Commission endorses the principles behind the DCRF, strongly encourages members to proceed with the use of DCRF for monitoring and reporting, and recognizes further investments are needed to build national capacities of WECAFC Members for data collection, analysis, and reporting.

The Commission also adopted a Regional Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (RPOA-Sharks). The RPOA-Sharks is aimed at ensuring the conservation and management of sharks and their long-term sustainable use in the WECAFC area. This regional plan sets out five objectives and provides a table of actions to achieve these objectives.

A Regional Fish Spawning Aggregation Fishery Management Plan, focusing on Nassau grouper and mutton snapper, was endorsed by the Commission. This plan aims to strengthen the management of fish that aggregate to spawn and to reverse the declines of species that are vulnerable to overexploitation. The United States – through the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC) – provided support for the development of this plan and an accompanying Communications Strategy. The conservation of Nassau grouper is a U.S. priority; this species is listed as Threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act and is listed in Annex III of the Protocol for Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Caribbean (SPAW Protocol).

An accompanying recommendation was adopted, calling for adoption and implementation of the Regional Fish Spawning Aggregation Management Plan, and actions to improve regional data collection, assessment, communication, and outreach for the conservation of fish spawning aggregations and mobilization of resources for priority research and monitoring.

A recommendation was adopted aimed at helping WECAFC members combat IUU fishing by encouraging strengthened fisheries governance; implementation of measures to effectively regulate, monitor, and control transshipment; and development of mechanisms for sharing fishing vessel information consistent with domestic data confidentiality requirements. WECAFC members will continue intersessional work to implement the Regional Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU fishing that was adopted in 2019.

A recommendation on queen conch reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to implementation and continued monitoring of the Regional Queen Conch Fishery Management and Conservation Plan (endorsed by the Commission in 2016), promoting genetic work on population structure and traceability, and encouraging collaboration with the Regional Working Group on IUU fishing.

Several documents promoting the sustainable management of fishing on Anchored Fish Aggregating Devices (aFADs) were also adopted by the Commission on an interim basis. These included a Caribbean Regional Management Plan for aFADs and a guide for improved monitoring of aFAD catches and improved assessment of aFAD impact on stocks. The Commission endorsed a related recommendation charging the Working Group with finalizing the regional aFAD management plan and guidance document to inform the development of national management plans and legislation (if relevant), promoting data collection and analysis to inform decision making on aFAD fisheries, supporting the establishment of stakeholder outreach and communication campaigns, and encouraging research in several key areas.

The Commission supported a regional strategy on the management of bycatch and discards in WECAFC bottom-trawl shrimp and groundfish fisheries and the recommendations of a report on the effects of the COVID19 pandemic on the fisheries and aquaculture sector in the region.

WECAFC also approved several documents to improve the administrative processes of the organization. Specifically, the Commission adopted a new Strategic Plan for 2022-2027, and revised Terms of Reference for the SAG, which provide greater clarity on its procedures and membership and specify timeframes for action. The

Commission adopted several changes to elucidate and enhance the Rules of Procedure for the organization. However, several key areas with respect to the Rules of Procedure could not be resolved and will be addressed at the Commission's meeting in 2023.

The Commission supported WECAFC becoming signatory to a Memorandum of Understanding that would establish a non-binding coordination mechanism in the wider Caribbean region towards oceans-based sustainable development. The Commission also endorsed an exchange of letters of cooperation between WECAFC and ICCAT as a basis for continuing collaborative work between the two organizations on issues of mutual interest under the umbrella of ICCAT's existing cooperative agreement with FAO.

WECAFC also agreed to a comprehensive Work Program for 2022-2024. At the request of the United States, it was amended to include meetings of the Flyingfish-Dolphinfish Working Group and the Recreational Fisheries Working Group.

WECAFC has continued to consider options for transforming into a strengthened regional fishery entity or arrangement with binding management authority. In 2019, the Commission held its first preparatory meeting on this issue and endorsed a roadmap for a member-driven and inclusive process to advance the development of a model for a regional fisheries management entity or arrangement in the WECAFC area. In 2022, the Commission reaffirmed this roadmap, agreed to solicit members of a small drafting group to make further progress on implementation of the roadmap, and expressed support for a second preparatory meeting to further consider all the options and make recommendations to the Commission on a way forward.

At the conclusion of the 2022 Commission meeting, a new Executive Committee was established. The incoming Chair is Edward Jackson from Nicaragua, and the First Vice-Chair is Dr. Gavin Bellamy from Jamaica. Nominations for the Second Vice-Chair were solicited during the intersessional period, and Mr. Ronny Leiva Martinez from Venezuela was confirmed to take this position [upon the departure of Natali Piccolo of Brazil].

The next Commission meeting will take place 6-8 September 2023 in a hybrid format (in Barbados and virtual). Although the Commission normally meets once every two years, this extraordinary annual meeting will allow outcomes and recommendations to be reported to the next meeting of the Regional Conference for Latin America (LARC) and the Caribbean, the highest FAO governing body in the region, which is scheduled to meet in 2024.

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INDIAN OCEAN

Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)

Basic Instrument

The [Agreement](#) for the Establishment of the IOTC, 1996

Implementing Legislation

N/A, the United States is not a party.

Contracting Parties (Members)

Australia, Bangladesh, China, Comoros, Eritrea, European Union, France (OT), India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Sultanate of Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Seychelles, Somalia, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, United Kingdom, and Yemen.

Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties

Liberia

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Description

IOTC seeks to promote cooperation among its members with a view to ensuring, through appropriate management, the conservation and optimum utilization of fish stocks covered by the Agreement and to encourage sustainable development of fisheries based on such stocks. IOTC has authority over tuna and tuna-like species in the Indian Ocean and its adjacent seas, with a focus on the key commercial species of albacore tuna, bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, swordfish, and yellowfin tuna.

Unlike the other tuna RFMOs, IOTC is an intergovernmental organization established under the FAO Constitution and is placed under the FAO framework. In practical terms, IOTC is meant to operate largely independently from FAO save from its financial controls and is meant to be guided by, and respond to, its Members alone. The question of whether to preserve this institutional link with FAO remains under consideration.

The Commission is the main decision-making body and is composed of all Members. Other important subsidiary bodies include the Compliance Committee, the Standing Committee on Administration and Finance, and the Scientific Committee. The Scientific Committee advises the Commission (and any sub-commissions which may be established) on research and data collection, status of stocks, and management issues. Seven Working Parties – Tropical Tunas, Neritic Tunas, Billfish, Temperate Tunas, Methods, Ecosystems and Bycatch, and Data Collection and Statistics – report to the Scientific Committee. An electronic Working Party on the development of a high seas boarding and inspection proposal also exists. In 2016, the Commission established an additional Working Party on the Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures (to take place back to back with Compliance meetings) and a Technical Committee on Management Procedures (to function alongside an existing Dialogue on Management Procedures).

The main functions of IOTC are, among other things: (a) to review the conditions and trends of the stocks and to gather, analyze, and disseminate scientific information, catch and effort statistics, and other relevant data; (b) to encourage, recommend, and coordinate research and development activities in respect of the stocks and fisheries covered by the Agreement; and (c) to keep under review the economic and social aspects of the fisheries based on the stocks covered by the Agreement. In order to achieve these ends, the Commission may, by a two-thirds majority, adopt, on the basis of scientific evidence, conservation and management measures to ensure the conservation and optimum utilization of the stocks covered by the Agreement. IOTC has passed measures that are comparable to the other tuna RFMOs, including: positive and negative vessel lists; VMS; rules on transshipment; reporting requirements for chartering arrangements; trade restrictive measures; statistical document requirements for bigeye tuna; a shark finning ban and a requirement to land sharks with fins naturally attached (exempting frozen product); port state measures; a ban on discards of tropical tunas in the purse-seine fishery; a prohibition on vessels intentionally fishing on data buoys; management of fish aggregating devices (FADs); bycatch mitigation measures for cetaceans, sea turtles, sea birds and mobulid rays; and a management procedure for bigeye tuna.

Across 2019-2021, reported catches by gear are attributed to purse seine (30%), gill net (30%), pole and line (20%), longline (9%), baitboat (6%) and other (5%). Overall, 61% of reported catches are considered artisanal. Although coastal fisheries represented the majority of catches within the IOTC area over the last decade, these fisheries report a small fraction of catch-effort and length-frequency data; there has been minimal progress in improving this data-poor situation in recent years. The Scientific Committee has developed a Strategic Science Plan for 2020–2024 with an emphasis on improving data reporting. Current composition of reported catch in the IOTC area is 52% tropical tunas; 30% neritic tuna and seerfish; 4% sharks; 4% billfish, and 2% temperate tunas, and 8% other.

The status of stocks in the IOTC area is mixed. As of 2022, skipjack, albacore, swordfish, and Indo-Pacific sailfish, are considered to be not overfished, with no overfishing occurring. Bigeye tuna, yellowfin tuna, blue marlin, and striped marlin are considered to be overfished and subject to overfishing. There has been mixed success in reducing catches under a yellowfin tuna rebuilding plan; interim measures were adopted in 2019 and 2021, but multiple Members have objected to the implementation of such measures, thereby limiting the effectiveness of the rebuilding plan. Concerning bigeye tuna, the Commission adopted a resolution in 2023 to limit bigeye tuna catches in accordance with the management procedure for the stock. The Technical Committee on Management Procedures conducts intersessional work on harvest control rules and management strategy evaluation for key stocks, with regular sessions to support capacity building.

IOTC has been engaged in a multi-year process to work on development of allocation criteria, an issue that has been contentious due to differing perspectives among distant water fishing nations, developed and developing coastal states. A Technical Committee on Allocation Criteria has met eleven times. The most recent meeting in early 2023 was held in Mombasa, Kenya. The Chair circulated a 5th version of an allocation proposal for consideration of the Technical Committee. Despite exhaustive efforts to reach consensus, several Members expressed frustration with the current negotiations and disagreement over the fundamental principles of allocation.

U.S. Participation

The United States has attended the annual meetings of the IOTC Commission, as well as some of its subsidiary bodies, as an observer since 2007. The most recent annual meeting of the IOTC took place May 8-12, 2023, in Balaclava, Mauritius.

The next IOTC annual meeting will be held May, 13-17 2024 in Thailand.

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Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)

Basic Instrument

The [Agreement](#) for the Establishment of the SIOFA, 2006

Implementing Legislation

N/A, the United States is not a party.

Contracting Parties (Members)

Australia, China, the Cook Islands, the European Union, France on behalf of its Indian Ocean Territories, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mauritius, the Seychelles, Thailand

Non-Contracting Parties

Comoros, India

Others

Chinese Taipei participates as a fishing entity. Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique and New Zealand are signatories to the Agreement but have not ratified it.

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Description

The objectives of SIOFA are to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fishery resources in the southern Indian Ocean through cooperation among members, and to promote the sustainable development of fisheries in the SIOFA area, taking into account the needs of developing States bordering the SIOFA area that are members of the Agreement, and in particular the least developed among them and small-island developing States.

The Agreement covers fishery resources including fish, molluscs, crustaceans and other sedentary species within the area, but excludes highly migratory species and sedentary species subject to the fishery jurisdiction of coastal states. Major fish species include Pelagic armourhead (*Pseudopentaceros richardsoni*), Patagonian toothfish (*Dissostichus eleginoides*), Oreos (*Neocyttus rhomboidalis*, *Pseudocyttus maculatus*), Orange roughy (*Hoplostethus atlanticus*), Dogfish (*Centroscymnus coelolepis*), Bluenose Warehou (*Hyperoglyphe antarctica*), and Alfonsino (*Beryx splendens*).

SIOFA maintains cooperative agreements with the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) and the Agreement on Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP).

U.S. Participation

The United States has an interest in SIOFA fisheries in consideration of intersections with species also managed by CCAMLR, to which the United States is a party. The United States has been an observer to the SIOFA Meeting of the Parties since 2020.

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PACIFIC OCEAN

Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP)

Basic Instruments

The Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program is a legally binding multilateral agreement that entered into force in February 1999 ([link to AIDCP text](#)). The AIDCP strengthened and replaced the 1992 Agreement on the Conservation of Dolphins (also known as the “[La Jolla Agreement](#)”).

Implementing Legislation

International Dolphin Conservation Program Act ([IDCPA](#)) of 1997 (11 Stat. 1122; 16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.; 16 U.S.C. 1411)

Parties

Belize, Bolivia¹, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, European Union, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, the United States, Vanuatu¹, and Venezuela.

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Budget

Article XV of the AIDCP provides that the Parties “shall contribute to the expenses necessary to achieve the objectives of this Agreement through the establishment and collection of vessel fees, the level of which shall be determined by the Parties, without prejudice to other voluntary financial contributions.” A significant feature of the AIDCP is that since 1995 (with some exceptions from 2020-2022, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic), one hundred percent of trips by large purse seine vessels (i.e., vessels in excess of 400 short tons, 363 metric tons, carrying capacity) fishing in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) are covered by the IATTC Observer Program and Parties’ national observer programs, collectively known as the On-Board Observer Program. However, 100% observer coverage comes at a substantial expense, and accounts for approximately 90% of the AIDCP budget. The remainder corresponds to the costs of meetings, administration, and other categories. In order to cover the cost of the AIDCP’s On-Board Observer Program, all large purse seine vessels, authorized to fish for tuna in the EPO, pay assessment fees at a rate of US\$14.95 per cubic meter of well volume. In 2023, the United States had 15 large purse seine vessels listed on the Active Purse Seine Vessel Capacity Register. The total U.S. vessel assessments paid for 2023 was \$381,135. The AIDCP Parties approved the 2023 budget in the amount of \$ 3,386,800.

While vessel assessments from all Parties cover the majority of AIDCP costs, approximately 30% of the observer program costs are derived from the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC). IATTC’s 30% contribution, agreed at the inception of IATTC’s Tuna-Dolphin Program in 1977, reflects the minimum level of observer coverage required for the data collected to be statistically reliable. At least 50% of trips must be covered by the IATTC observer program, and all assessment income is shared with the national observer programs that participate in the On-Board Observer Program in proportion to their rate of coverage for relevant trips, up to 50%. The IATTC program provides observers for 100% of trips made by vessels of Parties that do not have a national observer program.

¹ Applies the Agreement provisionally.

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

The goals of AIDCP are:

“(1) to progressively reduce incidental dolphin mortalities in the tuna purse-seine fishery in the Agreement Area to levels approaching zero, through the setting of annual limits; (2) with the goal of eliminating dolphin mortality in this fishery, to seek ecologically sound means of capturing large yellowfin tunas not in association with dolphins; and (3) to ensure the long-term sustainability of the tuna stocks in the Agreement Area, as well as that of the marine resources related to this fishery, taking into consideration the interrelationship among species in the ecosystem, with special emphasis on, *inter alia*, avoiding, reducing and minimizing bycatch and discards of juvenile tunas and non-target species.”

B. Organizational Structure:

AIDCP consists of Parties (i.e., nations and a regional economic integration organization), and a Secretariat provided by the Director of IATTC. Approval of decisions, resolutions, recommendations, and publications is achieved by consensus of all Parties to AIDCP. The Secretariat is responsible for drafting programs of investigations, budget formulation, accounting and administrative support, directing technical staff, coordinating AIDCP with other organizations, and preparing administrative, scientific, and other reports of AIDCP.

The International Review Panel (IRP) follows a general procedure for monitoring compliance by vessels with measures established by AIDCP, including minimizing the mortalities of dolphins during fishing operations and reporting on compliance to appropriate Parties. The IRP reviews data collected by observers of the On-Board Observer Program related to compliance with AIDCP, and identifies possible infractions of that Agreement. Lists of these possible infractions are submitted by the Secretariat to the Parties in which the vessels are registered for investigation and possible action. The Parties report back to the Secretariat on actions taken to address these possible infractions. The IRP must hold at least two meetings a year and publishes an annual report that summarizes the activities, actions, and decisions of the IRP, and lists the possible infractions identified for the various national fleets.

The Permanent Working Group on Tuna Tracking (PWGTT) was established by the Parties to AIDCP in 1999 as a component of the IRP. The AIDCP requires that all Parties have an approved tuna tracking and verification system. The purpose of the system is to ensure the dolphin-safe status of tuna harvested in the EPO. The first task undertaken by the Working Group was to develop an international tuna tracking and verification system template that each Party could use to prepare a national tuna tracking system consistent with AIDCP requirements. In addition, the PWGTT has encouraged and assisted in the development of national plans as requested by AIDCP Parties. The PWGTT provides a forum for discussing and solving problems encountered in operating the national tuna tracking systems, and recommends improvements to the system, as necessary. In 2001, the PWGTT developed an international dolphin-safe Certification Program to provide a method of documenting the dolphin-safe status of EPO tuna in the world market. The international certification program and system for tracking and verifying tuna are reviewed and amended as necessary.

The Working Group to promote and publicize the *AIDCP Dolphin Safe Tuna Certification System* was established in 2002. This working group seeks to identify means of effectively promoting the scientific and technical aspects of the AIDCP, as well as its conservation successes. Additionally, those Parties that utilize the *AIDCP Dolphin Safe Tuna Certification System* also look for means of promoting and increasing consumer understanding of the *AIDCP Dolphin Safe Tuna Label* so that commercial benefits can be realized from the program. The United States participates in the work that seeks to raise awareness of the AIDCP and its successes, but does not implement or promote the *AIDCP Dolphin Safe Tuna Certification System*.

C. Programs:

To fulfill its mission, the Parties carry out an extensive data collection program. This program is conducted by a permanent, internationally recruited staff selected and directed by the Secretariat, who is responsible to the Parties.

In addition, the Parties to the AIDCP have established working groups to address specific management and organizational issues.

Dolphin Conservation

In the 1950s, fishermen discovered that yellowfin tuna in the EPO aggregated beneath schools of dolphins. Soon after that discovery, the predominant tuna fishing method in the EPO was to intentionally encircle a school of dolphins with a purse seine net (also known as “setting on dolphins”) to capture the tuna concentrated below. Hundreds of thousands of dolphins died each year in the early years of this fishery. In 1972, the United States passed the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) that, among other things, began conservation efforts to reduce dolphin mortality in the EPO. A later amendment to the MMPA embargoed all imports of EPO purse seine caught yellowfin tuna. However, foreign participation in setting on dolphins in the EPO increased during the 1980s, such that the total EPO dolphin mortality of all fleets rose from about 21,000 in 1979 to approximately 132,000 in 1986. A program developed by the IATTC to monitor and reduce dolphin mortality began to take effect soon after 1986 and the annual mortality began to decline again, to approximately 15,500 in 1992². After the signing of the La Jolla Agreement in 1992 and the AIDCP later on in the same decade (described below), the number of observed mortalities has declined significantly to just 729 in 2021, with an average mortality per set of 0.07 dolphins. This represents a total reduction in observed dolphin mortality of approximately 99% compared to 1986 levels. While the majority of vessels in the U.S. EPO purse seine fleet make sets on floating objects and sets on un-associated schools of tuna, the U.S. has had up to two large purse seine vessels authorized to set on dolphins in recent years, as per the protocols set forth by AIDCP.

In the fall of 1992, the nations participating in the EPO tuna fishery signed the La Jolla Agreement, which placed voluntary limits on the maximum number of dolphins that could be incidentally killed annually in the fishery, decreasing the maximum each year over seven years, with a goal of eliminating dolphin mortality in the fishery. In 1995, the United States and nine other nations fishing in the EPO negotiated the Panama Declaration. The Panama Declaration established conservative species/stock-specific annual dolphin mortality limits and represented an important step toward reducing bycatch in commercial fisheries with sound ecosystem management. It contained provisions for additional protection for individual stocks of dolphins and for other living marine resources to achieve an ecosystem approach to management of the fishery. Due to the efforts of the nations that negotiated the Panama Declaration and IATTC, the yellowfin tuna fishery in the EPO has had 100% observer coverage since 1995. The signatory nations envisioned that, as a result of their actions in reducing dolphin mortality, the United States would amend its laws so their participation in AIDCP would satisfy compatibility requirements of the MMPA and result in the lifting of embargoes on yellowfin tuna and yellowfin tuna products.

In response to the Panama Declaration, in 1997, Congress amended MMPA with the IDCPA to authorize AIDCP and to: (1) allow for lifting the embargoes for countries fishing in compliance with AIDCP and (2) lift the ban on the sale of tuna that is not dolphin-safe. In February 1998, the nations participating in the tuna purse seine fishery in the EPO negotiated AIDCP, a legally-binding instrument for dolphin conservation and ecosystem management in the EPO. IDCPA is intended to give force domestically to AIDCP, which was designed to strengthen dolphin protection measures already in place and afford nations harvesting tuna in the EPO in compliance with those measures access to the lucrative U.S. market for their tuna.

Despite successes in reducing observed dolphin mortality in the EPO purse seine fishery, the three stocks of dolphin that interact to the greatest degree with the fishery, the eastern spinner dolphin (*Stenella longirostris orientalis*), northeastern offshore spotted dolphin (*Stenella attenuata*), and coastal spotted dolphin (*Stenella attenuata graffmani*), are currently categorized as depleted under the MMPA. As of the most recent fisheries-independent survey, conducted in 2006, none of these stocks of dolphin were recovering at a rate of population increase that is consistent with the drastic reduction in observed dolphin mortality in the ETP purse seine fishery. Since AIDCP meetings dating back to about 2018, Parties have been discussing initiating new population research on EPO dolphin stocks. While the Parties agree that a new survey is imperative, the COVID-19 Pandemic and lack of consensus on a

² Dolphin mortality figures up to 1992 were obtained from the following sources:
<https://swfsc.noaa.gov/textblock.aspx?Division=PRD&ParentMenuId=228&id=1408> and
<https://www.iatc.org/AnnualReportsENG.htm>

final survey proposal and funding source have delayed approval for new population research. Work was last done by Mexico who initiated a second trial survey in the EPO in Fall 2019 to test out updated survey methodologies for potential use during the main survey.

It is important to note that the dolphin-safe standard established by the AIDCP differs from that currently implemented in the United States. Under the AIDCP, dolphin-safe means “tuna captured in sets in which there is no mortality or serious injury of dolphins.” The current dolphin-safe standard in the United States includes the provision that “no purse seine net or other fishing gear was intentionally deployed on or used to encircle dolphins during the fishing trip and that no dolphins were killed or seriously injured in the sets or other gear deployments in which the tuna were caught.”

Other Conservation and Administration Issues: The Parties have taken a proactive position in fishery management and dolphin conservation in recent years. There are or have been two working groups dealing with specific management issues: (1) fishing by non-parties to the AIDCP and (2) vessel assessments and financing the AIDCP. The AIDCP currently does not require small purse seine vessels (i.e., of 400 short tons, 363 metric tons, carrying capacity or less) to carry observers. However, in light of the concern that some small purse seine vessels have set on dolphins, in contravention of the AIDCP, the Parties adopted measures to require small purse seine vessels, identified by the IRP that have intentionally set on dolphins, to carry observers on subsequent trips.

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Convention for the Establishment of an Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and Convention for the Strengthening of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission Established by the 1949 Convention between the United States of America and the Republic of Costa Rica

Basic Instrument and the Transition to the Antigua Convention

The Convention between the United States of America and the Republic of Costa Rica for the establishment of an Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, 1949 ([“1949 Convention” Text](#)); and Convention for the Strengthening of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission Established by the 1949 Convention between the United States of America and Costa Rica ([“Antigua Convention” Text](#)).

The Antigua Convention entered into force on August 27, 2010, and was drafted to update, and eventually replace, the original 1949 Convention. The Antigua Convention contains modern principles and reflects the duties and responsibilities of nations to cooperate to ensure the sustainable management of shared fisheries resources, to minimize impacts to bycatch species, and to conserve the marine ecosystems on which sustainable fisheries depend. The Antigua Convention also provides updates to monitoring, control, and surveillance provisions, which, *inter alia*, help to strengthen IATTC’s mandate to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and illegal imports of tuna product.

The United States signed the Antigua Convention on November 14, 2003, and the Senate subsequently provided advice and consent for the United States to ratify the Convention. On February 24, 2016, the United States deposited its instrument of ratification of the Antigua Convention. Several Parties to the 1949 Convention have signed the Antigua Convention, but have not yet ratified. As such, IATTC will continue to function under a dual-convention scenario until the Antigua Convention for all Parties to the 1949 Convention enters into force, at which time the 1949 Convention will be terminated.

Implementing Legislation

Convention between the United States of America and the Republic of Costa Rica for the establishment of an Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, 1949.

[Tuna Conventions Act](#) (16 U.S.C. 951 *et seq.*), as amended on November 5, 2015, by Title II of Public Law 114-81.

Member Nations

The sixteen members that have ratified/acceded to the Antigua Convention include Belize, Canada, China, Costa Rica, El Salvador, the European Union, France (on behalf of its overseas territories), Guatemala, Japan, Kiribati, Korea, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, and the United States. Additionally, Chinese Taipei is a Member of the IATTC pursuant to Article XXVIII of the Antigua Convention, which allows fishing entities to agree to be bound by the terms of the Convention and the measures adopted by the Commission.

Colombia, Vanuatu, and Venezuela are Members of IATTC under the 1949 Convention, but have not yet ratified the Antigua Convention.

Cooperating Non-Members

Cooperating Non-Member status was renewed for 2023 for Bolivia, Chile, Honduras, Indonesia, and Liberia.

Commission Headquarters

Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission
8901 La Jolla Shores Drive
La Jolla, California 92037-1509

Executive Director: Arnulfo Franco
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 Web Address: <http://www.iattc.org>

Budget

As with most other decisions under the Antigua Convention, the budget of the Commission is adopted by a consensus decision of the Members of the Commission present at a given meeting. In formulating and approving a budget, the Antigua Convention directs the Commission to give due consideration to the principle of cost effectiveness. The Commission maintains separate accounts for the activities carried out by IATTC and the AIDCP. The Antigua Convention provides that the amount of the contribution of each Member of the Commission to the budget shall be determined in accordance with a scheme that the Commission shall adopt, and amend, as required. The scheme must be transparent and equitable for all Members and must be set out in the financial regulations of the Commission.

At the first meetings of the IATTC following the entry into force of the Antigua Convention in 2010, the IATTC Working Group on Finance began discussions on the development of a contribution formula for use under the new Convention. In 2012, the Working Group was again unable to reach agreement on a long-term or permanent contribution formula, but did recommend an interim formula that will continue to be used until 2017 and beyond, until such time as a Member indicates that they can no longer accept its use for the basis of calculating contributions to the IATTC budget.

The provisionally approved IATTC budget for FY2024 is \$9,481,519. The United States assessed contribution is \$1,746,553 for FY2024.

U.S. Representation

A. Appointment Process:

The Tuna Conventions Act of 1950, as amended, provides that the United States shall be represented by a total of not more than four Commissioners, of which, one must be an officer or employee of the Department of Commerce and not more than two may be appointed who reside in a State other than a State whose vessels maintain a substantial fishery in the Convention Area. The Commissioners are appointed by the President and shall be subject to supervision and removal by the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce. In the absence of any U.S. Commissioner, the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary, may designate from time to time and for periods of time deemed appropriate Alternate U.S. Commissioners to the Commission. These Commissioners, along with the U.S. Department of State representative, comprise the U.S. Section to the IATTC.

B. U.S. Commissioners:

Ryan J. Wulf (Alternate)
 Assistant Regional Administrator for
 Sustainable Fisheries Division
 NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region
 U.S. Department of Commerce
 Office: 916-800-3301
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Dorothy Lowman (Alternate)
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 Portland, OR 97225
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Mike Thompson (Alternate)
 Owner and Operator of Newport Landing
 Sportfishing and Davey's Locker
 Sportfishing
 San Juan Capistrano, CA
 (949) 500-5901

John Zuanich (Alternate)
 Owner and Operator of JZ Trading
 San Pedro, CA
 (310) 710-4552

D. Advisory Structure:

The Tuna Conventions Act, as amended, provides that the Secretary of Commerce, in consultation with the Secretary of State, shall appoint a General Advisory Committee (Committee) and a Scientific Advisory Subcommittee (Subcommittee) to advise the U.S. Section regarding policy and science issues, respectively, as well as U.S. positions associated with IATTC conservation and management measures. The Committee first met in September 2003 and all interested sectors - commercial and recreational fishing and environmental organizations - are represented on the Committee. The Subcommittee convened for the first time in 2010, as this was the first time that applications from the required minimum of five eligible persons were received. Under the recent amendments to the Tuna Convention Act, the terms of the Committee are fixed at three years. Each member of the advisory committees may reapply and there are no term limits. The Committee members are invited to attend all non-executive meetings of the U.S. Section and are given the opportunity to examine and be heard on all proposed programs, reports, recommendations, and regulations of the Commission.

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

Under the 1949 Convention, IATTC was established to "(1) study the biology of the tunas and related species of the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) to determine the effects that fishing and natural factors have on their abundance, and (2) to recommend appropriate conservation measures so that the stocks of fish can be maintained at levels which will afford maximum sustainable catches." The objective of IATTC under the Antigua Convention is to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of tuna and other fish stocks covered by the Convention, in accordance with the relevant rules of international law.

B. Organizational Structure:

IATTC consists of States and regional economic integration organizations that are Parties to the 1949 Convention and/or the Antigua Convention, and any fishing entity that has expressed its formal commitment to abide by the terms of the Antigua Convention, and a Secretariat headed by a Director of Investigations. The principal duties and functions of the Commission, as reflected in the 1949 Convention and Antigua Convention include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1) To promote, carry out and coordinate scientific research concerning the abundance, biology and biometry in the Convention Area of covered fish stocks and, as necessary, of associated or dependent species, and the effects of natural factors and human activities on the populations of these stocks and species;
- 2) To adopt measures that are based on the best scientific evidence available to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of covered fish stocks and to maintain or restore the populations of harvested species at levels of abundance which can produce the maximum sustainable yield;
- 3) To adopt, as necessary, conservation and management measures and recommendations for species belonging to the same ecosystem and that are affected by fishing for, or dependent on or associated with covered fish stocks to maintain or restore populations of such species above levels at which their reproduction may become seriously threatened; and
- 4) To apply the precautionary approach for covered fish stocks.

Approval of decisions, resolutions, recommendations, and publications is only by consensus of all Members. National sections may consist of one to four members appointed by the governments or the respective Contracting Members. Each national section may establish an advisory committee which is invited to attend non-executive sessions of the Commission meetings. The Director of Investigations is appointed by the Commission and is responsible for drafting programs of investigations, budget formulation, accounting and administrative support, directing technical staff, coordinating Commission work with other organizations and preparing administrative, scientific, and other reports of the Commission.

C. Programs:

To fulfill its mission, the Commission carries out an extensive research and data collection program. This program is conducted by a permanent, internationally recruited staff selected and directed by the Director of Investigations, who is responsible to the Commission. In addition, IATTC has established a number of working groups to address specific management and organizational issues and has expanded the scope and nature of its management recommendations in recent years.

Fisheries Conservation and IATTC Management

IATTC uses a combination of effort-based and catch-based measures to manage tuna stocks in the Convention Area. To address growing fishing capacity in the purse seine fleet, IATTC has adopted measures intended to control fishing effort in the eastern Pacific Ocean. IATTC adopted a measure in 2002 that limited the purse seine vessel well volume capacity available to Members at levels at the time of adoption ([C-02-03](#)). IATTC is the first, and currently the only, tuna regional fishery management organization to establish a fleet capacity limit. The measure required purse seine vessels to be included on an IATTC Regional Vessel Register before being authorized to fish in the Convention Area. Additionally, the measure established a target purse seine well volume total capacity of 158,000 m³ based on recommendations of the IATTC scientific staff.

The Commission typically adopts tuna conservation and management measures on an annual or multi-annual basis. Since 2004, the Commission has adopted three-year measures for tropical tuna conservation in the eastern Pacific Ocean. In 2021, the Commission adopted a three-year measure on tropical tuna conservation (). The IATTC measure on tropical tuna includes a variety of conservation measures: (1) time-area closures for the purse seine fishery; (2) a requirement to retain all bigeye, skipjack, and yellowfin tuna caught, except fish considered unfit for human consumption for reasons other than size; and (3) longline catch limits for bigeye tuna. This 2021 measure also includes a new individual vessel limit program for bigeye tuna. This measure is to be re-evaluated in 2024. Since 2012, the Commission has adopted measures to establish catch limits for Pacific bluefin tuna in the EPO. Most recently, in 2021, the Commission revised a short term two-year measure (), later amended by [C-21-01](#), and a long term measure ([C-18-02](#)), later amended by [C-21-01](#), aiming to conserve and establish rebuilding targets for Pacific bluefin stocks.

IATTC has also adopted conservation and management measures to address the bycatch and incidental capture of other living marine resources, such as seabirds ([C-11-02](#)), sea turtles ([C-19-04](#)), sharks ([C-05-03](#); [C-11-10](#); [C-16-05](#); [C-16-06](#); [C-19-05](#); and [C-19-06](#)), mobulid rays ([C-15-04](#)), as well as a measure on fish aggregating devices (FADs) ([C-19-01](#)).

Monitoring, Control and Surveillance

IATTC has adopted measures to establish a vessel monitoring system ([C-14-02](#)), regulate transshipments (), require International Maritime Organization (IMO) numbers ([C-18-06](#)), and list and sanction vessels engaged in IUU fishing ([C-19-02](#)). In 2011, the IATTC adopted a measure to implement a compliance and monitoring scheme (), and results are reviewed annually at the meetings of IATTC.

Additional Resources

A list of active IATTC resolutions and recommendations can be found on the Commission's website:

<http://www.iattc.org/ResolutionsActiveENG.htm>

A list of vessels authorized to fish for tuna and tuna-like species in the IATTC Convention Area can be found on the Commission's website: <https://www.iattc.org/VesselRegister/VesselList.aspx?List=RegVessels&Lang=ENG>

Minutes from the meetings of the Commission, as well as minutes from the various working groups, can also be found on the Commission's website: <http://www.iattc.org/Minutes/IATTC-AIDCP-Minutes-ReportsENG.htm>

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Convention for the Preservation of the Halibut Fishery of the Northern Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea: Basic Instrument for the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC)

Basic Instrument

Convention for the Preservation of the Halibut Fishery of the Northern Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea, 1953 (TIAS 2900)

Implementing Legislation

Northern Pacific Halibut Act of 1982, 16 USC 773 *et seq.*, (as amended: 50 Stat. 325; 67 Stat. 494; 79 Stat. 902; 97 Stat. 78)

Member Nations

The United States and Canada

Commission Headquarters

International Pacific Halibut Commission
2320 W. Commodore Way Suite 300
Seattle, WA 98199-1287

Director: Dr. David T. Wilson, Ph.D.
Telephone: (206) 634-1838
Web address: <http://www.iphc.int>

U.S. Representation

A. Appointment Process:

The United States is represented on the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) by three Commissioners who are appointed by the President for a period of 2 years (with eligibility for reappointment). Of these Commissioners, one must be a NOAA official, one must be a resident of Alaska, and one must be a nonresident of Alaska. In addition, one of these three Commissioners must be a voting member of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. The Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce, may designate from time to time Alternate U.S. Commissioners to the IPHC.

B. U.S. Commissioners:

Jon Kurland (Federal Commissioner)
Alaska Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries
P.O. Box 21668
709 W. 9th Street, Rm 420
Juneau, AK 99802-1668

Richard Yamada
President, Alaska Charter Association

Robert Alverson
Alaska Fishing Vessel Owners Association

C. Advisory Structure:

There are no formal provisions for a U.S. Advisory Committee to IPHC, although informal groups made up of U.S. and Canadian industry representatives, known as the IPHC Conference Board and the Processor Advisory Group, do attend and provide recommendations to annual Commission meetings.

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

IPHC was created to conserve, manage, and rebuild the halibut stocks in the Convention Area to those levels that would achieve and maintain the maximum sustainable yield from the fishery. The yield definition was changed to optimum sustainable yield by amending the 1979 Protocol.

The halibut resource and fishery have been managed by IPHC since 1923. IPHC was established by a Convention between the United States and Canada, which has been revised several times to extend the Commission's authority and meet new conditions in the fishery. The most recent change, a protocol, was concluded in 1979 and involved an amendment to the 1953 Halibut Convention.

"Convention waters" are defined as the waters off the west coasts of Canada and the United States, including the southern as well as the western coasts of Alaska, within the respective maritime areas in which either Party exercises exclusive fisheries jurisdiction. For purposes of the Convention, the "maritime area" in which a Party exercises exclusive fisheries jurisdiction includes without distinction areas within and seaward of the territorial sea or internal waters of that Party.

B. Organizational Structure:

IPHC consists of a Commission and staff. The Commission consists of six members; three representatives appointed by each Contracting Party. All decisions of the Commission are made by a concurring vote of at least two of the Commissioners of each Contracting Party. The research programs and regulatory actions of the Commission are coordinated by the IPHC staff, in consultation with the Commissioners. The IPHC staff currently consists of 27 permanent employees, including fishery biologists, administrative personnel and support staff.

In addition, the Commission is advised by a Conference Board, a Processor Advisory Group (PAG), and a Research Advisory Board. The Conference Board is a panel representing U.S. and Canadian commercial, native and sport halibut fishers. Created in 1931 by the Commission, the Board provides the industry/sport/native harvesters' perspectives on Commission proposals presented at Annual Meetings. Members of the Board are designated by union, vessel owner, recreational harvester, Native American, and Canadian First Nations organizations from both nations. Created in 1996, the Processor Advisory Group (PAG) represents halibut processors. Like the Conference Board, the PAG lends its opinion regarding Commission proposals and offers recommendations at IPHC Annual Meeting. The Research Advisory Board (RAB) was created in 1999 with representation from harvesters and processors to advise the Director and staff on Commission research programs.

C. Programs:

Under the Protocol to the Convention, the Commission retains a research staff and recommends, for the approval of the Parties, regulations designed to achieve the purpose of the Convention. The Protocol provides for: (1) the setting of quotas in the Convention Area, and (2) joint regulation of the halibut fishery in the entire Convention Area under Commission regulations. Neither U.S. nor Canadian halibut fishing vessels are presently allowed to fish in the waters of the other country. In 1991, Canada implemented an individual vessel quota (IVQ) system; a similar, individual fishing quota (IFQ) system for Alaska was implemented by the United States in 1995.

D. Conservation and Management Measures:

The 99th Session of the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) Annual Meeting (AM099) was held in Victoria, B.C., Canada, from January 23 - 27, 2023. A total of 18 participants (6 Commissioners: Members; 12

advisors/experts) attended the Session from the two (2) Contracting Parties, as well as 134 members of the public (78 in-person and 56 remote). The meeting was opened by the Chairperson, Mr. Paul Ryall (Canada) and the Vice-Chairperson, Mr. Jon Kurland (U.S.A.) who welcomed participants. A subset of the complete recommendations and requests for action from the AM099 are provided at (<https://iphc.int>).

E. Upcoming Meetings:

The IPHC 2023 Interim Meeting will be held virtually on November 30 – December 1, 2023. The next Annual Meeting (AM083) will take place virtually on January 22 - 24, 2024.

Staff Contacts

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Convention for the Conservation of Anadromous Stocks in the North Pacific Ocean Basic Instrument for the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC)

Basic Instrument

[Convention](#) for the Conservation of Anadromous Stocks in the North Pacific Ocean, 1992 (hereafter referred to as the "Convention," Senate Treaty Document 102-30, 102d Congress, 2d Session).

Implementing Legislation

The North Pacific Anadromous Stocks [Act](#) of 1992, 16 USC 5001 *et seq.*

Member Nations

Canada, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and the United States

Commission Headquarters

North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission
Suite 502, 889 West Pender Street
Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6C 3B2

Executive Director: Mr. Vladimir L. Radchenko
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Web address: <http://www.npafc.org/>

Budget

The approved budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020/2021 is CAD\$933,950 with each Party contributing CAD\$180,000. The budget estimate for FY2021/2022 is CAD \$940,800 with each Party contributing CAD\$183,600. The NPAFC agreed to increase annual contributions by each Party by 2% annually starting from the 2021/22 FY. At the 2020 Annual Meeting, the Commission approved the rate of inflation be fixed at 2.0% per annum and that the duration of this measure will be five years. The budget estimate for FY 2022/2023 is CAD\$941,160 with each Party contributing CAD\$187,272

U.S. Representation

A. Appointment Process:

The United States is represented on the Commission by not more than three U.S. Commissioners who are appointed by the President and serve at his pleasure. Each U.S. Commissioner is appointed for a term not to exceed 4 years, but is eligible for reappointment. Of the three Commissioners, one must be an official of the U.S. Government, one a resident of the State of Alaska, and the third a resident of the State of Washington. Candidates for the non-Federal Commissioner positions must be knowledgeable or experienced concerning anadromous stocks and ecologically-related species of the North Pacific Ocean.

In addition, the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce, may designate from time to time alternate U.S. Commissioners to the NPAFC. The number of Alternate Commissioners that may be designated to a Commission meeting is limited to the number of authorized U.S. Commissioners that will not be present.

B. U.S. Commissioners

Gretchen Harrington (Alternate)
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Alaska Regional Office
National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA
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Joe Mentor (Alternate)
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Tommy Sheridan
Alaska Commissioner
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C. Advisory Structure:

The North Pacific Anadromous Stocks Act of 1992 established an Advisory Panel to the United States Section of the NPAFC. The Advisory Panel shall be composed of: (1) the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game; (2) the Director of the Washington Department of Fisheries and Wildlife; (3) one representative of the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission; and (4) 11 members (6 residents of the State of Alaska and 5 residents of the State of Washington) appointed by the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce, from among a slate of 12 persons nominated by the Governor of Alaska and a slate of 10 persons nominated by the Governor of Washington. There must be at least one representative of commercial salmon fishing interests and one representative of environmental interests on each of the Governors' slates. As is the case with NPAFC Commissioners, Advisors must be knowledgeable of North Pacific anadromous stocks and ecologically related species. Advisors serve for a term not to exceed 4 years, and may not serve more than two consecutive terms. The terms of the most recent Washington Advisory Panel members will expire in April 2022 and the Alaska Advisory Panel members' terms will expire in November 2022.

Description**A. Mission/Purpose:**

NPAFC serves as a forum for promoting the conservation of anadromous stocks and ecologically-related species, including marine mammals, sea birds, and non-anadromous fish, in the high seas area of the North Pacific Ocean. This area, as defined in the Convention, is "the waters of the North Pacific Ocean and its adjacent seas, north of 33° North Latitude beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured." In addition, NPAFC serves as the venue for coordinating the collection, exchange, and analysis of scientific data regarding the above species within Convention waters. It also coordinates high seas fishery enforcement activities by member countries (the Convention prohibits directed fishing for salmonids and includes provisions to minimize the incidental take of salmonids in other fisheries in the Convention area).

B. Organizational Structure:

NPAFC has three standing committees: the Committee on Enforcement (ENFO), the Committee on Finance and Administration (F&A), and the Committee on Scientific Research and Statistics (CSRS). The committees are responsible for providing accurate and timely advice to the Commission in the areas relating to the finances of the Secretariat and the scope of the enforcement activities and scientific research conducted under the auspices of the Commission.

C. Programs:

NPAFC is an international organization that promotes the conservation of Pacific salmon and steelhead in the North Pacific and its adjacent seas. It serves as a venue for cooperation in and coordination of enforcement activities and scientific research. The vast majority of salmon catches in the North Pacific originate from NPAFC member countries, which are Canada, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and the United States.

NPAFC and its counterpart in the Atlantic, the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) have partnered on the International Year of the Salmon (IYS), an international framework for collaborative outreach and research. Through outreach efforts the IYS will raise awareness of what humans can do to better ensure salmon and their varied habitats are conserved and restored against the backdrop of increasing environmental variability, and thus the overall theme is 'salmon and people in a changing world'. The IYS is intended to stimulate an investment in research and leave a legacy of knowledge, data/information systems, tools, and a new generation of scientists better equipped to provide timely advice to inform rational management of salmon.

The IYS organization includes independent Pacific and Atlantic IYS steering committees that oversee outreach activities, identify research priorities, support fundraising and establish reporting procedures. Outreach and research will be planned at three spatial scales—the hemispheric or "salmosphere" scale, the basin scale (Pacific, Atlantic, Arctic or Baltic), or at the local coastal level.

The following broad scientific themes have been identified for the IYS:

- Status of Salmon: to understand the present status of salmon and their environment
- Salmon in a changing salmosphere: to understand and quantify the effects of natural environmental variability and anthropogenic factors affecting salmon distribution and abundance and to make projections of their future changes
- New Frontiers: to develop new technologies and analytical methods to advance salmon science and to explore the uncharted regions of the salmosphere
- Human Dimension: to investigate the cultural, social, and economic elements that depend upon sustainable salmon populations
- Information Systems: to develop an integrated archive of accessible electronic data collected during the IYS and tools to support future research

Staff Contacts

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Treaty Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Canada Concerning Pacific Salmon Basic Instrument for the Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC)

Basic Instrument

Treaty between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Canada Concerning Pacific Salmon, 1985.

Implementing Legislation

Pacific Salmon Treaty [Act](#) of 1985 ([16 U.S.C. 3631](#)).

Member States

The United States and Canada.

Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC) Headquarters

Pacific Salmon Commission
1155 Robson Street, Suite 600
Vancouver, British Columbia
Canada V6E 1B5

Executive Secretary: Mr. John Field
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Web address: <http://www.psc.org>
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Budget

Each Party to the Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST) contributes equal amounts to a bilaterally approved annual budget for joint expenses of the Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC), with supplementary payments made to mitigate the PSC's unfunded pension liability. The Parties have identified the need for increased annual contributions over the next ten years to respond to annual salary increases, inflationary increases of meeting and operational costs, and to supplement the unprecedented drop in income from fish sold to recover the costs of test fishing.

Additionally, each Party pays its own incurred expenses. An Inter-Agency Agreement (IAA) between the Department of State and the National Marine Fisheries Services is used to transfer funds to pay for the U.S. Section staff, U.S. Section members' travel, and the costs associated with meeting rooms, supplies, and overhead. Non-federal and non-state Commissioner and Panel members receive a stipend for their PSC work, also funded through the Department of State. PST implementation funds, which are separate from the IAA monies, pay for state and tribal costs and grants to fulfill the fisheries conservation, enhancement, research, and management responsibilities described in the PST, as well as Endangered Species Act requirements for implementing each fishery.

U.S. Representation

A. Appointment Process:

The appointment process for U.S. members of the PSC includes several unique features. The legislation implementing the treaty specifies: "The United States shall be represented on the Commission by four Commissioners who are knowledgeable or experienced concerning Pacific salmon, to be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the President. Of these, one shall be an official of the U.S. Government who shall be a non-voting member of the U.S. Section; one shall be a resident of the State of Alaska and shall be appointed from a list of at least six qualified individuals nominated by the Governor of that State; one shall be a resident of the States of Oregon or Washington and shall be appointed from a list of at least six qualified individuals nominated by the Governors of those States; and one shall be appointed from a list of at least six qualified individuals nominated by the treaty Indian Tribes of the States of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. Two of the initial appointments shall be for 2-year terms; all other appointments shall be for 4-year terms." Legislation also provides for the designation of an

Alternate Commissioner for each Commissioner. In the absence of a Commissioner, the Alternate Commissioner may exercise all functions of the Commissioner.

B. Commissioners:

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Mr. W. Ron Allen (Tribal Commissioner)
Tribal Chairman
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C. Alternate Commissioners:

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Mr. McCoy Oatman (Tribal Alt. Com.)
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Mr. Dimitri Varmazis (Federal Alt. Com.)
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Mr. Rick Klumph (Oregon Alt. Com.)
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Tillamook, OR 97141

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

PSC's mission is to serve as a forum for cooperation between the United States and Canada in the establishment and implementation of salmon fishery management regimes for the international conservation and harvest sharing of intermingling North Pacific salmon stocks. Implementation of the principles of the Pacific Salmon Treaty enables the two countries, through better conservation and enhancement, to "prevent overfishing and provide for optimum production; and provide for each Party to receive benefits equivalent to the production of salmon originating in its waters." The Commission also serves as a forum for consultation between the Parties on their salmonid enhancement operations and research programs.

B. Organizational Structure:

The Commission has a complex organizational structure which includes four regional Panels (Northern, Transboundary, Fraser River, and Southern) consisting of 23 U.S. Panel Members, 15 of whom are appointed by the Secretary of Commerce. Each Panel member on the Northern, Fraser River, and Southern Panels has an Alternate Member (16 total), 8 of whom are appointed by the Secretary of Commerce. The Northern Panel's stocks of concern are those originating in rivers between Cape Suckling in Alaska and Cape Caution in British Columbia. The Transboundary Panel's stocks of concern are from rivers that originate in British Columbia and flow to the sea through Southeast Alaska. The Fraser River Panel is the only panel with regulatory responsibility. It is responsible for stocks of sockeye and pink salmon originating in the Fraser River. The Southern Panel is concerned with stocks originating in rivers of Canada south of Cape Caution (not including Fraser River pink and sockeye salmon) and the rivers of Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

The Panels are responsible for providing advice to the Commission on the fishing regimes for the intercepting salmon fisheries in their respective regions, i.e., those in which one or both countries intercept salmon spawned in the other country. The fishing regimes in the Treaty are contained in Annex IV and must be renegotiated from time to time. This is done by reviewing technical data on annual fishing plans, regulations, and the salmon enhancement programs of each country. Based in part on the advice provided by the Panels, PSC develops catch limits and related provisions to present to the two governments. These recommendations, which become effective upon approval by both governments, are then implemented by each country's domestic management authorities.

C. Programs:

Signed by Canada and the United States in 1985, the Pacific Salmon Treaty (Treaty) provides a framework for the two countries to cooperate on the management, research, and enhancement of Pacific salmon stocks of mutual concern. The Treaty establishes a process for developing, implementing, and monitoring science-based fishery management regimes to provide for shared salmon conservation and harvest objectives, working to meet the needs of the parties while eliminating overfishing.

The arrangements and institutions established in 1985 proved effective in the early years of the Treaty, with subsequent amendments negotiated in 1999, 2009, and 2019. After two years of negotiations, the Parties implemented a new 10-year agreement for these fisheries that is now in force 2019 through 2028.

The 2019 agreement maintains abundance based fishing regimes, based on run strength, for the major salmon intercepting fisheries in the United States and Canada. The 2019 agreement reduced pressure on stocks of concern, including harvest reductions of up to 15% in Oregon and Washington, 12.5% in British Columbia, and 7.5% in Alaska applied on a sliding scale depending on Chinook salmon abundance. The 2019 agreement also provides additional conservation objectives for several salmon populations, including unfunded measures to increase fish hatchery production to mitigate impacts to endangered or threatened Chinook salmon, and enhance prey availability for Southern Resident Killer Whales. In support of science-based decision-making, the 2019 agreement supports work to identify hatchery salmon in real time, as well as new methods to determine annual Chinook salmon abundance and catch limits. These regimes are designed to implement the conservation and harvest sharing principles of the Pacific Salmon Treaty.

Remaining in place are two bilaterally-managed regional funds that were established in 1999: the Northern Boundary and Transboundary Rivers Restoration and Enhancement Fund (northern fund) and the Southern Boundary Restoration and Enhancement Fund (southern fund). The Pacific Salmon Commission oversees these two funds to support projects in Canada and the United States that develop improved information for resource management, rehabilitate and restore marine and freshwater salmon habitats, and enhance wild stock production through low technology techniques. The United States contributed US\$75 million and US\$65 million to the northern and southern funds, respectively, over a 4-year period after the 1999 Agreement.

Overview of the Agreement's Current Fishing Regimes in Annex IV of the Treaty

Transboundary Rivers (Chapter 1): Chapter 1 addresses the cooperative management of Chinook, sockeye, and coho salmon originating in the Canadian portion of rivers that flow from Canada through the Alaskan panhandle to the Pacific Ocean, including the Stikine, Taku and Alsek Rivers. Appendix to Annex IV, Chapter 1 describes Canada's and the United States sockeye salmon enhancement commitments and programs for the Transboundary Rivers, specifically in the Taku and Stikine Rivers.

Northern British Columbia and Southeast Alaska (Chapter 2): Chapter 2 primarily addresses the management of sockeye and pink salmon fisheries in southern Southeast Alaska and northern British Columbia. It specifies how the fisheries will be managed to achieve conservation and fair sharing of salmon stocks that intermingle in the border area. The fixed catch ceilings contained in the expired agreements were replaced with abundance-based fishing regimes in 1999. These regimes allow harvests to vary from year to year depending on the abundance of salmon. Of particular note, because they resolve long-contentious issues, are agreements governing the harvest of Nass and Skeena river sockeye in Alaska's purse seine fisheries near Noyes Island (District 104) and the harvest of Nass River sockeye in the gillnet fishery at Tree Point (District 101), and Canada's various marine net fisheries for Alaska pink salmon and its troll fishery for Alaska pink salmon in specific Canadian fishing areas. Additional

support for the conservation of Nass and Skeena River sockeye salmon, including additional management actions, a comprehensive escapement goal analysis, review of sockeye run reconstruction model, and sockeye genetic samples, as well as a harvest pattern analysis of the Alaska pink salmon fishery were included in the 2019 amendments. Appendix to Annex IV, Chapter 2 includes the methodology for the Annual Allowable Harvest.

Chinook Salmon (Chapter 3): Chapter 3 addresses the management of Chinook stocks, including marine and certain freshwater fisheries in Alaska, Canada, Washington, and Oregon. Chinook stocks vary in status from healthy stocks that meet long-term production goals to stocks with conservation concerns, including some in the U.S. Pacific Northwest that are listed under the U.S. Endangered Species Act and some in Canada that are assessed to be at increasing risk of extinction and under consideration for listing under Canada's Species at Risk Act. Successful Chinook conservation, restoration, and harvest management depends on bilaterally coordinated programs including: the restoration and rebuilding of depressed natural stocks while providing opportunities for harvest, scientifically sound enhancement activities, maintaining or increasing the overall harvest rates exerted on hatchery-origin Chinook, a 10-year Chinook salmon Coded Wire Tag and Recovery program that begins in 2019, a Mark Selective Fisheries Fund subject to the availability of funds, and a work group to explore issues related to Okanagan Chinook. An abundance-based framework is used to manage all Chinook fisheries. Fishing regimes are managed using either the aggregate abundance of Chinook salmon present in the fishery or on the status of individual stocks or stock groups in the fishery. The 2019 agreement reduces pressure on stocks of concern, including harvest reductions of up to 15% in Oregon and Washington, 12.5% in British Columbia, and 7.5% in Alaska applied on a sliding scale depending on Chinook salmon abundance, as compared to the 2009 agreement that it replaced. Appendix A to Annex IV, Chapter 3 includes understandings and obligations of the Chinook Technical Committee. Appendix B to Annex IV, Chapter 3 includes calculations and base period data related to estimating the Catch Per Unit Effort from the southeast Alaska winter troll fishery in district 113 during statistical weeks 41 – 48. Appendix C to Annex IV, Chapter 3 includes a table showing the relationship between AIs, catches and HRIs. Attachment I includes a list of indicator stocks and the fishery limits and management objectives associated with each stock.

Fraser River Sockeye and Pink Salmon (Chapter 4): Chapter 4 applies to Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon harvested in marine waters of the Straits' of Juan de Fuca and Georgia, the San Juan Islands, the Fraser River and its tributaries; specific waters defining the Fraser Panel Area are identified in Annex II of the Treaty. The most recent negotiations for Chapter 4 amendments concluded in February 2019. The parties agreed to provisionally apply this chapter as of January 1, 2020 until it formally entered into force. Same as the other Chapters, Chapter 4 applies through 2028.

Coho Salmon (Chapter 5): Chapter 5 covers coho management, recognizing that some coho stocks are below levels necessary to sustain maximum harvest. The chapter provides an outline of conservation, research, and management regimes for border area fisheries in southern British Columbia and Washington State. The fishing regime includes rules that establish harvest limits in specified border area fisheries. The rules are designed to limit exploitation rates on natural coho stocks to sustainable levels, taking into account all fisheries affecting the stocks, thereby improving the long-term prospects of sustainable, healthy fisheries in both countries.

Southern British Columbia and Washington State Chum Salmon (Chapter 6): Chapter 6 covers chum conservation, research, and fisheries management in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Puget Sound, Johnstone Strait, Strait of Georgia, and Fraser River. Management incorporates certain refinements to the provisions that trigger fisheries directed at chum salmon in the Strait of Georgia and Puget Sound. The 2019 refinements further restrict fisheries in years of low Fraser chum abundance and expand fishing opportunities in years of high abundance. These refinements will have only a minor impact on the allocations of catches, but will improve the effectiveness of the regime.

General Obligations (Chapter 7): Chapter 7 notes that “with respect to intercepting fisheries not dealt with elsewhere in the PST, unless otherwise agreed, neither Party shall initiate new intercepting fisheries, nor conduct or redirect fisheries in a manner that intentionally increases interceptions”.

Yukon River (Chapter 8): Chapter 8 covers Yukon River fisheries management regimes, including rebuilding and conserving stocks, while providing benefits to the fisheries of both countries on this river system.

The 2019 agreement can be found at the PSC website at <http://www.psc.org>.

2023 Update: The PSC held its 38th Annual Meeting on February 13-17, 2023, in Portland, OR. At this meeting the PSC focused on issues relating to the implementation of the 2019 agreement. The Commission Session of the PSC was held October 19-23/16-20, 2023, in Sequim, Washington.

Future Meetings: The PSC Post Season Meeting will be held January 8-12, 2024, in Seattle, WA and the 39th Annual Meeting will be held February 12-16, 2024, in Vancouver, BC.

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Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea

Implementing Legislation

There is no implementing legislation for the [Convention](#).

Parties

Japan, People's Republic of China (China), Republic of Korea (Korea), Republic of Poland (Poland), Russian Federation, and the United States.

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

The objectives of the Convention are:

- "1. To establish an international regime for conservation, management, and optimum utilization of pollock resources in the Convention Area [the high seas area of the Bering Sea beyond the U.S. and Russian 200-mile jurisdictions];
2. To restore and maintain pollock resources in the Bering Sea at levels which will permit their maximum sustainable yield;
3. To cooperate in the gathering and examining of factual information concerning pollock and other living marine resources in the Bering Sea; and
4. To provide, if the Parties agree, a forum in which to consider the establishment of necessary conservation and management measures for other living marine resources in the Convention Area as may be required in the future."

B. Organizational Structure:

The Convention does not provide for a commission. It does, however, specify that Parties will convene an Annual Conference and establish a Scientific and Technical (S&T) Committee. The functions of the Annual Conference are, among other things, to establish an annual allowable harvest level (AHL) for pollock in the Convention Area, establish an annual individual national pollock quota (INQ) for each Party, adopt appropriate pollock conservation and management measures, establish a Plan of Work for the S&T Committee, and discuss cooperative enforcement measures and receive enforcement reports from each Party. Parties may also use the Annual Conference to determine the scope of any cooperative scientific research on, and conservation and management measures for, living marine resources other than pollock covered by the Convention.

The S&T Committee has the charge to "compile, exchange, and analyze information on fisheries harvests, fish stocks, and other living marine resources covered by this Convention in accordance with the Plan of Work established by the Annual Conference, and shall investigate other scientific matters as may be referred to it by the Annual Conference." The S&T Committee also makes recommendations to the Annual Conference regarding the conservation and management of pollock, including the AHL.

C. Advisory Body:

No formal U.S. advisory body has been legislated for the Convention. However, the U.S. Department of State has invited the 12-member "North Pacific and Bering Sea Fisheries Advisory Body," appointed to advise the U.S. Representative to the U.S.-Russia Intergovernmental Consultative Committee (ICC), to serve informally as the advisory body. This group consists of the following individuals:

- The Director of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife of the State of Washington;
- The Commissioner of the Department of Fish and Game of the State of Alaska;
- Five members appointed by the Secretary of State from a list of 10 nominees provided by the Governor of Alaska; and,
- Five members appointed by the Secretary of State from a list of 10 nominees provided by the Governor of Washington.

D. Background:

The development in the mid-to-late 1980s of an extensive pollock fishery in the central Bering Sea area of the Aleutian Basin, beyond the U.S. and Russian 200-mile zones, was of great concern to U.S. and Russian fishing interests. The United States closed a domestic fishery as a result of the adverse impact this unregulated fishery was having on U.S. pollock stocks. Concern also extended to bycatch problems associated with the fishery.

The central Bering Sea pollock fishery was conducted by trawl vessels from China, Japan, Korea, Poland, and the former Soviet Union. Catch data submitted by these countries indicated that annual harvests in the area rose to approximately 1.5 million metric tons (t) in the years leading up to 1989, largely due to drastic declines in catch and catch-per-unit-effort, leading to a total catch of less than 300,000 t in 1991 and only 10,000 t in 1992. As a result, the governments involved agreed to a voluntary suspension of fishing in the area for 1993-94. During the 2-year suspension of fishing, an agreed scientific monitoring program was carried out that showed no evidence of the recovery of the resource.

On February 11, 1994, after 3 years of negotiations, the Parties initialed the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the central Bering Sea. Its major principles include: no fishing permitted in the Convention area unless the biomass of the Aleutian Basin stock exceeds a threshold of 1.67 million t (if the parties cannot agree on an estimate of the biomass, the estimate of the Alaska Fisheries Science Center and its Russian counterpart will be used); allocation procedures; 100 percent observer and satellite transmitter coverage; and prior notification of entry into the Convention area and of transshipment activities.

On June 16, 1994, the Convention was signed by China, Korea, the Russian Federation, and the United States. Japan and Poland signed it on August 4, 1994, and August 25, 1994, respectively. The Convention entered into force on December 8, 1995, for Russia, Poland, China, and the United States, on December 21, 1995, for Japan, and on January 4, 1996, for Korea.

At the 14th Annual Conference of the Parties held on August 31-September 1, 2009, in Stevenson, Washington, the Parties adopted revised Rules of Procedure (Annex III of the Report of the First Annual Conference) for holding "virtual meetings" via teleconferences or other electronic forms of communication. To test the effectiveness of such meetings, the United States agreed to host the 15th Annual Conference and the S&T Committee Meeting virtually, with the understanding that the S&T Committee Meeting would be held well in advance of the Annual Conference. The Parties recommended that the Party hosting the Annual Conference distribute available scientific information at least 45 days in advance of the Annual Conference, if possible. Pending the success of the trial virtual meeting, the Parties would resume the normal rotation for hosting future virtual meetings beginning in 2011. The description of the "virtual" Annual Conference process can be found at:

http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/REFM/CBS/15th_annual_conference.htm

The United States conducted the S&T Committee Meeting from 1-25 August 2010, and the 15th Annual Conference from 22 September-6 October 2010. It was the first Annual Conference to be conducted via electronic mail.

Current Status

The 27th Annual Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea was hosted by the Republic of Korea, November 14 - 25, 2022 via Virtual Process Conference.

The Allowable Harvest Level (AHL) was again set at zero for 2023 because the minimum biomass level needed to trigger a non-zero AHL has not been reached in accordance with the Convention Annex. The process described in Article VII Part 1 of the Annex to the Convention was followed and the AHL for 2020 was set at zero. Since the AHL for 2020 was set at zero, no individual national quotas could be established.

Based on the report of the Scientific and Technical Committee, there was no new advice and consequently, no new conservation and management measures were adopted. The Parties agreed to adopt the same terms and conditions for trial fishing in 2020 as agreed to at the 2010 Annual Meeting. As in past Annual Conferences, the Parties recommended that countries planning to conduct trial fishing give at least one month lead time prior to fishing in order to facilitate enforcement efforts.

The Parties agreed to continue the virtual meeting process for 2023.

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Treaty between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Canada on Pacific Coast Albacore Tuna Vessels and Port Privileges

Implementing Legislation

The Pacific Albacore Tuna Treaty was implemented by Pub. L. No. 108–219, tit. IV, § 401, (April 13, 2004), 118 Stat. 616 (referenced in 16 U.S.C. § 1821 note).

Parties

The United States and Canada

Description/history

The Treaty entered into force in 1982. In 2001, at the request of the U.S. albacore fishing industry, the United States requested consultations with Canada for the purpose of discussing limitations on the catch or effort by fishing vessels of one Party operating in the jurisdiction of the other Party. Following initial consultations, three subsequent negotiating sessions culminated in agreement in April 2002 to [amend](#) the Treaty. The U.S. Senate gave its advice and consent to the Treaty amendments, and Congress enacted H.R. 2584 (Public Law 108-219) on March 29, 2004, to authorize the Secretary of Commerce to issue regulations to implement the amended Treaty. The President signed H.R. 2584 into law on April 13, 2004. Proposed regulations to allow the United States to implement the amendments to the Treaty were published in April 2004 and final regulations followed in June 2004.

The United States and Canada agreed to allow fishing vessels of the other Party to fish for albacore tuna in waters under its fisheries jurisdiction beyond 12 nautical miles during a fishing season that occurs from June through October. The Treaty requires that the United States and Canada annually exchange lists of fishing vessels which may fish for albacore tuna in each other's waters. The vessels agree to abide by the provisions of the Treaty, which include: vessel marking; recordkeeping; and reporting. The Treaty also allows the fishing vessels of each Party to enter designated fishing ports of the other Party to:

1. Land its catches of albacore without payment of duties, and
2. Transship catches in bond under the supervision of U.S. Customs and Border Protection to any port of the flag state, or
3. Sell them for export in bond, or
4. Sell them locally on payment of the applicable customs duty and
5. Obtain fuel, supplies, repairs, and equipment on the same basis as albacore tuna vessels of the other Party.

When the Treaty was amended in 2002, it had a default provision that if no agreement was reached to extend the arrangement or negotiate a new limit regime after three years, specific fishing limits would be triggered (i.e., 94 Canadian vessels allowed in U.S. waters for four months or 376 vessel months). The provision was first used for the 2007 fishing season and repeated again in 2008. The Parties renegotiated the reciprocal fishing regime in 2008 and agreed on a three-year regime for 2009-2011, which subsequently expired at the end of the 2011 fish season. When established, this regime left in place previous provisions regarding the exchange of scientific data and fishery information as well as the practice of annual Treaty consultations. However, the regime agreed to in 2008 did contain a number of significant changes, which included:

1. The Parties were to exchange a list of vessels for the upcoming fishing season; Canada submits a fixed list of vessels to the United States by June 1 and the United States provides its provisional list to Canada by July 1. Information on vessel lengths was also required.
2. The fishing season extended from June 15 through October 31.
3. The number of Canadian vessels fishing in U.S. waters was limited to 110 and the number of U.S. vessels fishing in Canada was to be reflective of "historical levels." The use of vessel months to limit access was no longer in use.

4. Canadian vessels fishing in U.S. waters could only use troll gear while U.S. vessels were allowed to use both troll and pole-and-bait methods.
5. The implementation of management resolutions at the international level or management requirements at the domestic level were to be considered as sufficient triggers for terminating the Treaty.
6. If national allocations by the appropriate regional fishery management organization had been established during the tenure of the regime, allocations received by Canada and the United States attributable to catch taken in the waters of the host country will be reassigned to the host country.

Upon the expiration of the 2009-2011 fishing regime, the United States and Canada entered into discussion for renewing a reciprocal fishing access regime but could not come to agreement in advance of the 2012 season. As a result, there was no reciprocal fishing in 2012. Subsequently, the Parties restarted negotiations and reached agreement on a renewed reciprocal fishing access agreement for 2013 (one year) with the United States noting that any future fishing regime for 2014 and beyond may include a complete phase-out of reciprocal fishing. The 2013 regime agreement contained changes from the 2009-2011 regime, including extending the fishing season from June 15 through October 31 for U.S. vessels fishing in Canada and June 15 through September 15 for Canadian vessels fishing in the United State and limiting the number of Canadian vessels fishing in U.S. waters to 45 and the number of U.S. vessels fishing in Canada continued to be reflective of “historical levels.”

In 2014, the Parties negotiated and reached agreement on a three-year fishing regime under the Treaty for the years 2014-2016 that mirrored the regime adopted for 2013. This existing fishing regime was again extended in 2016 (for 2017-2019) and in 2019 (for 2020-2022). No agreement was reached for a 2023 fishing regime, and negotiations for further renewal of reciprocal fishing in 2024 are currently underway. Terms and conditions governing reciprocal fishing and port access activities are set forth in Annexes to the Treaty

For further information regarding the current stock status of the north Pacific Albacore tuna stock and domestic/international management efforts relative to the U.S./Canada Pacific Albacore Agreement, please see the contacts below.

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Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Canada on Pacific Hake/Whiting

Basic Instrument

Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Canada on Pacific Hake/Whiting (TIAS 08-635)

Implementing Legislation

Implementing legislation was signed on January 12, 2007, as Title VI of Public Law 109-479, and was amended in 2011 in Title III, Section 302 of Pub. L. 111-348, and is found at 16 USC 7001 et seq.

Parties

The United States and Canada

Description

The Agreement was signed on November 21, 2003. The U.S. Senate gave its advice and consent to the Agreement, and Congress approved H.R. 5946 on December 7, 2006. The President signed H.R. 5946 into law (Public Law 109-479) on January 12, 2007, and signed the instrument of ratification for the Agreement on May 3, 2007. The Agreement entered into force on June 25, 2008, with the exchange of diplomatic notes with Canada. However, implementation of the agreement was delayed because there were errors in the implementing legislation concerning conflict of interest provisions for panel members and the correct number of members on the Joint Technical committee. These errors were corrected with approval of Public Law 111-348, which was signed into law on January 4, 2011. The 2012 whiting season was the first year that the whiting/hake harvest levels were established via the Agreement.

The Agreement implementing legislation tasks the Secretary of Commerce with carrying out the agreement and authorizes him to issue regulations to implement the Treaty. The Agreement established, for the first time, agreed percentage shares of the transboundary stock of Pacific hake, also known as Pacific whiting. It also created a process through which U.S. and Canadian scientists and fisheries managers recommend the total catch of Pacific hake each year, to be divided between the countries by a set percentage formula. Stakeholders from both countries have significant input into this process. The Agreement not only allows the Parties to prevent overfishing, but also provides long-term stability for U.S. fishers and processors and a structure for future scientific collaboration.

Current Issues

The parties came to agreement on a coastwide TAC in both 2022 and 2023.

There are two issues in the current treaty discussions.

The first is that, while neither country has been able to harvest its entire allocation in over a decade, the Canadian fleet has harvested a much lower proportion of its TAC than the US fleet has in the last 5 years. In 2022, Canada harvested 20.3% of its TAC, while the United States harvested 72.4% of its TAC. There are no clear reasons for this difference.

The second issue focuses on the development of the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE). Prior to this year, the MSE technical team has been focusing on refining the model and the tools to use the MSE. The MSE model is now robust enough that the Parties have asked the team to focus on moving toward making the MSE model operational in the next 2 years. The parties will need to come to an agreement on how to use the MSE in future TAC setting discussions.

More information on the Pacific Hake/Whiting Agreement can be found at:

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/management/whiting/pacific_whiting_treaty.html.

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Treaty on Fisheries between the Governments of Certain Pacific Island States and the Government of the United States of America

Implementing Legislation

South Pacific Tuna [Act](#) of 1988 as amended (U.S.C. 973 et seq.)

Parties

The United States and Pacific Island Parties (Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu)

Description

The Treaty on Fisheries between the Governments of Certain Pacific Island States and the Government of the United States of America (Treaty) entered into force in 1988. After an initial 5-year agreement, the Treaty was extended in 1993 and again in March 2003. In 2016, the United States and the Pacific Island Parties (PIPs) agreed to revise and extend the Treaty without expiration. However, the terms in the Treaty Annexes were not stipulated past 2022 and are being negotiated for beyond 2023 by the Parties to the Treaty (after arrangements were generally extended voluntarily via a 1-year MOU for 2023). A related Economic Assistance Agreement between the United States and the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) was renewed and revised in 2023 for an additional ten years until 2033. The Treaty provides access for U.S. purse seine fishing vessels to fish in the EEZs of the Pacific Island Parties. The Treaty includes a number of terms and conditions including mandatory observers and vessel monitoring system (VMS). The Treaty includes regional terms and conditions of licensing with the FFA and has linkages to the requirements of Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention (WCPFC), and the Nauru Agreement.

Budget

Under the Treaty, the terms for the level of access (vessel days) to be afforded U.S. vessels and the associated level of fees to be paid by U.S. vessel owners are included in one of the Annexes subject to renegotiation, as required. In addition to paying for vessel days, the U.S. tuna industry also pays the costs associated with observer coverage (including training), vessel monitoring system deployment and associated recurring costs, and an FFA vessel registration fee.

Associated with the Treaty is an Economic Assistance Agreement between the U.S. Government and the FFA. Under the terms of the 2023-2033 EAA, the U.S. government will pay \$60 million annually, subject to the availability of appropriated funds for this purpose, into an economic development fund administered by FFA. FFA ensures that the fund is used to support economic development programs in the region.

U.S. Administration

U.S. operational, administrative, and enforcement commitments under the Treaty are carried out by NOAA Fisheries, Pacific Islands Regional Office located in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Regulatory Actions

An Administration draft bill, the “South Pacific Tuna Act of 2017” (SPTA), was transmitted to Congress in 2018, and includes updates to the existing South Pacific Tuna Act of 1988 to conform with the recent amendments to the Treaty. Once legislation is signed, corresponding regulations will be developed to implement appropriate measures. The efforts to amend the South Pacific Tuna Act are being led by NOAA Fisheries, Office of International Affairs, Trade, and Commerce.

Future Meetings

The Pacific Island Parties and the U.S. Government and industry meet at least annually to promote broader cooperation under the Treaty and when necessary, to modify and extend the annexes and the economic assistance agreement and the Treaty itself.

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Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention (WCPFC)

Basic Instrument

[Convention](#) on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean

Implementing Legislation

Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention Implementation [Act](#), 16 U.S.C. 6901 et seq.

Membership

Australia, Canada, China, Cook Islands, European Union, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France (extends to French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna), Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Republic of Korea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand (extends to Tokelau), Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Chinese Taipei (Taiwan), Tonga, Tuvalu, United States (extends to American Samoa, Guam and Northern Mariana Islands), and Vanuatu.

Participating Territories

American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia, Tokelau, Wallis and Futuna.

Cooperating Non-members

Curacao, Ecuador, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Liberia, Thailand, and Vietnam have been granted Cooperating Non-Member (CNM) status for 2023.

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Budget

Each member of the Commission shall contribute to the budget in accordance with the following formula determined according to article 18, paragraph 2, of the Convention:

- a) a 10 percent base fee divided in equal shares between all members of the Commission;
- b) a 20 per cent national wealth component based upon an equal weighting of proportional gross national income (calculated on a three-year average) per capita and proportional gross national income (calculated on a three-year average); and
- c) a 70 per cent fish production component based upon a three-year average of the total catches taken within exclusive economic zones and in areas beyond national jurisdiction in the Convention Area of all the stocks covered by the Convention for which data are available (including the main target tuna species, as well as the four main billfish species (black marlin, blue marlin, striped marlin and swordfish)), subject to a discount factor of 0.4 being applied to the catches taken within the EEZ of a member of the Commission which is a developing State or territory by vessels flying the flag of that member.

The 16th Meeting of the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC) was held during the Nineteenth Annual Commission meeting in Da Nang, Vietnam, from November 27 - December 3, 2022, and was co-chaired by the

United States and Australia. The total budget approved by the Commission for 2023 was \$8,505,479, with the United States paying \$799,417, or approximately 11% of the total budget.

U.S. Representation

A. Appointment Process:

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention Implementation Act, 2007, provides that the United States shall be represented in the Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPFC) by five Commissioners. Individuals shall be appointed to serve on the Commission at the pleasure of the President. In making the appointments, the President shall select Commissioners from among individuals who are knowledgeable or experienced concerning highly migratory fish stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, one of whom shall be an officer or employee of the Department of Commerce, one of whom shall be a member of the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council and one of whom shall be a member of the Pacific Fishery Management Council. The Commissioners shall be entitled to adopt such rules of procedures as they find necessary and to select a chairman from among members who are officers or employees of the United States Government. Alternate Commissioners may be designated by the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce.

B. U.S. Commissioners:

The following five individuals currently serve as U.S. Commissioners to WCPFC. Presidentially appointed WCPFC Commissioners serve at the pleasure of the President.

U.S. Commissioners:

Stuart Chikami
Managing Owner
Western Pacific Fisheries, Inc.
Las Vegas, Nevada 89103

Alternate U.S. Commissioners:

Kelly Kryc, Ph.D.
Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Fisheries
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Washington, DC 20230

Gerald Leape
Senior Officer, International Environmental Policy
The Pew Charitable Trusts
Washington, DC 20004

Christa M. Svensson
Sustainability Program Manager – Global
TriMarine Group
Bellevue WA 98004

Roger Q. Dang
President
Fresh Island Fish, Co.
Honolulu, HI 96817

C. Advisory Body:

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention Implementation Act, 2007, provides that there is to be established an advisory committee which shall be composed of:

- (i) not less than 15 nor more than 20 individuals appointed by the Secretary of Commerce in consultation with the United States Commissioners, who shall select such individuals from various groups concerned with the fisheries covered by the WCPFC Convention, providing, to the maximum extent practicable, an equitable balance among such groups;
- (ii) the chair of the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council's Advisory Committee or the chair's designee; and
- (iii) officials of the fisheries management authorities of American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands (or their designees).

The Permanent Advisory Committee was initially established in 2008, with 20 members appointed by the Secretary of Commerce, in accordance with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention Implementation Act of 2007. The two-year terms of the 20 individuals appointed in 2023 will expire on August 2, 2025. The appointees serve alongside representatives from the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, the Pacific Fishery Management Council, and all three U.S. Pacific territories.

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

The objective of the Convention is to ensure, through effective management, the long-term conservation and sustainable use of highly migratory fish stocks in the western and central Pacific Ocean in accordance with the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement. For this purpose, the Convention establishes a Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPFC).

The Convention applies to all species of highly migratory fish stocks (defined as all fish stocks of the species listed in Annex I of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea occurring in the Convention Area and such other species of fish as the Commission may determine) within the Convention Area, except sauries. Conservation and management measures under the Convention are to be applied throughout the range of the stocks, or to specific areas within the Convention Area, as determined by the Commission.

B. Organizational Structure:

WCPFC is composed of member nations, participating territories and the fishing entity Chinese Taipei, and a Secretariat headed by an Executive Director. The Commission's primary subsidiary bodies are the Scientific Committee, Technical and Compliance Committee, and Northern Committee. In addition to these three bodies specified in the Convention, the Commission may establish other subsidiary bodies (e.g., the Finance and Administration Committee) and also employs *ad hoc* working groups as required. *Ad hoc* working groups have been established for data-related issues, the Commission's vessel monitoring system, the regional observer program, and other issues.

Fisheries Conservation and Management

Developing a conservation and management measure (CMM) for yellowfin tuna and bigeye tuna was one of the Commission's primary objectives when the Commission was established in 2004. Following a recommendation by the Scientific Committee (SC) that a 30% reduction in the fishing mortality rate of bigeye tuna in the western and central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) was necessary to address overfishing, the Commission adopted a conservation and management measure for WCPO bigeye tuna and WCPO yellowfin tuna in 2005 (CMM 2005-01). That measure was first replaced in 2008 (CMM 2008-01), and has been updated and replaced throughout the years (CMM 2012-01, CMM 2013-01, CMM 2014-01, CMM 2015-01, CMM 2016-01, CMM 2017-01, CMM 2018-01, and CMM 2020-01). The most recent version of the measure, CMM 2021-01, was adopted in 2021.

CMMs for bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack tuna have included measures aimed at reducing the fishing mortality rate of WCPO bigeye tuna and controlling the fishing mortality rate of WCPO yellowfin tuna and WCPO skipjack tuna. Measures have included fishing effort limits in purse seine fisheries, seasonal prohibitions on the use of fish

aggregating devices, high seas area closures, tuna retention requirements, 100% observer coverage in purse seine fisheries, bigeye tuna catch limits in longline fisheries, and limits on fishing capacity in other commercial tuna fisheries. At the 18th Regular Session of the Commission (WCPFC18) in 2021, Commission members adopted CMM 2021-01, which replaced and built on previous versions of the measure. CMM 2021-01 is generally applicable for the period 2022-2023. The current measure is set to expire in February of 2024, so negotiations towards a new measure will take place throughout 2023. Negotiations will focus primarily on revised catch and effort limits.

WCPFC also has CMMs in place addressing other living marine resources, including Pacific Bluefin tuna, North and South Pacific albacore, North and South Pacific striped marlin, Southwest Pacific swordfish, sharks, mobulid rays, sea turtles and seabirds. A list of adopted CMMs can be found on WCPFC's website (<http://www.wcpfc.int/conservation-and-management-measures>).

Monitoring, Control and Surveillance

WCPFC has implemented a number of measures and programs to address monitoring, control and surveillance in the western and central Pacific Ocean. Article 28(1) of the WCPFC Convention requires WCPFC to develop a Regional Observer Programme (ROP) to, among other things, collect verified catch data, and monitor the implementation of the conservation and management measures adopted by WCPFC. Accordingly, WCPFC established the ROP in 2007, setting forth a number of guiding principles, objectives, rights and responsibilities. Subsequently, progress has been made on issues such as minimum standards, data to be collected by observers, observer placement costs, and the authorization of national and sub-regional observer programs (which collectively comprise the ROP). However, the development of some standards, definitions and procedures is expected to continue to evolve over time.

WCPFC has also adopted CMMs to establish a vessel monitoring system, regulate transshipment, list and sanction IUU fishing vessels, establish high-seas boarding and inspection procedures, establish port state minimum standards and implement a compliance and monitoring scheme. Work has also begun on the development of electronic reporting and electronic monitoring. More information on the relevant MCS measures can be found on the WCPFC website (<https://www.wcpfc.int/wcpfc-monitoring-control-and-surveillance-mcs-scheme>).

Additional Resources

A summary report of the Nineteenth Regular Session of WCPFC is available at: <https://meetings.wcpfc.int/meetings/wcpfc19>.

2023 meetings

WCPFC will hold its Twentieth Regular Session in December 2023. The Scientific Committee met in August 2023. The Northern Committee met in July 2023. The Technical and Compliance Committee met in September 2023.

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Department of State:
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Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fishery Resources in the South Pacific Ocean (SPRFMO)

Basic Instrument

[Convention](#) on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fishery Resources in the South Pacific Ocean

Implementing Legislation

The United States signed the SPRFMO Convention on 31 January 2011. The Convention entered into force 24 August 2012. The U.S. Senate provided its advice and consent to ratification of the Convention in April 2014. Implementing legislation was enacted on 16 December 2016 (Public Law 114-327), and the United States ratified the Convention on 19 January 2017. The United States of America became a full member of the SPRFMO on 18 February 2017.

Member Nations/Entities

Australia, Belize, Chile, China, Cook Islands, Cuba, Ecuador, the European Union, Denmark in respect of the Faroe Islands, South Korea, New Zealand, Panama, Peru, Russia, Chinese Taipei (as a fishing entity), the United States of America, and Vanuatu.

Cooperating Non-Contracting Non Parties

Curacao and Liberia

Secretariat Headquarters

SPRFMO Secretariat
PO Box 3797
Wellington 6140
NEW ZEALAND
Tel: +64- 4- 499 9889

Web Address: <http://www.sprfmo.int>

Budget

Financial regulations (including a formula for contributions), were adopted at the first Commission Meeting. The contributions formula consists of a base fee and components for national wealth and catch of pelagic and demersal fisheries resources, which was modified at the Commission's 2018 meeting.

U.S. Representation

Appointment Process:

The Ensuring Access to Pacific Fisheries Act, enacted in 2016, provides that the United States shall be represented on the Commission by no more than three Commissioners. In making each appointment, the President shall select a Commissioner from among individuals who are knowledgeable or experienced concerning fishery resources in the South Pacific Ocean. At least one of the Commissioners serving at the pleasure of the President shall be an officer or employee of the Department of Commerce, the Department of State, or the Coast Guard, and at least one of the Commissioners shall be the chairperson or designee of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council. The Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce, may designate for periods of time considered appropriate an alternate Commissioner to the Commission. An alternate Commissioner may exercise all powers and duties of a Commissioner in the absence of a Commissioner.

U.S. Commissioners:

On 30 August 2022, Alexa Cole was designated as the Alternate United States Commissioner to SPRFMO.

Description

Beginning in 2006, a series of International Consultations were held with the objective of establishing a regime for conservation and management of non-highly migratory fish stocks and protection of biodiversity in the marine environment in high seas areas in the South Pacific. Following the successful conclusion of the International Consultations, the participants conducted a series of meetings of a [Preparatory Conference](#) to prepare for the first meeting of the [Commission](#) of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation, which took place from January 28 - February 1, 2013.

A. Mission/Purpose

The objective of the Convention is, through the application of the precautionary approach and an ecosystem approach to fisheries management, to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of fishery resources and, in so doing, to safeguard the marine ecosystems in which these resources occur.

B. Organizational Structure:

The Organization structure includes the following:

- Commission;
- Scientific Committee;
- Compliance and Technical Committee;

- Finance and Administration Committee;
- Secretariat.

As a general rule, decisions by the Commission are adopted by consensus; however there are provisions for voting when the Chair considers that all efforts to reach a decision by consensus have been exhausted. There is also an objection procedure.

The SPRFMO Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) define the regulatory framework for the SPRFMO fisheries in the high seas areas of the South Pacific Ocean. Each year, the Commission may revise existing, or adopt new, CMMs. Existing CMMs can be found at <http://www.sprfmo.int/measures/> and include management measures for jack mackerel and bottom fishing, monitoring, control and surveillance measures, and several other measures.

C. Programs

The eleventh Commission meeting was held in Manta, Ecuador from February 13 - 17, 2023 and was preceded by the seventh meeting of the Compliance and Technical Committee on February 7 - 10, 2023. The meeting documents can be found at <https://www.sprfmo.int/meetings/comm/comm11/>.

At the 2023 meeting, the Commission adopted a U.S. proposal to establish SPRFMO-specific procedures in a comprehensive measure governing high seas boarding and inspection in the South Pacific. The organization also took an important step towards controlling fishing levels in the jumbo flying squid jigging fishery through adoption of a measure that limits the number and size of vessels flagged to China, Chinese Taipei, and Korea that currently target squid in the eastern Pacific.

Another U.S. proposal was adopted that requires the Commission and its science and compliance committees to consider climate change as a standing agenda item in all future meetings and make recommendations for the Commission.

Members adopted a measure to enhance the conservation of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the South Pacific and improve the management of bottom fishing on the high seas. The measure will implement a minimum level of 70 percent protection of suitable habitat for vulnerable marine ecosystems.

Finally, the organization adopted an allocation by vote for jack mackerel among current and new participants that will strengthen management and sustainable use in this fishery over the next ten years.

Staff Contacts

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Bureau of Oceans and International and Scientific Affairs
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Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fisheries Resources in the North Pacific Ocean (NPFC)

Basic Instrument

The [Convention](#) on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fisheries Resources in the North Pacific Ocean. The Convention text was agreed to by the negotiating Participants on February 24, 2012. The Convention received its fourth instrument of ratification on January 21, 2015. The Convention entered into force July 19, 2015, 180 days after the 4th ratification.

Implementing Legislation

North Pacific Fisheries Convention, 16 USC 7701 *et seq.* .

Member Nations

The Members include Canada, China, Japan, the European Union, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Chinese Taipei, the United States of America, and Vanuatu.

Fisheries

Fisheries resources covered by the Convention are all fish, mollusks, crustaceans and other marine species caught by fishing vessels within the Convention Area, excluding: (i) sedentary species insofar as they are subject to the sovereign rights of coastal States; and indicator species of vulnerable marine ecosystems as listed in, or adopted pursuant to the NPFC Convention; (ii) catadromous species; (iii) marine mammals, marine reptiles and seabirds; and (iv) other marine species already covered by pre-existing international fisheries management instruments within the area of competence of such instruments.

Secretariat Headquarters

North Pacific Fisheries Commission
2F Hakuyo-Hall
Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology
4-5-7 Konan, Minato-ku, Tokyo 108-8477 JAPAN
Web Address: <https://www.npfc.int/>

Budget

The budget for 2019/2020 is \$1,479,609.

U.S. Representation

The United States shall be represented on the Commission by five United States Commissioners. The Commissioners shall be as follows:

1. Two of the Commissioners shall be appointed by the President and shall be an officer or employee of the Department of Commerce, the Department of State or the Coast Guard. In making each appointment under clause (i), the President shall select a Commissioner from among individuals who are knowledgeable or experienced concerning fisheries resources in the North Pacific Ocean.
2. One Commissioner shall be the chairman of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council or a designee of such chairman.
3. One Commissioner shall be the chairman of the Pacific Fishery Management Council or a designee of such chairperson.
4. One Commissioner shall be the chairman of the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council or a designee of such chairperson.

In the event of a vacancy in a position as a Commissioner appointed under subsection (a), the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary, may designate from time to time and for periods of time considered appropriate an alternate Commissioner to the Commission. An alternate Commissioner may exercise all powers and duties of a Commissioner in the absence of a Commissioner appointed under subsection (a), and shall serve the remainder of the term of the absent Commissioner for which designated.

Description

The Convention was formed in response to calls from the international community (e.g., United States General Assembly Resolutions 59/25, 61/105 and 64/72) for States to take measures to address the impacts of fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) on the high seas, including through the establishment of new regional fisheries management organizations with the competence to regulate bottom fisheries and the impacts of fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems in areas where no such organization exists. The Convention also responds to calls from the international community to close international jurisdictional gaps for high seas fisheries.

The Convention establishes a Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) through which Parties will cooperate to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of fisheries resources in the Convention Area of the North Pacific Ocean, while protecting the marine ecosystems in which these resources occur. Cooperation under NPFC addresses fisheries resources not covered under pre-existing international fisheries management instruments and helps to prevent impacts on fisheries resources in areas subject to U.S. jurisdiction.

The Convention Area is the high seas area (i.e. outside of 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones) roughly north of 20-degrees N latitude and south of the Aleutians. Of particular concern to NPFC are bottom fisheries over seamounts that would have significant adverse impacts on VMEs. The participants to the negotiations of NPFC agreed to interim measures aimed at protecting VMEs and the sustainable management of high seas bottom fisheries in the Convention Area and these interim measures will remain in place until the Commission adopts permanent measures. The interim measures contain measures for any fishing entity to abide by including conducting assessments to prove that contemplated fishing activities would not have significant adverse impacts on VMEs and sustainability of the fishery resources.

The Convention also establishes two committees, a Scientific Committee and a Technical and Compliance Committee, to carry out its functions. The Members are working on developing: (a) A 5-year science research plan, (b) standards, rules and procedures for the compilation and management of data for effective stock assessments, (c) standards, rules, and procedures for vessel monitoring, transshipment, and observer coverage, and (d) an encounter protocol for bottom fishing.

As a general rule, decisions by the Commission will be adopted by consensus, however there are provisions for voting, if that is determined to be necessary. There is also an objection procedure.

Staff Contacts

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Michael Brakke (Commissioner)
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SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources: Basic Instrument for the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)

Basic Instrument

[Convention](#) on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, 1982

Implementing Legislation

Antarctic Marine Living Resources Convention Act of 1984 (16 U.S.C. 2431 *et seq.*)

Members/Acceding States

Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, People's Republic of China, Ecuador, European Union, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay.

Bulgaria, Canada, Cook Islands, Finland, Greece, Mauritius, Pakistan, Panama, Peru and Vanuatu have acceded to the Convention, but are not Members of the Commission.

Commission Headquarters

Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
181 Macquarie Street, Hobart, 7000
Tasmania, Australia

Executive Secretary: David Agnew
Telephone: 61 3 6210 1111
Email: ccamlr@ccamlr.org
Web address: www.ccamlr.org

U.S. Representation

A. Appointment Process:

The Secretary of State, with the concurrence of the Secretary of Commerce and the Director of the National Science Foundation, appoints an officer or employee of the United States as the U.S. representative to the Commission. The Secretary of Commerce and the Director of the National Science Foundation, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, designates the U.S. representative to the Scientific Committee.

B. U.S. Representative to the Commission:

Elizabeth Kim
Director, Office of Ocean and Polar Affairs
U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20520
Telephone: (202) 647-7697

U.S. Representative to the Scientific Committee:

Dr. George Watters
Director, Antarctic Ecosystem Research Division

NOAA/NMFS/SWFSC
8901 La Jolla Shores Drive
La Jolla, CA 92037
Telephone: (858) 546-7198

C. Advisory Structure:

The U.S. Commissioner receives advice from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Science Foundation, Marine Mammal Commission, and the NGO community.

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

The objective of the Convention is the conservation of Antarctic marine living resources. The Convention is based upon an ecosystem approach to the conservation of marine living resources and incorporates principles designed to ensure the conservation of populations and the Antarctic marine ecosystem as a whole.

The Convention applies to the Antarctic marine living resources of the area south of 60° South latitude and to the Antarctic marine living resources of the area between that latitude and the Antarctic Convergence that form part of the Antarctic marine ecosystem.

B. Organizational Structure:

The Convention establishes the Commission, Scientific Committee, and the Secretariat. The Commission consists of one representative from each member. It is responsible for facilitating research and compiling data on the populations of Antarctic marine living resources, ensuring the acquisition of catch and effort data, publishing information, identifying conservation needs, adopting and revising conservation measures, and implementing a system of observation and inspection. The Secretariat, headed by an Executive Secretary, handles the administrative matters for the Commission.

The Commission has two standing committees, the Standing Committee on Implementation and Compliance (SCIC) and the Standing Committee on Administration and Finance (SCAF). SCIC, among other activities, provides technical advice and recommendations related to CCAMLR's conservation measures; reviews and assesses the implementation of, and compliance with, the conservation measures; reviews information on IUU fishing; and reviews and recommends improvements to the System of Inspection and with the Scientific Committee, to the Scheme of International Scientific Observation. SCAF examines and provides advice related to the budget and advises on other administrative and financial matters.

The Scientific Committee is composed of scientific advisors from the members. It provides the best available scientific information on harvesting levels and other management issues to the Commission. The work of the Scientific Committee is carried out with the assistance of the Working Group on Fish Stock Assessment (WG-FSA); the Working Group on Ecosystem Monitoring and Management (WG-EMM); the Subgroup on Acoustics, Survey and Analysis Methods (SG-ASAM); and the Working Group on Statistics, Assessments and Modeling (WG-SAM). Following a decision made during CCAMLR-40, the Working Group on Incidental Mortality Associated with Fishing (WG-IMAF) was reconvened in 2022 to address seabird and marine mammal mortality incidental to fishing in the krill trawl fishery.

C. Conservation Measures:

Paragraph 2 of Article IX of the CAMLR Convention provides a non-exhaustive list of conservation measures the Commission may adopt, including those related to quantity and characteristics of harvested species, protection of species, open and closed seasons, open and closed geographic regions, regulation of fishing effort employed, and methods of harvesting.

The Commission adopted its first conservation measures during its 1984 session (CCAMLR-III). Each year, CCAMLR updates some of the conservation measures or adopts new measures. The conservation measures are organized by general categories, including compliance, general fishery matters, data reporting, fishery regulations, research, minimization of incidental mortality, environmental protection, and protected areas. CCAMLR has also adopted non-binding resolutions that Members are encouraged to implement.

Protected areas

In 2009, CCAMLR established its first marine protected area (MPA) in the South Orkney Island southern shelf. In 2011, it adopted a general framework for establishment of CCAMLR MPAs. Proposals for establishment of marine protected areas (MPAs) has since remained a high priority.

At its 2016 meeting, CCAMLR adopted the Ross Sea region MPA (RSRMPA). The MPA entered into force on December 1, 2017. With a 35-year period of designation, it is set to expire in 2052. The MPA protects a rich and productive ecosystem and is designed to be a natural laboratory and reference area for scientific study of the impacts of climate change and fishing. The MPA consists of three zones: the General Protection Zone (GPZ) where no commercial fishing is allowed (about 72 percent of the MPA), the Krill Research Zone (KRZ) designed to allow regulated fishing for krill only (about 21 percent of the MPA), and the Special Research Zone (SRZ), in which limited fishing is allowed (about 7 percent of the MPA). In 2022, Members submitted activity reports to CCAMLR highlighting the scope and breadth of research undertaken in the RSRMPA during the preceding five years. CCAMLR will conduct the 10-year review of the MPA in 2027.

CCAMLR has ongoing efforts to adopt MPAs in other parts of the Convention Area. Australia and the EU have proposed since 2012, a representative system of MPAs in East Antarctica. The EU has proposed since 2016 the Weddell Sea MPA and Argentina and Chile have proposed since 2017 an MPA in the Antarctic Peninsula. Starting in 2021, several other members, including the United States, joined as co-sponsors of the East Antarctic and Weddell Sea (Phase 1) proposals. Norway has been leading the development of the Weddell Sea (Phase 2) proposal following the 2018 CCAMLR meeting. The EU amended the Weddell Sea (Phase 1) MPA proposal in 2022 to encompass two new areas: the recently discovered icefish nesting site, and the location of the wreck of Shackleton's *Endurance*. With progress on MPA adoption stalled during the past several Commission meetings, CCAMLR held a third Special Meeting on Marine Protected Areas and Spatial Planning in 2023 to adopt a roadmap to advance the process for developing a representative system of MPAs in the Convention Area but was unable to make progress on advancing the discussions nor adopt a roadmap. MPAs will continue to be a part of the Commission and Scientific Committee meeting agendas.

The 10-year review of the South Orkney Islands Southern Shelf MPA was conducted in 2019. Most Members agreed that the scientific basis for protection remained as described in the Conservation Measure establishing the MPA and, thus, did not revise the measure.

Compliance

CCAMLR conservation measures require marking of fishing vessels and gear, licensing and inspections, port inspections of fishing vessels carrying Antarctic marine living resources, vessel monitoring system operation, the toothfish catch documentation scheme, procedures for listing IUU vessels, a scheme to promote compliance by Contracting Party nationals, advance notifications of transshipments, and a compliance evaluation procedure.

CCAMLR has been applying its Compliance Evaluation Procedure (CCEP) since 2012. The purpose of the CCEP is to improve and support Contracting Party compliance with CCAMLR Conservation Measures and, if needed, identifying where measures may need to be clarified or improved. The CCEP initially included review of compliance with a small number of the conservation measures in force. 2017 was the first year that the procedure was applied to all conservation measures in force. During the annual meeting, the Standing Committee on Implementation and Compliance (SCIC) discusses information provided in a Summary CCAMLR Compliance Report compiled by the Secretariat, containing incidences of non-compliance and the responses of the Contracting Party for each identified incidence. In general, SCIC recommends compliance status categories for each incident in a Provisional Compliance Report to the Commission, which then provides its responses to the recommendations.

In 2020 and 2021, the most numerous instances of non-compliance were associated with Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and transshipment reporting requirements. Similarly, in 2022, numerous instances of non-compliance with the Catch Documentation Scheme (CDS) and transshipment reporting requirements were discussed. These led to clarification, in some cases, in the relevant conservation measures, an intended outcome of the CCEP.

General fishery matters

CCAMLR maintains conservation measures related to requirements to notify of vessels participating in fisheries, gear restrictions, data reporting, research and experiments, minimization of incidental mortality, and environmental protection.

Bottom trawling in the high seas areas of the Convention Area has been restricted since 2006. The use of gillnets is also currently prohibited in the Convention Area except for scientific research purposes. CCAMLR has measures for avoiding significant adverse impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems. Seabird conservation measures for longline and trawl gear have significantly reduced the number of incidental seabird mortality, from thousands of birds in the late 1990s to an estimated 15 birds in the longline fishery in 2022. However, during the 2019 meeting, CCAMLR was made aware that a member had been operating its continuous krill trawlers with net monitoring cables, which are prohibited to prevent seabird strikes with such cables. CCAMLR agreed to issue an exemption from the use of net monitoring cables in 2020/2021 fishing season as long as the vessel carries out trials with mitigation devices and certain monitoring and reporting requirements are met. CCAMLR provided the exemption for the 2021/22 fishing season and again for the 2022/23 fishing season, following reviews of information provided from relevant members. This exemption will be reviewed at CCAMLR-42 following further advice from the Scientific Committee.

CCAMLR has measures to mitigate marine mammal bycatch in its fisheries including the mandatory use of marine mammal exclusion devices on trawls. These exclusion devices are mainly to mitigate seal bycatch in the trawl fishery, and when deployed correctly have decreased seal bycatch in CCAMLR fisheries. A few instances of unusually high numbers of seal bycatch in a krill fishery were investigated to ensure the exclusion device was installed properly. However, reported bycatch of three juvenile humpback whales in a krill trawl, combined with issues of seabird striking cables, prompted the reconvening of WG-IMAF in 2022.

CCAMLR has a conservation measure prohibiting directed fishing for sharks in the Convention Area, but allows for retention of incidentally-caught sharks that cannot be released alive. The measure is silent on the practice of finning (i.e., removal of the fins and discard of the carcass at sea), which is widely prohibited in international fora and in U.S. domestic law. In 2011 and from 2013 to 2017, and again in 2019 the United States and European Union, joined by several other members, led proposals requiring that any sharks incidentally caught in the Convention Area be kept with all fins naturally attached to the point of first landing. With the meetings in 2020 and 2021 being virtual and the reduced meeting times and inability to negotiate in person, CCAMLR members were not able to further pursue this and other issues.

Fishery regulations

CCAMLR maintains conservation measures for regulating the fisheries, identifying fishing seasons, catch limits by area and species, bycatch limits, and closed areas, as well as other requirements. Members currently target toothfish, icefish, and krill. Fisheries for toothfish and icefish require 100% observer coverage on fishing vessels. All krill fishing vessels are required to have 100% observer coverage since the 2020/21 fishing season.

For the krill fishery in Statistical Area 48, the spatial distribution of the interim trigger level (620,000 metric ton catch limit) among four Subareas has been in place since 2009. This spatial distribution of krill fishing in this area was set to lapse in 2016, which could have led to concentrated fishing anywhere. However, in 2016, the Commission agreed to reauthorize the spatial allocation of krill under the existing conservation measure until 2021. The Commission has since continued to roll over this conservation measure each year until a replacement measure is developed.

In 2017, in an effort to track the full scope of fishing for research purposes, the Commission adopted a new conservation measure that lists details of approved research fishing occurring in areas otherwise closed to fishing in

the Convention Area. Documenting the research plans promotes transparency of the research fishing that takes place in areas closed to fishing. This new conservation measure went into effect for the 2018/19 season and has been updated for each subsequent fishing season, reflecting research fishing endorsed by the Commission.

In 2021, and again in 2022 and 2023, CCAMLR failed to reach consensus on a conservation measure with a catch limit and other requirements for a long-standing established toothfish fishery in FAO Statistical Subarea 48.3, which includes waters surrounding South Georgia. This meant that the conservation measure governing this fishery lapsed. An associated conservation measure, 31-01, provides that the Commission shall adopt catch limits or other measures as necessary for Subarea 48.3. The fishing that took place in this subarea in 2022 prompted much discussion in advance of and during the 2022 meeting, with similar concerns raised in 2023.

Climate Change

In 2016, CCAMLR adopted a conservation measure to establish Special Areas for Scientific Study (SASS) in newly exposed marine areas following ice shelf retreat or collapse in the Antarctic Peninsula area. Such habitats offer unique opportunities for research to understand how ecological states change due to climate change (e.g., colonization of new benthic areas after ice sheet collapse). In 2017, under this new conservation measure the Commission designated the area of the Larsen C Ice Shelf break a Special Area for Scientific Study. This area is set to expire on October 27, 2028. In 2022, there was a proposal to expand this conservation measure to apply to the entire continent, noting ice shelf retreat and collapse is not confined to just the Antarctic Peninsula area, but this was not adopted.

The Pine Island Glacier has decreased in size by 465 square kilometers (over 2½ times the area of Washington, DC). In July 2019, the sea area exposed by the lost ice was designated as a Stage 1 Special Area for Scientific Study, which is a designation that establishes a temporary (up to 2 years) moratorium on fishing in the newly exposed area while Members review information on the area's characteristics. The area exposed by the loss of ice from the Pine Island Glacier can be designated as a Stage 2 Special Area for Scientific Study if the Members agree on such designation, which would extend the moratorium on fishing for 10 years so that research may be undertaken in the area to observe how the characteristics of the area change. Pine Island Glacier was not designated as a Stage 2 Area in 2021 and the SASS protection lapsed. The UK re-designated this area as a Stage 1 Area for another two years.

In 2022, following four years of effort, the Commission adopted an updated resolution on climate change (Resolution 36/41), which was co-sponsored by the United States. The previous resolution on climate change was adopted in 2009. The resolution recognizes the need to prepare for, and adapt to, the effects of climate change on marine ecosystems of the CAMLR Convention Area. The resolution encourages Members and entities to conduct and integrate climate change science into activities to mitigate, prepare for, and respond to the impacts of climate change.

D. Activities and Meetings:

The 2023 annual meeting of CCAMLR, CCAMLR-42, was held October 16 to 27, 2023 at CCAMLR headquarters in Hobart, Tasmania.

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Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT)

Basic Instrument

[Convention](#) for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna, 1994

Implementing Legislation

N/A, the United States is not a party.

Member Nations/Entities of the Extended Commission

Australia, European Union, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, South Africa, and Chinese Taipei

Cooperating Non Parties

None.

Commission Headquarters

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Budget

The contributions to the annual budget from each Party are calculated on the following basis:

- (a) 30% of the budget shall be divided equally among all the Parties; and
- (b) 70% of the budget shall be divided in proportion to the nominal catches of southern bluefin tuna among all the Parties.

Description

Mission/Purpose: The Commission's objective is to ensure, through appropriate management, the conservation and optimum utilization of the global southern bluefin tuna (SBT) fishery. CCSBT is unique in that it does not have a geographic Convention area, but rather manages SBT globally wherever it occurs, including in the Convention areas of other RFMOs.

In pursuit of this objective CCSBT performs a number of functions. It:

- Is responsible for setting a total allowable catch and its allocation among the members;
- Considers and administers regulatory measures to meet Convention objectives;
- Conducts and coordinates a scientific research program aimed at providing information to support the Commission's management objectives (the program is a mixture of member managed activities and activities managed directly by the CCSBT Secretariat);
- Takes decisions to support and implement fishery management;
- Provides a forum for the discussion of issues relevant to the conservation objectives of the Convention;
- Acts as a coordination mechanism for member's activities in relation to the SBT fishery;
- Fosters activities directed towards the conservation of ecologically related species (living marine species which are associated with the SBT fishery) and bycatch species;

- Encourages nonmembers engaged in the fishery, to accede, apply for cooperating non-membership, or participate as observers in Commission activities;
- Cooperates and liaises with other regional tuna fishery management organizations in areas of mutual interest.

Organizational Structure: CCSBT consists of a Commission composed of national sections of member nations and an Extended Commission consisting of representatives from all member nations and entities. The Secretariat is headed by an Executive Director.

Decisions of the Commission are taken by a unanimous vote of the Parties present at the Commission meeting. The Extended Commission makes consensus recommendations to the Commission for consideration and adoption. There are currently three subsidiary bodies of the Extended Commission: a scientific committee, a compliance committee, and a finance and administration committee.

Fisheries Conservation and CCSBT Management

Status of the Stock. In a 2017 stock assessment, the spawning stock biomass (SSB) of southern bluefin tuna (SBT) remained very low, with the stock estimated to be 13% of the initial spawning stock biomass, and below the level to produce maximum sustainable yield. Since 2017, the CCSBT scientific committee has measured reproductive capacity as Total Reproductive Output (TRO) rather than SSB. The 2020 stock assessment indicated that the SBT TRO is at 20% of its initial biomass as well as below the level that could produce maximum sustainable yield. The 2020 assessment indicated the stock has increased from a low of 10% of initial TRO in 2009. Interim estimates of stock status suggest the stock is continuing to rebuild and in 2021 the SBT TRO was at 22% of its initial biomass, still below the level that could produce maximum sustainable yield. A new stock assessment will be carried out in 2023.

Overall performance indicators show signs of higher recruitment in recent years above historic averages, and there are some consistent positive trends in the age-based longline catch per unit effort estimates across a number of fleets. This suggests that there may be some relatively strong cohorts moving through the fishery, and the detection rate of parent-offspring pairs from the most recent close-kin mark-recapture data is consistent with an increase in adult abundance.

TAC and Management Procedure. At its eighteenth annual meeting in October 2011, CCSBT agreed that a Management Procedure (MP) would be used to guide the setting of the southern bluefin tuna global total allowable catch (TAC) to ensure that the spawning stock biomass achieves the interim rebuilding target of 20% of the original spawning stock biomass by 2020. CCSBT developed a new MP to guide the setting of TACs for 2021 and onwards. The current management procedure includes the following associated management parameters:

- The MP is tuned to a 50% probability of achieving a biomass level of 30% of the original spawning stock biomass by 2035;
- The MP is also designed to achieve the original objective of the first management procedure: i.e., a 70% probability of rebuilding the stock to the interim rebuilding target reference point of 20% of the original spawning stock biomass by 2035;
- The minimum TAC change (increase or decrease) is 100 tons;
- The maximum TAC change (increase or decrease) is 3,000 tons;
- The TAC will be set for three-year periods; and
- The national allocation of the TAC within each three-year period will be apportioned according to the CCSBT Resolution on the Allocation of the Global Total Allowable Catch.

The TAC is set in three year periods. The TAC for 2014 was 12,449 tons, the TAC for 2015 to 2017 was 14,647 tons, the TAC for 2018 to 2020 was 17,647 tons and the TAC for 2021 to 2023 is also 17,647 tons.

CCSBT also adopted the meta-rule process as the method for dealing with exceptional circumstances in the southern bluefin tuna fishery. The meta-rule process describes: (1) the process to determine whether exceptional circumstances exist; (2) the process for action; and (3) the principles for action.

Compliance. The Compliance Plan provides a framework for CCSBT, Members and Cooperating Non-Members to achieve full compliance with CCSBT's conservation and management measures. It includes a three-year action plan to address priority compliance risks and will be reviewed, and confirmed or updated every year. CCSBT has also adopted three Compliance Policy Guidelines, including minimum performance requirements to meet CCSBT Obligations, corrective actions policy; and MCS information collection and sharing. CCSBT adopted an updated Compliance Action Plan for 2021-2023 in October 2020. An updated plan is expected to be discussed in 2023 when in-person meetings resume.

Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS). In 2005, CCSBT established a list of all fishing vessels approved to fish for SBT, which is available on the CCSBT website. In 2008, CCSBT established a list of authorized farms that are approved to operate for farming SBT, which was updated in 2022. CCSBT established a list of carrier vessels that are authorized to receive SBT at sea from large scale fishing vessels in 2009. In an effort to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, Members and Cooperating Non-Members will not allow the trade of SBT caught by fishing vessels and farms, or transhipped to carrier vessels that are not on these lists.

CCSBT's Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) measure came into effect in 2008 and was updated in 2017. It requires CCSBT Members and Cooperating Non-Members to adopt and implement satellite-linked VMS for vessels fishing for SBT that complies with the IOTC, WCPFC, CCAMLR, or ICCAT VMS requirements according to the respective convention area in which the SBT fishing is being conducted. For fishing outside of these areas, the IOTC VMS requirements must be followed, with a minimum polling rate of 4 hours for all authorized vessels. CCSBT will review the VMS measure in 2018 and consider additional improvements.

The CCSBT Catch Documentation Scheme (CDS) came into effect on 1 January 2010 and replaced the previous Statistical Document Program. The CDS provides for tracking and validation of legitimate SBT product flow from catch to the point of first sale on domestic or export markets. As part of the CDS, all transshipments, landings of domestic product, exports, imports and re-exports of SBT must be accompanied by the appropriate CCSBT CDS Document(s), which include a Catch Monitoring Form and possibly a Re-Export/Export after Landing of Domestic Product Form. U.S. dealers are required to submit these forms when importing or re-exporting SBT. CCSBT is undertaking efforts to develop an electronic CDS.

The CCSBT Transshipment monitoring program came into effect on 1 April 2009, and was expanded to include in-port transshipments in 2015. The program applies to transshipments from tuna longline fishing vessels with freezing capacity (referred to as "LSTLVs"). It requires, amongst other things, for carrier vessels that receive SBT transshipments at sea from LSTLVs to be authorized to receive such transshipments and for a CCSBT observer to be on board the carrier vessel during the transshipment. The CCSBT transshipment program is harmonized and operated in conjunction with those of ICCAT and IOTC to avoid duplication of the same measures. ICCAT or IOTC observers on a transshipment vessel that is authorized to receive SBT are deemed to be CCSBT observers provided that the CCSBT standards are met. Transshipments in port must be to an authorized carrier vessel (container vessels are exempted) at designated foreign ports and meet additional requirements including prior notification to Port State authorities, notification to Flag States, and transmission of the CCSBT transshipment declaration to the Port State, the Flag State and the CCSBT Secretariat.

U.S. Participation

As a non-cooperating, non-member of CCSBT that does not catch SBT, the United States must be invited to meetings in order to participate as an observer. CCSBT has issued annual invitations since 2012, and the United States attended meetings from 2014 to 2022 as an invited observer. A U.S. representative was not able to attend in 2019.

U.S. dealers are required to ensure that imports and re-exports of SBT are accompanied by the appropriate CCSBT documentation. As one of the largest non-cooperating, non-member importers of SBT, the United States has provided import data from CDS forms to the Commission since 2016.

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WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Inter-American Convention (IAC) for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles

Basic Instrument

Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles

Member Nations

Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, México, Netherlands Antilles, Panamá, Peru, United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

The [Convention](#) entered into force on May 2, 2001, with nine signatory nations ratifying—Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, the Netherlands on behalf of the Netherlands Antilles, Peru, the United States, and Venezuela. Nicaragua has signed, but has not yet completed their internal ratification processes and/or deposited instruments of ratification. The Dominican Republic is the most recent Party to join. The Convention is open for accession to all countries of the Inter-American region.

IAC is the first binding regional agreement for protecting sea turtles and their habitats in the Western Hemisphere. The stated purpose of the Convention is "to promote the protection, conservation and recovery of sea turtle populations and of the habitats on which they depend, based on the best available scientific evidence, taking into account the environmental, socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of the Parties." The Convention's efforts to date have included calling attention to the most endangered sea turtle species, such as leatherbacks and hawksbills, as well as calling on countries to address sea turtle bycatch in fisheries and poaching. IAC has also recently adopted measures to improve Northwest Atlantic leatherback sea turtle conservation.

B. Organizational Structure:

IAC provides for the creation of an Executive Secretary, a Consultative Committee of Experts, and a Scientific Committee. The Consultative Committee, among other things, reviews and analyzes information relating to the protection and conservation of populations of sea turtles and their habitats; examines reports concerning the environmental, socio-economic and cultural impact on affected communities resulting from the measures set forth or adopted pursuant to the Convention; and evaluates the efficiency of the different measures proposed to reduce bycatch (incidental capture and mortality) of sea turtles. The Scientific Committee examines and, as appropriate, may conduct research on sea turtles covered by the Convention, including research on their biology and population dynamics. It may also evaluate the environmental impact on sea turtles and their habitats of activities such as fishing operations and the exploitation of marine resources, coastal development, dredging, pollution, degradation of estuaries and reef deterioration, among other things.

At the fourth Conference of Parties in April 2009, the Parties agreed with the U.S. proposal to host the Secretariat at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Headquarters' Office in Falls Church, VA and to authorize the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation as the manager of the IAC Special Fund. This arrangement has been renewed several times since 2009. At the Tenth Conference of Parties, this arrangement was renewed at least through December 31, 2025. The official website for the organization is <http://www.iacseaturtle.org/defaulteng.htm>.

Status

IAC's initial meeting of member countries--the First Conference of the Parties (IAC COP1)--took place in San José, Costa Rica on August 6–8, 2002. Delegates from all 11 signatory countries were present, along with 27 observers from 10 countries. The goal of COP1 was primarily to create procedural rules and bylaws. Because there was not enough time to address all of the specific items set out in the Convention to be accomplished at the first COP, the Parties decided to suspend COP1 and resume it in August 2003 in San Jose. At this session, the Parties were able to

come to agreement on the outstanding substantive items on the agenda—the rules of procedure and the terms of reference for the Consultative Committee of Experts and the Scientific Committee. Agreement was also reached with regard to guidelines for international cooperation and the 2004 work program for the Secretariat Pro Tempore.

Several delegations raised the issue of funding for IAC. It was stressed that adequate and reliable sources of funding must be secured in order to ensure the continued operation of the Pro Tempore Secretariat and to assist Parties in implementing the provisions of IAC. While it was recognized that most Parties contribute to the implementation of IAC through their national efforts to protect and conserve sea turtles, financial contributions are necessary to support the work of the Secretariat and the meetings of the Parties. To address this situation, Peru proposed that a minimum voluntary contribution from each Party in the amount of US\$2,000 be established. The Parties agreed, but several delegations noted that financial contributions to IAC are voluntary and so Parties may not all be able to meet the minimum level each year.

The Second Conference of the Parties took place in Isla de Margarita, Venezuela, 16-18 November 2004. Delegates from 10 of the 11 signatory countries were present (Ecuador did not attend), along with observer states Nicaragua and Panama, and observers representing the United Nations Environment Program, Latin American Organization for Fisheries Development (OLDEPESCA), and 11 non-governmental organizations. At COP2 the Parties constituted the Consultative Committee, finalized the format for the annual report form, extended the Secretariat, continued discussions on the agreement of the structure of the Scientific Committee (SC), passed the IAC's first resolution (a largely advisory resolution on conservation of the leatherback sea turtle) and concluded its first Memorandum of Understanding between IAC and the regional South American fisheries development organization OLDEPESCA.

The Third Conference of the Parties took place in September 2006 in Mazatlán, Mexico. Delegates from all signatory nations attended and, for the first time, Canada (non-signatory) sent an official observer. The primary issues discussed, and decisions made included: rules of procedure for the Scientific Committee, establishment and funding of a permanent Secretariat, and revisions to the annual national report format. The Parties adopted two resolutions; (1) convening a meeting to discuss the status of the hawksbill in the wider Caribbean, and (2) promotion of sea turtle bycatch avoidance and mitigation techniques adopted by FAO.

In October of 2007, IAC held its first Extraordinary meeting to discuss the establishment of a Permanent Secretariat and to negotiate a voluntary contribution scheme. The first two days of the meeting were restricted to the heads of the delegation and the afternoon of the third day was open to observers. The Parties agreed to a procedure for selecting the Permanent Secretary and a process for selecting the location of Permanent Secretariat. The Parties also agreed to a voluntary contribution scheme for 2008.

The fourth Conference of Parties was moved from the fall of 2008 to the spring of 2009. At the fourth Conference of Parties in April of 2009, the Parties agreed to host the Secretariat Pro Tempore in Arlington, VA at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as selecting a new Secretary Pro Tempore, agreeing to the 2009-2011 contribution scheme, a resolution on Climate Change and choosing the United States to be Chair of the Conference of Parties.

The 5th Conference of Parties met in Bonaire in June 2011. The major agenda items included renewing the Secretary Pro Tempore's contract, establishing a process to identify a permanent location for the Secretariat, adopting the procedures for establishing exceptions to the prohibitions outlined in the Convention, adopting a new annual report form, adopting a delegate travel support fund, updating the Terms of Reference for the Consultative and Scientific Committees, adopting an MOU between IAC and IATTC, and adopting the 2011-2012 work plan and budget.

In June 2013, the government of Ecuador hosted the 6th Conference of Parties at the Galapagos National Park. The COP addressed several administrative issues related to eventually transitioning the Secretary Pro Tempore to a Permanent Secretariat. In addition, the COP adopted several conservation measures including adopting the first requests from exceptions to the Conventions prohibition on the collection of sea turtle eggs. These exceptions are granted only for subsistence, traditional communities if there is a management plan in place with regular review. The Consultative Committee and the Secretariat Pro Tempore are working closely with Guatemala and Panama on the implementation of these exceptions. Further, the COP agreed that Parties will only use index nesting beach information from now on in their annual reports. This allows the Scientific Committee to analyze the data for trends. This is a significant step as several countries in the region do not currently have index nesting beaches identified.

And finally, the COP outlined a plan for addressing the critical status of endangered Pacific Leatherbacks and are implementing this plan intersessionally.

The 7th Conference of Parties was held in Mexico City, Mexico in June 2015. At the meeting resolutions were adopted to strengthen conservation efforts for Pacific leatherbacks as well as loggerheads in the Atlantic and the Pacific. Costa Rica's request for exception for their harvest of Olive Ridley eggs was also approved provided certain improvements were made to their monitoring program. Finally, Parties approved the 2015-2017 budget.

The 8th Conference of Parties was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina in June 2017. The Parties worked to strengthen the existing hawksbill resolution, renew the Secretariat Pro Tempore and agree to financing resolution. The Parties also discussed supporting the on-going United Nation negotiations on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction. However, they were not able to agree to the text during the COP. Several delegations supported the spirit of this proposal but given the sensitivities of this issue could not agree to text.

The 9th Conference of Parties was held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic in June 2019. The Parties passed a resolution to protect and conserve the Northwest Atlantic leatherback turtle population. The Parties committed to protecting key nesting beaches, reducing fishery bycatch, and improving in-water and nesting beach monitoring programs. The Parties also agreed on a procedure to facilitate sea turtle information requested from IAC Secretariat Pro Tempore. Finally, the Parties approved the 2019 - 2021 budget.

The 10th Conference of the Parties was held in two parts. The first part (COP 10.1) was held virtually. The Resolution on the Extension of the Secretariat, the recommendation was to remove the modifier "pro tempore" when referring to the IAC Secretariat was passed. The renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding with the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation to continue to be IAC fiscal agent, and manage the IAC special fund, document CIT-COP102021-Doc.2 was adopted.

The second part (COP 10.2) was held Panama in 2022. 11 countries (Argentina, Brazil, Caribbean Netherlands, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, the United States, and Uruguay). Canada, Trinidad and Tobago, and Colombia representatives of observer countries. The Resolution on the Exceptions for Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Panama under Article IV (3a and 3b) for Subsistence Harvesting of *Lepidochelys olivacea* Eggs in Costa Rica was adopted. The plenary adopted the Resolution for the Reduction of Adverse Impacts of Fisheries on Sea Turtles

Future Meetings

The next Conference of Parties will be held in 2024 in Ecuador. The major agenda topics will likely include additional work on leatherback conservation and addressing sea turtle bycatch in fisheries.

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GLOBAL

Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)

Basic Instrument

[Agreement](#) on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Members

Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, France, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom, and Uruguay

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Description

ACAP entered into force in 2004 and currently has 13 Parties. ACAP is one of several treaties under the Convention on Migratory Species, also known as the Bonn Convention. ACAP's objective is to achieve and maintain a favorable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels through improved conservation measures, research and information exchange, and increased public awareness of the threats facing these seabirds.

Annex 1 of the Agreement contains a list of species identified by ACAP Parties as in need of conservation action. This list is composed of: 22 albatrosses and 9 petrel species with known fisheries interactions. Four of these species are of particular interest to the United States, the 3 North Pacific albatrosses (added in 2009 during the 3rd Meeting of the Parties) and the pink-footed shearwater (a species that breeds in Chile but migrates to U.S. waters, added in 2015 during the 5th Meeting of the Parties). Annex 2 of ACAP contains an "Action Plan" which outlines the major conservation elements of the Agreement. The Action Plan emphasizes several major conservation strategies that Parties must undertake to conserve seabirds.

Organizational Structure

ACAP has an Advisory Committee which holds meetings and oversees the activities of three working groups (1) Population and Conservation Status Working Group (which was formed in August 2011 when the Advisory Committee merged the Breeding Sites Working Group and the Status and Trends Working Group), (2) the Seabird Bycatch Working Group, and (3) the Taxonomy Working Group. ACAP Parties meet every 3 years, with the Advisory Committee and its working groups meeting in the two intervening years.

U.S. Representation

Non-Party Range States, member economies of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum, regional economic integration organizations may participate in ACAP as Observers. The United States, via NOAA Fisheries, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has participated in ACAP meetings as an Observer due to its interest in seabird conservation and its status as a Range State under ACAP. This participation has granted the United States influence over some ACAP proceedings, although only full Parties have voting rights, the ability to Chair any of ACAP's meetings, and propose amendments to the Agreement. Experts from the United States also serve as invited experts in the Seabird Bycatch and Population and Conservation Status Working Groups.

Programs

ACAP's working groups continue to regularly make progress in reviewing the population status and trends of threatened seabird species, addressing taxonomic issues, compiling information on breeding sites and assessing threats to species from factors associated with these sites, development of best practice advice on bycatch mitigation measures, and engaging Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) to address seabird bycatch. In particular, the ACAP Secretariat, on behalf of its Parties, has participated as an observer at key RFMO meetings to offer expertise and assistance to help RFMOs address seabird bycatch. The Secretariat also works with non-governmental organizations, such as BirdLife International, to develop informational materials detailing seabird distribution and its overlap with specific fisheries for discussion at RFMO and other relevant meetings, seabird bycatch identification guide, bycatch mitigation measure fact sheets, seabird handling and release guidelines, and guidelines related to breeding birds and habitats.

Recent Activities

ACAP is the only multilateral agreement that coordinates on a global scale activity to mitigate known threats to albatross and petrel populations. ACAP held its first Meeting of the Parties in 2005. A major outcome of that meeting was the establishment of an Advisory Committee to guide the implementation of the Agreement. As the last Party to join was in 2008, ACAP is implementing a strategy for engagement with non-Party Range States, including countries with breeding habitats for Annex I species and/or distant water fishing fleets. ACAP is also active within RFMOs, providing technical assistance and expert advice regarding minimization of bycatch of albatrosses and petrels in high seas longline and trawl fisheries.

ACAP develops and updates advice for reducing the impact of fishing on seabirds, including technical specifications for certain bycatch mitigation measures specific to gear types, such as pelagic longline, demersal longline, and trawl gear. SBWG continues to adjust specifications for various mitigation measures based on research and experimental trials. It also notes research priorities for the development of mitigation measures for longline, trawl, and gillnet fishing gear. As seabirds can also be incidentally caught in artisanal and small-scale fisheries but applying a single set of measures would not be practical, ACAP provides a toolbox format of mitigation measures to test for effectiveness. ACAP has focused more in recent years on enhancing the implementation of best practice advice, primarily through its engagement in RFMOs and CCAMLR but also by providing input into fisheries certification schemes.

The Advisory Committee regularly updates a strategy for engagement with RFMOs and CCAMLR. The main elements are: (1) engage in RFMO reviews of seabird measures; (2) strengthen implementation of RFMO measures seabird conservation measures; and (3) strengthen RFMO bycatch data collection and reporting requirements and inclusion of bycatch mitigation measures in the RFMO compliance monitoring procedures. Supporting compliance with required seabird bycatch mitigation measures is another area that the ACAP intends to give greater attention. Furthermore, ACAP intends to develop messaging to reinvigorate information on the current crisis in albatross conservation, and why and how it should be solved. At the 2023 Advisory Committee meeting, Parties agreed to form an intersessional working group to further develop the communications strategy, including recommending and prioritizing ways of effectively communicating with various audience segments, including the production of targeted communications materials (such as advice products, presentations, other media) as well as taking account of success stories.

The Population and Conservation Status Working Group collates and maintains information on population size, trends, demography, at-sea distribution, threats and management of albatrosses, petrels, and shearwaters listed on Annex I of the Agreement. It continues to seek information to fill gaps in population sizes, trends, and demography and encourages countries to address threats in breeding sites and tracking studies of deep diving and nocturnally active species. . The latest guidelines endorsed by this working group were on assessing and managing the impacts of artificial light on seabirds.

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Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas

The problem of fishing vessels reflagging, sometimes repeatedly and rapidly, to avoid compliance with national or international fisheries conservation and management measures was first raised for urgent action at the International Conference on Responsible Fishing held in Cancun, Mexico, in May 1992. The Declaration of Cancun adopted by that Conference called upon States “to take effective action, consistent with international law, to deter reflagging of fishing vessels as a means of avoiding compliance with applicable conservation and management rules for fishing activities on the high seas.” Other injunctions for the eventual agreement came from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the FAO Technical Consultation on High Seas Fishing in September 1992.

The Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas (<http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/MEETING/003/X3130m/X3130E00.HTM>) was approved by the FAO Conference on 24 November 1993. In April 2003, upon the date of deposit of the 25th instrument of acceptance, the Agreement entered into force. As of October 2014, 40 instruments of acceptance have been deposited. The Agreement is an integral part of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

At the heart of the Agreement are the requirements that Parties:

- permit only their flag vessels that they have authorized to fish on the high seas to do so and prohibit all others from fishing on the high seas;
- control their vessels authorized to fish on the high seas so that all applicable rules governing such fishing are observed;
- collect data on their vessels authorized to fish on the high seas and their catches;
- submit to the FAO a list of vessels authorized to fish on the high seas;
- maintain such list as vessels are added or deleted. If an authorization to fish is withdrawn for misconduct, report the specifics of the misconduct and any punitive measures to the FAO.

The Agreement is implemented within the United States through the High Seas Fishing Compliance Act (16 U.S.C. 5501 *et seq.*) and regulations promulgated by NOAA Fisheries. NOAA Fisheries issues the authorizations for U.S.-flagged vessels to fish on the high seas and collects data on such vessels.

An updated rule, effective January 14, 2016, sets forth regulatory changes to improve the administration of the High Seas Fishing Compliance Act program and the monitoring of U.S. fishing vessels operating on the high seas. This final rule includes, for all U.S. fishing vessels operating on the high seas, adjustments to permitting and reporting procedures. It also includes requirements for the installation and operation of enhanced mobile transceiver units (EMTUs) for vessel monitoring, carrying observers on vessels, reporting of transshipments taking place on the high seas, and protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems. The rule makes the High Seas Fishing Compliance Act consistent with other established requirements.

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Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UNFSA)

UNFSA was adopted in 1995 and sets out principles for the conservation and management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. It, *inter alia*, prescribes that a precautionary approach and the best available scientific information be used in fishery management, that the impacts of fishing on associated and dependent species be managed, that pollution be minimized, and that overfishing and excess fishing capacity be prevented or eliminated. UNFSA has provisions that help to ensure that key fishery resources that occur both within a State's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and on the high seas are conserved and managed on a sustainable basis. UNFSA balances the sovereign rights of coastal States with respect to resources in their EEZs with the rights of all States to authorize their vessels to fish on the high seas. UNFSA also reinforces the conservation and management capacities of Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) so that non-member fishing does not undermine them, specifies means for cooperation between coastal States and distant water fishing States, articulates the duties of States with respect to vessels flying their flags, requires parties to settle disputes using procedures in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and reaffirms the sovereign rights of coastal States with respect to their EEZs.

UNFSA also elaborates on the fundamental principle, established in the Convention, which dictates that States should cooperate to ensure conservation and to promote the objective of optimum utilization of fisheries resources both within and beyond the EEZ by providing as the framework regional and sub-regional fisheries management organizations. It promotes effective management and conservation of high seas resources by, among other things:

- Prescribing specific roles and functions for RFMOs, and standards of operation;
- Establishing principles and minimum international standards for the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks, such as data collection and the application of the precautionary approach;
- Establishing that measures taken for the conservation and management of those stocks in areas under national jurisdiction and in the adjacent high seas be compatible;
- Establishing standards for flag State control and effective mechanisms for compliance and enforcement on high seas
- Recognizing the special requirements of developing States.

Article 36 of UNFSA required the Secretary-General of the UN to convene a conference to assess the effectiveness of the Agreement in securing the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks. The Review Conference was held in May 2006. The Review Conference was suspended, following agreement on the resumption of the Conference at a date no later than 2011. The Review Conference resumed in May 2010 to review and assess the adequacy of the provisions of UNFSA and, if necessary, to propose ways to strengthen the substance and methods of implementation of those provisions in order to better address any continuing problems in the conservation and management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. Detailed information can be found at http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/review_conf_fish_stocks.htm.

The Resumed Review Conference recommended specific actions and approaches that States and RFMOs could undertake to strengthen the implementation of UNFSA's provisions. These recommendations are centered around 4 core themes: (1) Conservation and Management of Stocks; (2) Mechanisms for international cooperation and non-members; (3) Monitoring, control and surveillance and compliance and enforcement; and (4) Developing States and non-parties. The Participants also agreed that further review is necessary and, to that end, suspended the Review Conference again and agreed to continue the informal consultations of States parties and resume the review of the Agreement again not earlier than 2015. The final report of the Resumed Review Conference can be found at: http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/review_conf_fish_stocks.htm

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/75, the Review Conference was resumed May 23-27, 2016. The meeting Report can be found at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N16/244/06/PDF/N1624406.pdf?OpenElement>

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 77/118, the Review Conference was resumed May 22-26, 2023. The advance and unedited meeting Report can be found at:

https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/RRC23/2023RRC_AdvanceUnedited.pdf

The Review Conference was suspended, following agreement on the resumption of the Conference at a date no earlier than 2028.

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Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Basic Instrument

The [Convention](#) was opened for signature at the United Nations Convention on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, June 1992; signed by President Clinton on June 4, 1993, and transmitted to the Senate for advice and consent, along with an interpretive statement to clarify how the United States understands certain provisions that have caused concern. The treaty entered into force on December 29, 1993.

Implementing Legislation

The CBD is awaiting Senate ratification. No implementing legislation to carry out the terms of the treaty was sent to the Congress because current law was considered sufficient to meet the U.S. obligations.

Member Nations

196 nations have ratified or acceded to the CBD. The United States has signed but not yet ratified the Convention. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety has been ratified or acceded to by 172 nations. The Cartagena Protocol entered into force on September 11, 2003. The Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing has been ratified or acceded to by 124 nations. The Nagoya Protocol entered into force on October 12, 2014. As a non-Party to the Convention, the United States cannot become a Party to the Protocols.

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U.S. Representation

The Department of State is the lead U.S. agency to the CBD negotiations. The Department of Commerce (including NOAA), Department of the Interior, Department of Agriculture, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Agency for International Development, and a number of other Agencies participate actively in the interagency process and on delegations to CBD negotiations.

The NOAA Office of International Affairs is the lead for NOAA. NOAA Fisheries Service works in close consultation with NOAA International in the development of position papers and the review of information documents.

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

The objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) are:

- (1) the conservation of biological diversity,
- (2) the sustainable use of its components, and
- (3) the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

B. Organizational Structure:

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is governed by a Conference of the Parties (COP) made up of all the Parties to the Convention. At the COP, countries report on steps taken, and consider further measures for implementing the provisions of the Convention. In addition to the COP, a Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical,

and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) has been established to provide advice to the COP. The SBSTTA is also composed of representatives of governments that are Parties and has its own Bureau. SBSTTA generally meets annually, and can request assistance for its work intersessionally of *ad hoc* technical expert groups or liaison groups on specific issues. A Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI) has also been created. The SBI's main purposes is to review progress in implementation, identify strategic actions to enhance implementation, strengthen means of implementation, and oversee operations of the convention and the protocols. The COP Bureau serves as the SBI's Bureau. A Secretariat, located in Montreal, Canada, provides administrative support to the Convention under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Program. The Secretariat also manages an electronic clearing-house mechanism to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation (<https://www.cbd.int/>).

The Conference of the Parties to the CBD adopted a supplementary agreement to the Convention known as the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety on January 29, 2000, which later came into force on September 11, 2003. The Cartagena Protocol seeks to contribute to the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms (LMOs) - such as genetically engineered plants, animals, and microbes - that cross international borders. Although the United States is not a Party to the CBD and therefore, cannot become a Party to the Biosafety Protocol, the U.S. participated in the negotiation of the text and the subsequent preparations for entry into force under the Intergovernmental Committee on the Cartagena Protocol. The Cartagena Protocol provides countries the opportunity to obtain information before new biotech organisms are imported. It acknowledges each country's right to regulate bio-engineered organisms, subject to existing international obligations. It also creates a framework to help improve the capacity of developing countries to protect biodiversity.

The Cartagena Protocol establishes an Internet-based "Biosafety Clearing-House" to help countries exchange scientific, technical, environmental and legal information about living modified organisms. It creates an advance informed agreement (AIA) procedure that in effect requires exporters to seek consent from importers before the first shipment of LMOs meant to be introduced into the environment (such as fish for release). It requires bulk shipments of LMO commodities intended for direct use as food, feed or for processing, to be accompanied by documentation stating that such shipments "may contain" living modified organisms and are "not intended for intentional introduction into the environment." The Cartagena Protocol establishes a process for considering more detailed identification of LMO commodities in international trade.

The Conference of the Parties also adopted a supplementary agreement to the Convention known as the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization (ABS) to the Convention on Biological Diversity on October 29, 2010, which later came into force on October 12, 2014. The Nagoya Protocol seeks to maintain fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources, thereby contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The Nagoya Protocol creates legal transparency for providers and users of genetic resources by establishing more predictable conditions for access to genetic resources, and helping to ensure benefit-sharing when genetic resources leave the country providing the genetic resources. The benefit-sharing of the Nagoya Protocol creates incentives to conserve and sustainably use genetic resources, and therefore enhances the contribution of biodiversity to development and human well-being.

General Provisions of the Treaty: The Convention on Biological Diversity affirms that conservation of biodiversity is a common concern of humankind and reaffirms that nations have sovereign rights over their own biological resources. Implementation depends principally on action by Parties at the national level. In this respect, the Convention provides general guidance on best practices, but does not currently include any sanctions for countries that do not adhere to these practices. The Convention covers both terrestrial and marine biota, and Parties are explicitly required to implement the CBD consistent with the rights and obligations of States under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The major commitments made by Parties to the Convention encompass nearly all aspects of NOAA Fisheries work and responsibilities. These commitments include:

- To develop national strategies, plans, etc., for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; and to integrate, as far as possible and appropriate, the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans (Art. 6);

- To identify and monitor the components of biodiversity and activities which have or might have significant adverse impacts (Art. 7);
- To establish protected areas or areas where special measures are needed and to regulate or manage biological resources important to biodiversity; to promote protection of ecosystems and natural habitats; and to promote environmentally sound and sustainable development in areas adjacent to protected areas; to prevent introduction of species from outside a country that could threaten native ecosystems or species; to develop or maintain necessary legislation and other regulatory provisions for protection of threatened species and populations; and to establish means to regulate, manage or control risks associated with use and release of living modified organisms from biotechnology with likely adverse environmental affects (Art. 8);
- To adopt measures for the *ex-situ* conservation of components of biological diversity (Art. 9);
- To integrate consideration of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity resources into national decision-making; adopt measures relating to the use of biological resources to avoid or minimize adverse impacts on biological diversity; to preserve and maintain knowledge and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles that are compatible with conservation or sustainable use requirements; support remedial action in degraded areas; and encourage cooperation between the government and private sector to develop methods for sustainable use (Art. 10);
- To adopt economically and socially sound measures that act as incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of components of biological diversity (Art. 11);
- To establish programs for scientific and technical education and training in identification, conservation, sustainable use of biodiversity and promote research that contributes to biodiversity (Art. 12);
- To promote programs for public education and awareness (Art. 13);
- To require environmental impact assessments that address impacts on biodiversity and to minimize such impacts; (Art. 14);
- To create conditions to facilitate access to genetic resources on mutually agreed terms, recognizing sovereign rights of States over their natural resources; and to share in a fair and equitable way the results of research, development, and the commercial utilization of genetic resources with contracting Parties providing such resources (Art. 15);
- To encourage access to, and transfer of, technology relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity or that makes use of genetic resources and does not cause significant damage to the environment (Art. 16);
- To facilitate the exchange of information and scientific and technical cooperation in the field of the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity (Art. 17&18);
- To encourage biotechnology research, especially in developing countries; ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from biotechnology; and address safety concerns related to the transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms (Art. 19).

In addition to these general provisions, developed country Parties are required to provide “new and additional financial resources” to assist developing country parties meet the incremental costs of implementing measures that fulfill the obligations of the CBD. These resources are provided through the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) (Art. 20 & 21).

Marine and Coastal Biodiversity: The Second Conference of the Parties (COP) in November 1995 adopted the Ministerial Statement on the Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which referred to the new global consensus on the importance of marine and coastal biological diversity as the “*Jakarta Mandate on Marine*

and Coastal Biodiversity.” The Ministerial Statement (re)affirmed the critical need for the Parties to address the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biological diversity and urged Parties to initiate immediate action to implement COP decisions on the issue.

The program of work on marine and coastal biological diversity was approved by the COP in a decision in 1998, and further elaborated in decisions in subsequent COPs. The work program identifies important operation objectives and priority activities within the framework of five key program elements reflecting global priorities:

1. Promoting integrated marine and coastal area management as the framework for addressing human impacts on biological diversity;
2. Establishing and maintaining marine and coastal protected areas;
3. Using fisheries and other marine and coastal living resources sustainably (this was the most controversial recommendation, including issues of overcapacity, subsidies and bycatch);
4. Ensuring that mariculture practices are environmentally sustainable;
5. Preventing the introduction of, and controlling or eradicating, alien species that threaten ecosystems, habitats or species.

The CBD program of work on Marine and Coastal biodiversity aims to assist the implementation of the Jakarta Mandate at the national, regional and global level. It identifies key operational objectives and priority activities within the five key program elements, namely: (1) implementation of integrated marine and coastal area management, (2) marine and coastal living resources, (3) marine and coastal protected areas, (4) mariculture and alien species and (5) genotypes. It also provides a general element to encompass the coordination role of the Secretariat, the collaborative linkages required and the effective use of experts, as well as enabling activities to assist Parties in overcoming obstacles to implementation.

Delegates to the Convention on Biological Diversity 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) in December 2022 adopted the Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework committing to conserving or protecting at least 30 percent of global lands and waters by 2030.

The 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity will tentatively be held in Türkiye, October 21 - November 1, 2024.

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Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

Basic Instrument

The [Convention](#) on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (also known as CMS or the Bonn Convention)

Member Nations

As of March 2022, CMS has 133 Parties. The United States is not a party.

Commission Headquarters

Bonn, Germany

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (also known as CMS or the Bonn Convention) aims to conserve terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory species throughout their range. It is an intergovernmental treaty, concluded under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme, concerned with the conservation of wildlife and habitats on a global scale. Since the Convention's entry into force, its membership has grown steadily to include 133 Parties from Africa, Central and South America, Asia, Europe and Oceania.

Migratory species threatened with extinction are listed on Appendix I of the Convention. CMS Parties strive towards strictly protecting these animals, conserving or restoring the places where they live, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them. Besides establishing obligations for each State joining the Convention, CMS promotes concerted action among the Range States of many of these species.

Migratory species that need or would significantly benefit from international co-operation are listed in Appendix II of the Convention. For this reason, the Convention encourages the Range States to conclude global or regional Agreements for those species.

In this respect, CMS acts as a framework Convention. The Agreements may range from legally binding treaties (called Agreements) to less formal instruments, such as Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), and can be adapted to the requirements of particular species or region. The development of models tailored according to the conservation needs throughout the migratory range is a unique capacity to CMS.

Species-specific Agreements and MOUs, concluded under CMS, are open to all range States of a species, regardless of whether they are Party to the Convention. Several countries although not Party to CMS are Party to one or more of the Agreements and/or have signed one or more of the MOUs.

The United States is not a Party to CMS, however, it is currently signatory to three CMS MOUs: the MOU on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia (IOSEA); the MOU on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks; and the MOU for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region. Further, the United States is considering ratifying the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) and actively participates as an observer in ACAP meetings.

B. Organizational Structure:

The Convention has established several bodies to support its implementation.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the CMS decision-making body. It meets every three years. Its functions are described in Article VII of the Convention. For example, it reviews the Convention's implementation, adopts budgets, resolutions and recommendations, amends Appendix I and II, and decides on priorities for future CMS activities.

The Standing Committee (StC) provides policy and administrative guidance between regular meetings of the COP, particularly on general policy as well as on operational and financial issues. The StC consists of representatives of the Parties, in particular from each CMS region, the Depositary and a delegate representing the country that plans to host the next meeting of the COP. The StC meets at least annually.

The Scientific Council (ScC) advises the COP and the Secretariat on scientific matters and priorities for research and conservation. Its functions are described in Article VIII of the Convention. The ScC consists of experts appointed by CMS Parties. In addition, the Convention provides for the appointment of a limited number of qualified individuals - appointed councilors- who are recognized experts in their field or region. The ScC currently has 8 appointed councilors whose expertise covers aquatic mammals, African fauna, Asian fauna, birds, bycatch, fish, marine turtles and neotropical fauna. Scientific Councilors participate in ScC meetings in their capacity as experts, not as governmental representatives. The ScC meets once immediately before the COP and once intersessionally.

All three bodies have the ability to establish working groups on particular species or other topics.

Recent Activities

The thirteenth Meeting of the COP was held October 15-22, 2020, in Gandhinagar, India. The documents from the meeting can be found at: <https://www.cms.int/en/meeting/thirteenth-meeting-conference-parties-cms>.

Future Meetings

The fourteenth Meeting of the COP (COP14) took place on October 23-28, 2023, in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

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Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

Basis Instrument

[Convention](#) on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (27 UST 1087, TIAS 8249)

Implementing Legislation

[Endangered Species Act](#) (16 USC 1531-43)

Member Nations

There are 184 Parties: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Republic of Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, People's Republic of China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, European Union, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Republic of Kuwait, Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, North Macedonia, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Eswatini, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, United Republic of Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

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U.S. Representation

The Endangered Species Act designates the Secretary of the Interior as the CITES Management Authority and Scientific Authority and directs that the respective functions of each Authority be carried out by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). FWS is also responsible for inspections of shipments of wildlife and wildlife products, which must be imported/(re-)exported through designated ports of entry. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is responsible for inspecting shipments of CITES-listed plants imported/(re-)exported into and out of the United States. Many CITES-listed marine species are managed by NMFS or could be managed in the future, including all great whales, all dolphins, all marine turtles, all hard coral species, all seahorse species, queen conch, six seal species,

coelacanths, some sturgeon species, basking sharks, great white sharks, all species of hammerhead sharks, all requiem sharks (Carcharhinidae species) including oceanic whitetip sharks and silky sharks, shortfin and longfin mako sharks, porbeagle sharks, , all thresher sharks, whale sharks, devil rays, manta rays, all sawfish, all giant guitarfish, all guitarfish, all wedgefish, and six species of sea cucumbers (teatfish and Thelenota species).

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is a multinational environmental agreement that entered into force in 1975 and aims to ensure that international trade in listed wildlife and plant species does not threaten their survival. Under CITES, countries (referred as Parties) work together to regulate international trade in certain animal and plant species to ensure that the trade is legal, traceable, and not detrimental to the survival of wild populations (i.e., is biologically sustainable).

B. Organizational Structure:

The CITES framework includes three Committees that address the work of the Convention during the intersessional period between meetings of the Conference of the Parties. The Standing Committee considers administrative matters of the Convention and is responsible for addressing issues related to implementation and enforcement of the Convention requirements. It makes recommendations to the Conference of the Parties. The Animals Committee and Plants Committee address scientific and technical matters and make recommendations to the Standing Committee or the Conference of the Parties.

The three CITES Committees meet approximately once a year on their own schedules. Meetings of the Conference of the Parties (CoPs) are convened approximately every three years.

C. Programs:

Species for which trade is regulated are included in one of three Appendices to CITES. Species included in Appendix I are threatened with extinction and are or may be affected by international trade, and trade in Appendix-I species is allowed only in exceptional circumstances; commercial trade is generally prohibited. Species listed in Appendix II are not necessarily now threatened with extinction but they may become so if international trade is not regulated. Commercial and non-commercial international trade is permitted for Appendix-II species only if the exporting country is able to make certain determinations, including that the specimen was acquired in accordance with its domestic conservation laws and that the export will not be detrimental to the survival of the species. Species are listed in Appendix I or II based on a two-thirds majority vote of the Parties. Amendments to Appendices I and II are adopted at CoPs, and where decisions cannot be made by consensus are adopted by a two-thirds majority of Parties present and voting. Appendix III includes wildlife and plant species identified by any particular CITES Party as being in need of international trade controls and that is subject to domestic regulation to prevent or restrict its exploitation. A species is unilaterally included in Appendix III by a country in the native range of the species, but Parties are urged to consult with other range countries before including a species in Appendix III.

The Animals and Plants Committees of CITES may undertake reviews of Appendix II-listed species for which there are significant volumes of international trade through a process called the Review of Significant Trade. The purpose of the Review is to determine if exporting Parties are making scientifically-based non-detriment findings prior to the issuance of export permits. Based on these reviews, recommendations for remedial measures are made to help ensure that international trade in these species is biologically sustainable.

Of special interest to NMFS in the past have been proposals to list commercially exploited aquatic species in the CITES Appendices, the review of significant trade process for marine species (such as queen conch, sharks, and rays), discussion of the implementation of CITES Appendix II for commercially exploited aquatic species, cooperative efforts with the International Whaling Commission to control illegal trade in whales, the listing criteria for commercially exploited aquatic species, and resolution of the CITES provisions for regulation of trade in species taken on the high seas, referred to under the Convention as “introduction from the sea.”

Nineteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

The Nineteenth Meeting of the CoP (CoP19), took place November 14 – 25, 2022 in Panama City, Panama. The Standing Committee meets immediately prior to the start of a CoP and immediately following its conclusion; therefore, the 75th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC75) was held on November 13, 2022, and the 76th meeting (SC76) took place on November 25, 2022.

Four proposals to include marine species in Appendix II were adopted at CoP19. CITES Parties agreed to include non-listed requiem sharks (Carcharhinidae species) with a 12-month implementation delay, non-listed hammerhead sharks (Sphyrnidae species), and guitarfish (Rhinobatidae species) in CITES Appendix II. A proposal co-sponsored by the United States to include three Indo-Pacific species of sea cucumbers (Thelenota species) in CITES Appendix II was also successful upon agreement to an 18-month implementation delay. A proposal to include freshwater stingrays (family Potamotrygonidae) and a U.S. proposal to transfer short-tailed albatross (*Phoebastria albatrus*) from Appendix I to Appendix II were also adopted.

Other priority marine species topics and decisions adopted at CoP19 are discussed below.

Totoaba/Vaquita

There was significant support and adoption at the 75th Standing Committee for strong recommendations to address the ongoing illegal harvest and trafficking in totoaba. These decisions require Mexico to develop a Compliance Action Plan focusing on the implementation of the provisions of any decisions directed to Mexico and agreed at the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP19). This plan had to be developed by February 28, 2023. If a finalized compliance action plan considered adequate by the Secretariat is not submitted by this deadline, the Secretariat would have to publish a Notification to CITES Parties recommending a suspension of trade with Mexico in CITES listed species, which would remain in effect until a compliance action plan assessed as adequate by the Secretariat is received. The Standing Committee agreed to review Mexico's progress on the implementation of its compliance action plan at the next full meeting of the Standing Committee (in November 2023) and, in the absence of sufficient progress, to consider compliance measures.

At CoP19, the Committee considered the proposed changes offered by the CITES Secretariat and the United States to update and strengthen the decisions on totoaba that were adopted at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Although there was strong support for the U.S. proposed changes, which were considered stronger than the Secretariat's proposal, Mexico expressed concerns with support from China and Japan. At the direction of the Chair, the United States worked with Mexico and was able to reach agreement on a set of strong renewed decisions on totoaba. Mexico is called upon to, among other actions, strengthen surveillance and enforcement and ensure timely reporting to the CITES Secretariat. CITES Parties are encouraged to support efforts related to the recovery and monitoring of wild populations of totoaba and vaquita and elimination of the supply and demand for illegally sourced specimens of totoaba to address and prevent their illegal trade.

Marine Turtles

A U.S. proposal – co-sponsored by Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Peru – to create a resolution aimed at addressing the illegal trade in marine turtles was adopted. The resolution calls on Parties to scale up efforts to address illegal harvest and markets associated with illegal trade of marine turtles; take action to decrease consumer demand, improve monitoring, detection and enforcement activities; and address marine turtle bycatch in fisheries by effectively addressing IUU fishing that is a threat to marine turtles. A study commissioned by the CITES Secretariat – with support of NOAA Fisheries – on the legal and illegal international trade in marine turtles revealed that, despite regulatory frameworks that prohibit or restrict the exploitation of marine turtles, illegal take and trade in these species continues to occur.

Seahorses

CoP19 adopted a set of decisions proposed by the United States – with co-sponsorship of Maldives, Monaco, Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Togo, and the United Kingdom – calling for the following key actions: 1) Parties

with ongoing illegal and/or unsustainable trade in dried seahorses should develop national or regional plans of action to ensure future trade complies with CITES provisions; and 2) the Standing Committee should address the large volumes of illegal trade in dried seahorses. The adopted decisions are crucial next steps in addressing the challenges that have hindered effective implementation of the regulation of international trade in seahorses and will maintain momentum through the next intersessional period on seahorse conservation efforts.

Queen Conch

The Conference of the Parties updated and adopted several draft decisions related to queen conch. These decisions will help strengthen queen conch management, data collection, traceability, sustainability, regional collaboration and compliance with CITES requirements. The decisions also direct the CITES Secretariat to provide assistance to range States of queen conch on relevant enforcement issues, report on new developments, and provide updates on relevant activities of the Queen Conch Working Group established under WECAFC to the Animals Committee and the Standing Committee, as appropriate.

Marine Ornamental Fish

Decisions were renewed to allow the completion of work on marine ornamental fish that could not be completed prior to CoP19 due to COVID-19, travel restrictions, and insufficient funding. Specifically, the decisions call on the CITES Secretariat to convene a technical workshop to consider the conservation priorities and management needs related to the trade in non-CITES listed marine ornamental fishes worldwide, with a particular focus on data from importing and exporting countries. The Animals Committee will consider the results of the workshop and make recommendations to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Indonesia has offered to host this workshop in late fall 2023.

Introduction from the Sea

Due to the increasing number of marine species listed in the CITES Appendices, there has been increased attention on the implementation of CITES requirements for the landing and export of CITES-listed species taken on the high seas (referred to as “introduction from the sea”), which have posed several challenges for CITES Parties. To address these issues, the Conference of the Parties adopted decisions that call on the Secretariat to continue to monitor the implementation of the relevant CITES resolution on introduction from the sea and report as appropriate to the Standing Committee. They are also called to work with the States that are most active in the trade in CITES species from the sea to encourage their compliance. Finally, the Standing Committee will review a set of frequently asked questions and responses on introduction from the sea and provide recommended changes to the resolution on this matter.

NDF Workshop for Specimens Taken in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction

A document offered by the United Kingdom was adopted at CoP19 that proposed a technical workshop for CITES Parties. The aim of the workshop is to develop guidance for Parties to make sustainability findings, referred as non-detriment findings (NDFs), required for landing CITES-listed marine species taken on the high seas. This workshop should build upon the outcomes of a global NDF workshop, tentatively scheduled to take place in December 2023.

Updates

As required by the CITES Standing Committee, Mexico submitted a draft Compliance Action Plan for totoaba prior to its deadline. However, the plan was initially deemed inadequate by the CITES Secretariat, which resulted in a recommendation by the Secretariat that Parties suspend all commercial trade in specimens of CITES-listed species with Mexico. The United States immediately implemented the recommended trade suspension which remained in effect until the CITES Secretariat announced the withdrawal of the recommendation on April 13, 2023, after Mexico re-submitted a plan that the CITES Secretariat deemed to be adequate.

Other Meetings and Upcoming Activities

The CITES Animals Committee held its 32nd meeting on June 19 – 23, 2023. Among the marine species topics on its agenda, the meeting was dominated by discussions related to sharks and rays with a pivotal decision in the history of CITES to include several species in the Review of Significant Trade process.

The CITES Standing Committee will meet November 6 – 10, 2023.

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International Whaling Commission (IWC)

Basic Instrument

International [Convention](#) for the Regulation of Whaling, 1946, (TIAS 1849); Protocol amending 1956 (TIAS 4228).

Implementing Legislation

Whaling Convention [Act](#) of 1949 (64 Stat. 421, 16 U.S.C. 916-9161).

Member Nations

There are currently 88 member nations: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chile, People's Republic of China, Colombia, Republic of the Congo, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Eritrea, Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, The Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Republic of Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Kiribati, Republic of Korea, Laos, Liberia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mali, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Oman, Republic of Palau, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Togo, Tuvalu, United Kingdom, United States, and Uruguay.

Commission Headquarters

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Web address: <http://www.iwc.int>

Executive Secretary: Martha Rojas Urrega
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Budget

The IWC Financial Year runs from 1 January to 31 December. The Commission passes a two-year budget at its biennial meetings. In 2022, the Commission approved a balanced budget of GBP3,704,343 for the 2023-24 biennial period. The United States' dues in 2022 were GBP 98,191. Additionally, the Commission accepted a compromise solution that increased dues by 5% in 2023 and 1% in 2024 for Capacity to Pay Groups 3 and 4, which includes the United States. The United States regularly contributes voluntary funds (from both NMFS and DOS) to support various initiatives across the Commission.

U.S. Representation

A. Appointment Process:

The Commissioner is appointed by the President, on the concurrent recommendations of the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Commerce, and serves at his pleasure. The President may also appoint a Deputy U.S. Commissioner.

B. U.S. Commissioners:

U.S. Acting Commissioner (and Deputy U.S. Commissioner):
Mr. Ryan Wulff
Assistant Regional Administrator
West Coast Regional Office
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service

650 Capitol Mall, Suite 5-100
Sacramento, CA 95814

C. Advisory Structure:

U.S. representation in IWC has no formal (legislated) advisory structure. The IWC Commissioner does consult, however, with representatives of the Department of State, the Marine Mammal Commission, Department of the Interior, other Federal agencies, conservation organizations, Native organizations, and other interested parties.

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

The 1946 Convention has as its objective the proper conservation of world whale stocks, thus making possible the orderly development of the whaling industry. The Convention established IWC to provide for a continuing review of the condition of whale stocks and for such additions to or modifications of the agreed conservation measures as might appear desirable.

B. Organizational Structure:

IWC consists of the Commission, Bureau, Secretariat, and subject area committees, including a Scientific Committee. The Commission, currently chaired by Mr. Amadou Téliel Diallo (Republic of Guinea) and vice-chaired by Dr. Nick Gales (Australia), is composed of one member from each Contracting Government, who may be accompanied by one or more experts and advisors. The Bureau is a group of seven IWC Commissioners elected to oversee the work of IWC during the intersessional period. The Bureau members for 2022-24 are Republic of Guinea (Chair), Australia (Vice-chair), USA (Chair of F&A), and Argentina, Ghana, St Lucia, and Belgium.

At the Commission, each member government has one vote, including the members of the European Union, which vote along a common position, but cast individual votes. Decisions of the Commission are by simple majority of those members voting, except that a three-fourths majority of those members is required for actions to amend the provisions of the Schedule (which contains the binding decisions of the Commission). The Commission determines its own rules of procedure and appoints its own Secretary and staff. The Committees may be set up by the Commission from its own members and experts or advisors to perform such functions as it may authorize.

IWC has the following subsidiary bodies:

- IWC Commission
- Bureau
- Finance and Administration Committee
 - Budgetary Sub-committee
 - Working Group on operational effectiveness and cost savings measures
 - Voluntary Conservation Fund Steering Group
- Conservation Committee
 - Ship Strikes Working Group
 - Standing Working Group on whale watching
 - Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans
 - Standing Working Group on Bycatch
 - Conservation Committee Planning Group
- Scientific Committee
 - Sub-committee on Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling (ASW)
 - Sub-committee on the other Northern Hemisphere Whale Stocks (NH)
 - Sub-committee on In-Depth Assessments (IA)
 - Sub-committee on other Southern Hemisphere Whale Stocks (SH)
 - Standing Working Group on Abundance Estimates, Stock Status and International Cruises (ASI)
 - Working Group on Stock Definition and DNA testing (SD&DNA)
 - Sub-committee on Non-Deliberate Human-Induced Mortality of Cetaceans (HIM)
 - Standing Working Group on Environmental Concerns (E)

- Standing Working Group on Ecosystem Modelling (EM)
- Sub-committee on Small Cetaceans (SM)
- Sub-committee on Whale Watching (WW)
- Sub-committee on Implementation Reviews and Simulation Trials (IST)
- Sub-committee on Conservation Management Plans (CMP)
- *Ad hoc* Working Group on Sanctuaries (SAN)
- *Ad hoc* Working Group on photo-ID (PH)
- *Ad hoc* Working Group on databases and related issues (GDR)
- Joint Working Group between the Conservation and Scientific Committees
- Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling Sub-committee
- Credentials Committee
- Infractions Sub-committee
- Working Group on Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues
 - Intersessional Working Group on Welfare
- Global Whale Entanglement Response Network

C. Programs:

IWC meets biennially to review the condition of whale stocks and to modify conservation measures, as appropriate. The Commission has used various means of regulating commercial whaling including the fixing of open and closed seasons, open and closed areas, protected species, size limits for each species, and limits on the catch of whales in any one season. The IWC recognizes three types of whaling: commercial whaling, special permit (scientific research) whaling, and aboriginal subsistence whaling.

Past actions by the IWC include establishment of a whale sanctuary in the Indian Ocean area and in the Southern Ocean (in most of the waters south of 40°S. latitude), prohibition on the use of cold grenade (non-exploding) harpoons to kill whales for commercial purposes, a moratorium on all commercial whaling from the beginning of the 1985-86 pelagic and 1986 coastal seasons, and separate and distinct management for aboriginal subsistence whaling. Criteria for evaluating research involving the killing of whales under special permits were established because of concerns that some countries would use special permits for scientific research as a means of circumventing the zero catch limits for commercial whaling. The 1946 Convention allows countries to issue special permits authorizing the taking of whales for scientific research.

Since the withdrawal of Japan from the Commission in 2019, IWC only actively manages one type of whaling – aboriginal subsistence whaling (ASW). In 2018, the Commission adopted a joint-ASW Schedule amendment proposal from the four ASW nations (United States, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Russian Federation, and Denmark (on behalf of Greenland)), to renew the ASW strike and catch limit quotas every 6 years, provided there is no change in scientific advice and Commission determines that the relevant ASW country has complied with the approved IWC timeline for submitting annual reports on its ASW hunts and that the information provided represents a status quo continuation of the hunt.

The Chair's summary of each Commission meeting can be found on the IWC Secretariat's website (www.iwc.int).

After several postponements due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission held a Special Virtual Meeting in 2021, and a full, formal meeting of the Commission (IWC68) in September 2022. The next meeting of the Commission will take place in 2024 in Peru.

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PART II:
BILATERAL CONSULTATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

ASIA

Fisheries Bilateral between the United States & China

Basic Instrument

This meeting was the outcome of an agreement in the 2014 and 2015 US-China Strategic & Economic Dialogue.

Members

The United States and China

Meetings

Parties will meet annually or as otherwise agreed, with the venue alternating between the United States and China.

U.S. Representation

U.S. participants include representatives from the National Marine Fisheries Service (U.S. Department of Commerce), the U.S. Coast Guard (Department of Homeland Security), and the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (U.S. Department of State).

Description

The United States and China meet to discuss bilateral, multilateral, and global fisheries conservation and management issues of interest to both countries.

Recent Activities

The United States and China established and held the first meeting of their Bilateral Fisheries Dialogue in April 2016 in Ningbo, China, and aim to meet annually. The meeting schedule was interrupted in 2020, with the last meeting taking place virtually in 2021. Through this fora, the United State and China have reaffirmed their commitment to jointly combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing; strengthen cooperation under bilateral frameworks and in relevant international organizations; and promote the development of effective measures for combating IUU fishing by regional fisheries management organizations. Through this dialogue, the United States and China are working to enhance the exchange of management experience in marine fisheries resource conservation, marine fishing, aquaculture and recreational fisheries as well as share information related to fisheries law enforcement. The particular goal of these discussions is to facilitate a more fluid exchange between all interested Chinese and U.S. agencies on fisheries-related issues.

Future Meetings

The eighth meeting will be hosted by China at a date and location to be determined.

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Memorandum of Understanding between the American Institute in Taiwan and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States Concerning Cooperation in Fisheries and Aquaculture

Basic Instrument

The basic instrument establishing U.S.-Taiwan cooperation in fisheries and aquaculture is the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Between the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) in the United States Concerning Cooperation in Fisheries and Aquaculture. The MOU was originally signed by AIT and TECRO on July 30, 2002. It was renewed once again for 2019-2024 in addition to its supporting documents.

Members

The United States and Taiwan working through the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) and the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Representatives Office (TECRO)

Meetings

The Parties (AIT and TECRO) agreed that their designated representatives will consult periodically, either in the United States or Taiwan.

U.S. Representation

The designated representatives for AIT are the National Marine Fisheries Service (U.S. Department of Commerce), the U.S. Coast Guard (Department of Homeland Security), and the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (U.S. Department of State).

Description

The United States began negotiating the MOU between AIT and TECRO in July 2000 to address problems associated with (1) Taiwan's inability, due to its political status as a non-state, to become party to a number of international fisheries treaties and regional organizations, and (2) Taiwan fishermen's involvement in large-scale high seas driftnet fishing activities in the North Pacific Ocean.

Pursuant to the MOU, Taiwan committed to abide by the rules for sustainable fisheries set forth by the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 Relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and the 1993 FAO Agreement on Promoting Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas. Taiwan also agreed to cooperate with the United States in the implementation of the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries; and the International Plans of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity, for the Conservation and Management of Sharks, for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries, and for Preventing, Deterring and Eliminating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing as adopted by the FAO. Finally, Taiwan committed to continue to cooperate with the United States in the implementation of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 46/215, which calls for a global ban on the use of large-scale high seas driftnets. Taiwan will take action against individuals, corporations, and vessels that may engage in large-scale high seas driftnet fishing operations in the North Pacific Ocean. In exchange for the above commitments from Taiwan, the United States agreed to assist Taiwan's authorities to participate equitably in global, regional, and subregional fisheries organizations.

The two Parties, through their designated representatives, also agreed to (1) exchange information on fisheries and aquaculture research and relevant scientific reports and publications; (2) conduct joint studies and training programs on fisheries and aquaculture; (3) promote exchange visits of fisheries and aquaculture personnel; and (4) strengthen existing cooperation between fisheries enforcement representatives.

Recent Activities

The annual fisheries consultations between the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) and the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Representatives Office (TECRO) took place in Taipei, Taiwan on July 13, 2023. The U.S. delegation was led by the Department of State's DAS Maxine Burkett, and included NOAA's DAS for International Fisheries Kelly Kryw and Rear Admiral Jo-Ann Burdian from the USCG. The meeting was preceded by the first ever priority flag-State consultation under the Maritime SAFE Act. The meeting covered a range of key fisheries topics including combatting IUU fishing, climate change, high seas boarding and inspection (HSBI), limiting bycatch of non-target species, and cooperation in RFMOs.

Future Meetings: The next anticipated meeting will be held in 2024, but location and dates have yet to be discussed as of this writing.

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National Marine Fisheries Service/Japan Fisheries Research and Education Agency, Scientific Cooperation

Basic Instrument

The basic instrument establishing scientific cooperation between the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the Japan Fisheries Research and Education Agency is the *Memorandum of Understanding [MOU] on Cooperation on Research Between the National Marine Fisheries Service of the United States of America and the Japan Fisheries Research and Education Agency*. The MOU became effective on April 18, 2017 and remains in effect ten years from the date of signature.

Members

The United States and Japan

Meetings

The Parties agreed that their designated representatives will meet as needed.

U.S. Representation

Dr. Cisco Werner
Director of Scientific Programs and
Chief Science Advisor
National Marine Fisheries Service

Description

The MOU serves to encourage and support cooperation on scientific matters related to fisheries, other living marine resources, their ecosystems, climate effects, aquaculture, and methods for communication of scientific information. The Appendix to the MOU describes five areas of support: (1) joint sponsorship of workshops or symposia on the assessment and management of living marine resources of the northern hemisphere and aquaculture; (2) exchange of scientific expertise and information; (3) extended visits of scientists; and (4) cooperative research on common scientific issues and methodological problems (5) coordination and planning.

Recent Activities

Representatives from NMFS, NOAA, and FRA met in Yokohama, Japan on September 26, 2019 to continue dialogue on collaborative research activities. The meeting offered the opportunity to have in-depth discussions on a range of issues of mutual interest. The following issues were discussed in detail:

- Utilization of eDNA for resource analysis
- Pacific Bluefin Tuna Management Strategy Evaluation process
- Utilization of new observation equipment such as ocean gliders
- Electronic reporting of fishing data
- Systematization and standardization of process from resource survey to Analysis
- AI technology

Next meeting

The next science meeting is tentatively planned for January 2024 in Silver Spring, MD.

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EUROPE

Informal Fisheries Consultations between the United States and Norway

Basic Instrument

None.

The U.S.-Norway cooperative relationship relative to fisheries and aquaculture was established in October 2008, with the signing of the *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation on Fisheries Issues Between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the United States of America and the Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs of Norway*. An Addendum to this MOU was signed in September 2013, establishing a bilateral scientific relationship between NOAA Fisheries and the Institute of Marine Research, Norway. Initially, the scientific work focused on cooperation in marine ecosystems research and assessment. The original MOU expired on September 29, 2013, and a new MOU is currently under development. Full cooperation via informal annual policy and scientific dialogues have continued in the interim.

Members

The United States and Norway

Meetings

Meetings are held annually, or as needed, alternating between the United States and Norway.

U.S. Representation

The Representative for NOAA Fisheries is the Director of the NOAA Fisheries Office of International Affairs, Trade and Commerce. As appropriate, the NOAA Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Affairs also participates in these meetings. The Representative for the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries of Norway is the Secretary General, or his designee, as appropriate.

Description

The general purpose of the bilateral consultation is to strengthen and encourage cooperation between the United States and Norway on fisheries and other living marine resources, and ecosystem matters. Norway belongs to a number of international organizations to which the United States is also a member, including the International Whaling Commission, the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization, and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas. Thus, there are many areas of joint interest and concern regarding living marine resources.

Recent Activities

The 10th US-Norway Fisheries Consultations were held in Oslo, Norway during 4-5 September 2019. Ms. Alexa Cole (Director NOAA Fisheries Office of International Affairs, Trade, and Commerce) led the U.S. delegation, which consisted of representatives from NOAA Fisheries, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

The meeting covered issues of mutual interest within a range of topics, including: aquaculture; IUU fishing and fisheries-related crime; FAO and UN processes; regional fisheries management organizations; Arctic cooperation; and trade-related activities. The meeting also examined a number of strategic issues of mutual concern and areas of future cooperation/collaboration. A significant number of areas for follow-up were identified in the meeting and a negotiated report will be produced in the future. It was also agreed that a new MOU would be drafted at the staff level and distributed for comments before the 2020 consultations. Due to the onset of COVID, personnel changes, and scheduling challenges, the United States and Norway were unable to meet in person during 2020-2022. Both countries maintained strong communications during this period on a full range of on-going issues and topics of mutual interest.

Future Meetings: The United States will host the 11th Informal Fisheries Consultation in 2024.

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United States-European Union High Level Dialogue on Fisheries and Oceans

Basic Instrument

There is no formal instrument.

Implementing Legislation

None

Members

The United States and the European Union (EU)

Meetings

The United States and the EU normally meet on an annual basis, alternating venues between the United States and the EU.

Description

The United States and the EU first met in 1997 to promote cooperation in the field of fisheries and fisheries research. Since then, they have held annual consultations to review fishery issues of mutual concern, although no meetings were held 2008-2011.

Recent Activities

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and U.S. Department of State (DOS) representatives met with representatives of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG-MARE) on June 6-7, 2023, in Brussels, Belgium, for the U.S.-EU High Level Dialogue on Oceans and Fisheries. Ms. Céline Idil, Acting Director, International Ocean Governance and Sustainable Fisheries; Head of Unit, Trade Negotiations and Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements, led the EU side, and the U.S. delegation was led by NOAA's Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Fisheries, Dr. Kelly Kryc, NOAA, and further supported by NOAA Fisheries, and the Department of State.

The agenda addressed various issues of common interest, including: IUU fishing, science, capacity management, bycatch, the UN General Assembly and Food and Agriculture Organization, and cooperative outreach to other States, as well as the large number of RFMOs in which the United States and the EU both participate.

Next Meeting

The date and venue of the next session of the U.S.-EU High Level Dialogue remains to be determined, but it is projected to be held in 2024 in Silver Spring, MD.

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NORTH AMERICA

Informal Fisheries Consultations between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Canada

Basic Instrument

None

Authorities

Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1822(a), which authorizes the Secretary of State to negotiate international fisheries agreements, and 16 U.S.C. 1855(d), which authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to promulgate regulations necessary to carry out the Magnuson Act.

Member Nations

United States and Canada

Meetings

Parties meet annually, alternating meetings between the United States and Canada.

Description

The United States and Canada have agreed that annual informal consultations on bilateral, multilateral and global fisheries conservation and management issues are of benefit to both Parties. These consultations generally take two days to complete and are designed to provide an informal platform for broad coordination/communication as opposed to negotiation of final agreements or specific technical measures.

The meeting agenda focuses on a range of issues of mutual interest, including: bilateral management of straddling and shared stocks; multilateral and regional fisheries management organizations and issues; global fisheries conservation and management fora; and fisheries- and oceans-related developments in trade and other economic organizations.

Recent Activities

Representatives of the United States and Canada met virtually (due to extenuating circumstances) on April 8, 2022, to discuss a range of fisheries and oceans issues of mutual interest. The U.S. Delegation included representatives of the Department of State, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Coast Guard. The Canadian delegation included representatives from the Departments of Fisheries and Oceans and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The meeting agenda was adjusted to be consistent with the shortened time-frame, but included specific high-priority topics within the following categories: national and international developments and priorities; bilateral fisheries issues; regional issues and RFMOs; Arctic cooperation; United Nations issues and fora; and FAO/COFI. Due to scheduling difficulties, there was no meeting during 2023. Similarly, representatives from the United States and Canada meet virtually February 2-3, 2023 to discuss fisheries science topics of mutual interest. The U.S. Delegation included representation from NOAA Fisheries leadership and the Canadian delegation was composed of Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada leadership.

Upcoming Meeting:

The next informal consultation will take place in 2024 (venue and timing TBD).

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Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Canada on Fisheries Enforcement

Basic Instrument

[Agreement](#) between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Canada on Fisheries Enforcement of September 26, 1990 (House Document 102-22, 102d Congress, 1st Session)

Authorities

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management [Act](#), 16 U.S.C. 1822(a), which authorizes the Secretary of State to negotiate international fisheries agreements, and 16 U.S.C. 1855(d), which authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to promulgate regulations necessary to carry out the Magnuson Act.

Member Nations

United States and Canada

Meetings

Parties meet annually, alternating between the United States and Canada. Periodically, meetings are held regionally to discuss local fisheries law enforcement cooperation. The United States hosted the 2022 U.S. - Canada Fisheries Bilateral at NOAA Headquarters in Silver Spring, MD, after not being able to meet in-person for a few years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Description

Representatives of the Conservation and Protection (C&P) Directorate of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service, Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) and NOAA Office of General Counsel and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) meet annually to review past practices and discuss new standards, policies, and strategies for enforcement cooperation. The meeting provides an important forum to plan joint fisheries enforcement operations, and identify opportunities for bilateral cooperation to combat IUU fishing and trade in illegal products, including information sharing, Port State Measures implementation, aboriginal initiatives and issues, and capacity building cooperation.

Recent Activities

New England

The Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) are the RFMOs responsible for managing most of the fishery resources in the high seas area of the Northwest Atlantic bordering the EEZs of the United States and Canada. OLE's Northeast Division (NED) continues active participation in the U.S. delegation to NAFO by attending the 2023 STACTIC Intersessional Meeting and the 2022 Annual Meeting. In 2023, OLE also participated in a DFO hosted Inspector Workshop to promote collaboration regarding NAFO enforcement operations.

OLE NED continues to enjoy an excellent working relationship with DFO Conservation and Protection in the Atlantic Maritimes region of Canada and the coastal area of Maine. OLE's NED has a strong relationship with Canada's National Fisheries Intelligence Service and their representatives at the Marine Security Operations Centre (MSOC), which is comprised of federal government departments and agencies responsible for marine security, asset support or maritime expertise, including the Department of National Defense, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canada Border Services Agency, Transport Canada, DFO and CCG. Engagement is also strong between OLE NED and DFO detachments around New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, with sworn personnel from both agencies attending monthly border intel meetings with other partner law enforcement agencies. Outcomes from these meetings include

joint patrols (NAFO/Hague Line), updated communication protocols, intelligence sharing, joint training and joint operations.

The Northeast Investigative Support Team, within OLE, monitored the activities and maintained communications with the one U.S.-registered vessel actively participating in the NAFO fishery during 2021. The vessel submitted required daily catch reports, including catch on-entry and catch on-exit reports, to the Investigative Support Team who in turn reviewed and entered the catch data into OLE's monitoring application for direct access by the NAFO Secretariat. The catch data was also made available to NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Region in order to track landings and discards. Additionally, the Northeast Investigative support team continues to monitor Canadian Salmon transshipment vessels while in the US EEZ.

The NED enjoys continued field level collaboration with DFO regarding NAFO/HMS intel sharing, Right Whale protection and Atlantic Maritimes US/CA boundary enforcement initiatives. In September 2022, NOAA, DFO and the USCG conducted *Operation Good Neighbor* to coordinate a collective response to incursions and illegal fishing by domestic vessels in the other nations EEZ. This resulted in DFO apprehending a U.S. vessel fishing within Canadian waters. The vessel was handed off to the USCG at the maritime boundary line. A USCG case package is being submitted to OLE for further investigation and submission to GCEL. This operation is being planned again for 2023.

DFO and OLE agents and officers continue to collaborate on permitting and import/export compliance along their shared border, including inspections for proper documentation and labeling of seafood imports/exports. This relationship has resulted in the effective collection and dissemination of operational intelligence involving cross border seafood commerce to include collaboration with additional law enforcement partners to include USFWS, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). A joint investigation by OLE and CFIA resulted in the dismantling of a scheme between U.S. and Canadian industry members to circumvent an import ban on EU herring by transshipping the product through the U.S. where its origin was obfuscated prior to export to Canada. Trade was temporarily suspended while the regionalization agreement was modified, requiring certification of U.S. origin for future imports into Canada. Additionally, enforcement actions were taken in Canada for the unlawful import and false declarations to Canadian customs.

Oregon/Washington

The majority of US/CA coordination in this region occurs at the border and/or through bilateral treaties. In addition to coordination of border enforcement operations to inspect seafood products crossing the international border, there is significant coordination between USCG, NOAA, and DFO as part of the US/CA Albacore Treaty. Reciprocal fishing and port access under the Treaty are currently on hold as US-CA negotiations continue. Joint cooperative enforcement patrols involving DFO and OLE enforcement officers conducting joint albacore tuna patrols from a USCG cutter are expected to be rescheduled once an agreement is reached. Law Enforcement collaborators also work towards ensuring that seafood is properly labeled at the Port of Entry (POE) and that recreationally and subsistence/ceremonial caught fish are not destined for commercial markets.

The primary threat for illegal incursions in the Pacific Northwest occurs in the vicinity of the San Juan Islands during crab season and outside the approach to the Strait of Juan de Fuca during sablefish season. Through successful collaboration between DFO and NOAA state partner agencies, numerous illegal crabbing operations have been discovered and managed.

Moving beyond fisheries, the USCG, NOAA, and DFO have also partnered to develop complimentary cross-border regulations to support the recovery of the endangered population of Southern Resident killer whales.

North Pacific Ocean (high seas)

OLE meets annually with DFO representatives at the Dixon Entrance meeting (CANUSDIX) to share information and discuss cooperative efforts along the maritime border between Alaska and Canada. NOAA continues to coordinate with DFO and Canadian Customs on enforcement of laws and regulations related to the movement of fish and fish products across the US/Canada border. Also, USCG District 17 and the DFO continue to work

collaboratively on enforcing the U.S.-Canada Maritime Boundary Line. This collaboration is necessary to ensure amicable and equitable enforcement of sovereignty and fisheries regulations.

As in past years, DFO coordinates with the USCG to provide maritime patrol aircraft in support of multilateral efforts to deter large-scale high seas driftnet (HSDN) fishing operations in the North Pacific Ocean. DFO deploys a liaison officer to Commander, Coast Guard District 17 in Alaska during Canadian deployments of maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) to coordinate at-sea surveillance and intelligence sharing. The DFO contracts with the Canadian Navy for limited surveillance of the North Pacific Ocean in support of broader multilateral IUU fishing enforcement efforts targeting HSDN fishing and to meet obligations under the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC). These flights are closely coordinated with the high seas enforcement operations of NPAFC Contracting Parties and People's Republic of China. Like the U.S. DOD and USCG resources, the Canadian Navy must allocate limited resources across a global threat environment. Despite these pressures, DFO has been successful in recent years to maintain a base level of MPA coverage in the North Pacific targeting HSDN enforcement. The continued participation of Canada's MPA coverage is vital to supporting USCG surface efforts and overall multilateral efforts on the high seas in the deterrence of IUU/HSDN activity.

Canada also performs occasional satellite monitoring of the NPAFC convention area with its "RadarSat 2" synthetic aperture radar under the Department of National Defense (DND) unclassified maritime domain awareness program. When allocated for use by DFO, this surveillance satellite is capable of producing daily ship detection reports, which are then distributed to NPAFC member countries and China for use by patrolling vessels and aircraft.

Canada and the United States participate in the North of 60 Conference, an annual meeting consisting of field level officers from each countries natural resource enforcement agencies to exchange intelligence information related to violations of wildlife, fisheries and other natural resources, particularly those with a transboundary nexus, and coordinate enforcement activities and collaborative investigative efforts on subjects of joint interest.

The United States and Canada have been working collaboratively on both maritime and landside border operations. OLE and DFO have conducted an annual Dixon Entrance Operation focusing on the A/B line. This operation is conducted with maritime surface assets on both sides of the border focusing on illegal fishing activity. OLE worked with Yukon Conservation Officers in a POE border operation in Haines, Alaska to detect undeclared fish and wildlife parts and products crossing the US/CAN border and to monitor and identify sport and/or subsistence fish and wildlife products with the potential for entry into commercial markets.

The USCG typically conducts one patrol under the North Pacific Coast Guard forum that provides a surface patrol resource for purposes of conducting high seas boarding and inspection (HSBI) for enforcement of the High Seas Driftnet ban, North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC), Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC).

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United States-Mexico Fisheries Cooperation Program

Basic Instrument

The U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) and the predecessor agency to the Mexican Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación (SAGARPA) informally agreed in 1983 to meet annually to review the broad range of issues involved in the United States-Mexico Fisheries Cooperation Program (FCP) and the bilateral fisheries relationship. There are three memoranda of understanding (MOU) since agreed to by NOAA Fisheries Service and SAGARPA to formalize different aspects of the fisheries relationship: (1) MEXUS-Golfo research program, (2) MEXUS-Pacífico research program, and (3) information exchange.

Implementing Legislation

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act ([Act](#)), particularly 16 U.S.C. 1822(a), authorizes the negotiation of international fishery agreements to further the purposes, policy, and provisions of the Act.

Member Nations

United States and Mexico

Budget

There are no funds specifically budgeted for the program; costs are assumed in the operating budgets of the participating NOAA Fisheries offices. Annual costs of the program including staff time, travel, translation services, and miscellaneous expenses, which total about \$60,000 annually, during years when Fishery Cooperation Talks (FCTs) occur.

Representation

The annual FCT meetings are coordinated by NOAA Fisheries and Mexico's National Commission of Aquaculture and Fishing (CONAPESCA). Both agencies often invite other agencies to participate in the meetings. NOAA Fisheries has invited representatives from other NOAA line offices, the Food and Drug Administration, Department of Interior (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), U.S. Coast Guard, and the Department of State, as well as state government officials. CONAPESCA has invited other government units such as the Instituto Nacional de Pesca y Acuicultura, the Procurator General para el Ambiente (PROFEPA), the Secretaría de Comercio, the Secretaría de Salud, the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, and the Instituto Nacional de Pesca y Acuicultura (INAPESCA).

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

The participants have agreed to periodically review the United States-Mexican fisheries relationship. The FCT discussions serve to reinforce the longstanding cooperative relationship between the United States and Mexico on fishery issues. Formal and informal sessions provide opportunities to exchange information and discuss major issues.

B. Programs:

Ideally, NOAA Fisheries and CONAPESCA meet annually; alternating meetings between the United States and Mexico, and additional working group meetings are held as needed. The two science working groups, MEXUS-Golfo and MEXUS-Pacífico, also strive to meet annually. Other working group meetings are held as required on such matters as enforcement, management, aquaculture, protected species, and other issues.

Initially, the participants decided to omit the most contentious issues and focus on those issues where it was possible to reach some agreement on mutually beneficial projects. As a result, considerable progress was made during the 1980s in expanding cooperative research programs and better understanding each country's fishery laws and policies. The relationship matured during the 1990s; recent meetings have included discussions on management, enforcement, recreational fisheries, marine mammals and endangered species. The meetings help to inform participants of national programs affecting the other country. The participants in recent years have widened the scope of some research projects to include coordinated management and other issues.

C. Conservation and Management Measures:

Conservation and management issues are generally the major topics discussed at the meetings. The protection of marine mammals and endangered species (especially sea turtles and marine mammals) were for several years the focus of discussions. More recently, there have been information exchanges and a sharing of management experiences on various fishery resources. Shared interests and goals regarding participation in the various tuna RFMOs and other international bodies such as FAO COFI and the UNGA are also discussed.

D. Meetings

The United States and Mexico have not held official fisheries bilateral meetings since 2020, when the two parties met in Silver Spring, MD. Mexico was identified in the 2019 Report to Congress on Improving International Fisheries Management for illegal fishing in U.S. waters, and the 2021 Report to Congress negatively certified Mexico. This resulted in port restrictions and a recommendation for trade restrictions for related fish and fish products. The United States and Mexico have had numerous consultations since then to discuss how Mexico can address the cause for identification. Mexico received another negative certification for IUU fishing and bycatch identifications in the 2023 Report to Congress.

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PART III:
SCIENTIFIC ORGANIZATIONS AND COUNCILS

ARCTIC OCEAN

Working Group for the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF)

Basic Instrument

The Arctic Council's Working Group for the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) was established to address the special needs of Arctic biodiversity and its habitats in the rapidly changing Arctic region. CAFF is one of six working groups of the Arctic Council created by the Declaration on the Establishment of the Arctic Council, signed September 19, 1996 in Ottawa, Canada. The Arctic Council succeeded the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS), adopted through a Ministerial Declaration at Rovaniemi, Finland in 1991.

Implementing Legislation

None

Member Nations

Canada, Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russian Federation, Sweden, and the United States of America.

Permanent Participants

Each of the six Arctic Council Indigenous Peoples organizations assigns representatives to the CAFF management board. They are: Aleut International Association, Arctic Athabaskan Council, Gwich'in Council International, Inuit Circumpolar Council, Russian Association of Indigenous People of the North, and Saami Council.

Organization Headquarters

The CAFF International Secretariat is located at: Borgir Nordurslod, 600 Akureyri, Iceland. Email address: CAFF@caff.is; telephone: +354 462 3350.

Executive Secretary: *[vacant as of September 2023]*

Executive Assistant: Olga Pálsdóttir

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The Kingdom of Denmark is serving as the current chair of the CAFF Management Board. The CAFF website is: <http://www.caff.is/>

Budget

The cost of the Secretariat is borne largely by Iceland, supplemented by voluntary contributions from Member countries. The U.S. contribution is provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Alaska Region. Other U.S. agencies contribute funds for U.S. expert participation on various Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP) initiatives. NOAA is represented on the CBMP-Marine Steering Committee and provides partial funding for participation of U.S. scientists in the CBMP-Marine Expert Networks.

U.S. Representation

A. Appointment Process

The U.S. Department of State has designated the FWS as the lead Federal agency for CAFF. The FWS Alaska Region provides the U.S. National Representative to CAFF and leads the U.S. delegation to the biannual meetings of CAFF. Gilbert Castellanos is the present U.S. National Representative.

B. U.S. Delegates and Scientific Advisers

U.S. delegates and scientific advisors are provided to CAFF by the Department of State, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/National Marine Fisheries Service, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, U.S. Geological Survey, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Marine Mammal Commission, academia, and non-governmental organizations.

C. Interagency Arctic Policy Group (APG)

U.S. participation in CAFF is also informed and advised by the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Group, convened on a monthly basis by the Department of State.

Description

A. Mission/Purpose

CAFF's main goals are to:

(1) conserve Arctic flora and fauna, their diversity and their habitats; (2) protect Arctic ecosystems from threats; (3) improve conservation and management, laws, regulations and practices for the Arctic; and (4) integrate Arctic interests into global conservation.

Its guiding principles are:

(1) the involvement of indigenous and local people and the use of traditional ecological knowledge; (2) the use of a broad, science-based, ecosystem-based approach to conservation and management; (3) cooperation with other conservation initiatives and the other Arctic Council working groups, particularly the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP) and the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) working group; and (4) effective communication with respect to CAFF programs.

B. Organizational Structure

CAFF operates through a system of Designated Agencies and National Representatives responsible to CAFF and their respective countries. The National Representatives and Permanent Participants meet several times a year to guide the administration of CAFF work and to prepare CAFF reports to meetings of Senior Arctic Affairs Officials (SAOs) and Arctic Ministers under the Arctic Council. CAFF meets biannually to assess programs and to develop CAFF Work Plans. It is directed by a chair and vice-chair, which rotate among the Arctic countries, and is supported by an International Secretariat.

Most of CAFF's work is carried out through a system of lead countries as a means of sharing the workload. Whenever possible, CAFF works in cooperation with other international organizations and associations to achieve common conservation goals in the Arctic.

As needed, CAFF also establishes Specialist and Expert Groups to address program areas.

C. Expert Groups

CAFF established three expert monitoring groups/programs to carry out its Strategic Plan. They are the: Circumpolar Seabird Expert Group (CBird); Flora Expert Group (CFG); and the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP). In addition, at the request of the Arctic Council, CAFF has undertaken an Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (ABA).

Circumpolar Seabird Expert Group (CBird)

CBird facilitates seabird conservation, management and research activities between circumpolar countries, and works to improve communication between seabird scientists and managers. Conservation issues include exotic predators, habitat alteration, oil and contaminants pollution, seabird bycatch, subsistence harvesting, unregulated harvesting, and climate change. Further, CBird promotes conservation of seabirds outside the Arctic, coordinates research efforts with other seabird groups, and coordinates the circumpolar seabird monitoring network as part of CBMP, in addition to developing seabird initiatives for CAFF.

Recent CBird products include: (1) Circumpolar Seabird Monitoring Framework, (2) Circumpolar Seabird Monitoring Plan, and (3) International Ivory Gull Conservation Strategy and Action Plan. The CBird website has been updated and revised – and is available at: <http://www.caff.is/seabirds-cbird/cbird-members>.

CAFF Flora Expert Group (CFG)

With botanical expertise drawn from CAFF member countries, the CAFF Flora Expert Group promotes, encourages, and coordinates internationally the conservation of biodiversity of Arctic flora and vegetation, habitats, and research activities. CFG works to enhance the exchange of information relating to Arctic flora and vegetation and factors affecting them. CFG is designated as the Arctic Plant Specialist Group of the IUCN Species Survival Commission.

Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP)

The Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP) has evolved in response to the needs of CAFF and numerous international conventions and agreements which have stressed the link between conservation of biological diversity and sustainable development. Descriptions of CBMP and its activities are available at:

<https://www.caff.is/monitoring>; CBMP's 2021-25 Strategic Plan is available at: <https://www.caff.is/monitoring-series/all-monitoring-documents/545-circumpolar-biodiversity-monitoring-program-strategic-plan-2021-2025>.

The CBMP takes an ecosystem-based management approach, functioning as a coordinating entity for existing site-based monitoring networks for species and habitats. Four Expert Monitoring Groups representing the major Arctic ecosystems – marine, coastal, freshwater, and terrestrial were established by the CBMP. The Marine Expert Monitoring Group was originally co-led by the United States and Norway, followed by rotating leadership among members. A CBMP-Marine Implementation Plan 2021-2024 is available at: <https://www.caff.is/monitoring-series/all-monitoring-documents/576-circumpolar-biodiversity-monitoring-program-marine-implementation-plan-2021-2024>. The CBMP-Marine Group also produced and released its State of the Arctic Marine Biodiversity Report (SAMBR) in 2017 as well as marine mammal and seabird updates in 2021 (available at:

<https://www.caff.is/marine/marine-monitoring-publications/state-of-the-arctic-marine-biodiversity-report>).

Monitoring plans for the terrestrial, freshwater, and coastal expert monitoring groups have also been developed. In addition, Indigenous and other Arctic peoples contribute information, interpretation, and expertise to CBMP efforts through Community-Based Monitoring.

Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (ABA)

The ABA, led by Finland (Chair), Greenland/Denmark and the United States, synthesized and assessed the status and trends of biological diversity in the Arctic. It provided a description of the current state of the Arctic's ecosystems and created a baseline for use in global and regional assessments of Arctic biodiversity. It also served as

a basis to inform and guide future biodiversity work. It provided up to date scientific and traditional ecological knowledge, identified gaps in the data record, identified key mechanisms driving change, and produced recommendations. The report was produced in two phases. Phase 1 was a short 2010 Arctic Highlights Report presenting twenty one indicators of trends and is based on the suite of indicators developed by the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program. This report was prepared as an Arctic Council contribution to the United Nations 2010 Biodiversity Target and the International Biodiversity Year in 2010. Phase 2 was a full scientific Arctic Biodiversity Assessment that was released in 2013. In 2015, CAFF released a report entitled, "Actions for Arctic Biodiversity, 2013-2021: Implementing the recommendations of the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment."

D. CAFF's Work Plan

The CAFF program of work is guided by its "Strategic Plan for the Conservation of Arctic Biological Diversity" and undertakes priority tasks identified by the Arctic Council.

CAFF's work plans place a strong focus on climate change and building upon the recommendations contained in the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA). The CBMP and the ABA are two of the primary vehicles via which CAFF is responding to the recommendations in the ACIA. Further, the work plans emphasize cooperation and collaboration with other Arctic Council Working Groups, organizations outside of the Arctic Council, and efforts to actively contribute to the global conservation agenda. The plans describe CAFF's main areas of emphasis in: (1) monitoring, (2) assessments, (3) strategies, (4) data management, (5) communications, and (6) cooperation.

E. Meetings

CAFF meets in plenary every two years. Sweden is presently serving as the CAFF Chair. The National Representatives to CAFF meet on an approximately every 6-month basis to address administrative and organizational matters. The meeting is referred to as a CAFF Management Board Meeting.

The Senior Arctic Officials meet approximately every six months. A calendar of CAFF meetings and listing of goals of the various projects is available at: <http://caff.arcticportal.org>.

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ATLANTIC OCEAN

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

Basic Instrument

The Council was established by an exchange of letters on July 22, 1902, in Copenhagen, Denmark, with eight countries' representatives in attendance (Denmark, Germany, Norway, Russia, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain & Ireland). The United States has been associated since 1912, and joined formally as a contracting party in 1972. From 1902 until 1964, the Council operated in a "gentlemen's agreement" fashion. On September 12, 1964, the Council membership concluded the Convention for the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, 1964 (TIAS 7628), giving it true and full international status. The Convention fixed the seat of the Council at Copenhagen and, by the end of 1967, all Contracting Parties had ratified the Convention, which came into force on July 22, 1968.

Member Nations

ICES coordinates and promotes marine research in the North Atlantic, working with an international community of over 1600 marine scientists from 20 member countries. Belgium, Canada, Denmark (including Greenland and Faroe Islands), Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia (temporarily suspended), Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. There are also a number of countries that have affiliate status with ICES. The Affiliate Countries are: Australia, Chile, Greece, New Zealand, Peru, and South Africa. Non-governmental organizations with formal observer status: Worldwide Fund for Nature and Birdlife International.

Council Headquarters

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General Secretary: Dr. Alan Haynie
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Budget

The ICES annual budget is approximately 67,922,266 DKK (approx. \$9.9 million U.S.). The U.S. contribution for 2024, paid by the Department of State, is 1,335,000 DKK (approx. \$195K US).

U.S. Representation

A. Process:

Each of the member countries elects two delegates who represent their country on the ICES Council. The ICES Council is the principal policy and decision-making body of ICES. NMFS, through NOAA and DOC, and the National Science Foundation provide the Department of State with recommendations for the U.S. representatives (delegates and advisors) to the annual meeting.

B. U.S. Representation (Delegates):*Government Delegate:*

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C. Committees and Working Groups:

U.S. representation in ICES has no formal (legislated) advisory structure. During 2020-2021, United States scientists served as members of the Advisory Committee and the Science Committee. More than 100 U.S. scientists serve on working/study/planning groups. ICES has more than 100 Expert/Study Groups that cover most aspects of the marine ecosystem.

Description**A. Mission/Purpose:**

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), with 20 member nations, is the oldest intergovernmental organization in the world concerned with marine and fisheries sciences. (ICES was founded in 1902; the United States has been associated since 1912, and joined formally as a contracting party in 1972). ICES is a leading forum for the promotion, coordination, and dissemination of research on the physical, chemical, and biological systems in the North Atlantic and adjacent seas such as the Baltic Sea and North Sea, and advice on human impacts on its environment, in particular fisheries effects in the Northeast Atlantic. ICES has long recognized the mutual interdependence of the living marine resources and their physical and chemical environment. In support of these activities, ICES facilitates data and information exchange through publications and meetings, in addition to functioning as a marine data center for oceanographic, environmental, and fisheries data. ICES works with experts from its 20 member Countries and collaborates with more than 40 international organizations, some of which hold scientific Observer status.

Uniquely, ICES is also the provider of objective, independent and apolitical scientific advice on fisheries and environmental management, not only to the governments of its member countries but also to six intergovernmental regulatory commissions. The latter includes the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) of which the U.S. is a leading member, particularly through NASCO's North American Commission.

ICES is a complex organization involving about 1600 scientists. It fulfills functions through an Annual Science Conference, about a dozen committees, over 100 working and study groups, several symposia annually, and a wide range of quality science publications which are recognized as such by the world's scientific community. Two delegates represent each member country on the Council.

The fundamental purposes of ICES outlined in the ICES Convention are: to promote and encourage research and investigation for the study of the sea particularly related to the living resources thereof; to draw up programs required for this purpose and to organize, in agreement with the Contracting Parties, such research and investigations as may appear necessary; and to publish or otherwise disseminate the results of research and investigations carried out under its auspices or to encourage the publication thereof.

The ICES mission is to advance the scientific capacity to give advice on human activities affecting, and affected by, marine ecosystems. The mission calls for: effective arrangements to provide scientific advice; informing interested parties and the public objectively and effectively about marine ecosystem issues; coordinating and enhancing physical, chemical, biological, and interdisciplinary research; partnerships with other organizations that share a common interest; developing and maintaining accessible marine databases.

Further information on ICES can be found on the Web at <http://www.ices.dk/>.

B. Organizational Structure:

The Council (the ultimate governing body) consists of the President who presides at all meetings of the Council and the Bureau, and two Delegates from each member country. The Bureau (the Executive Committee of the Council) meets intersessionally and consists of the President, a First Vice President, and five Vice Presidents elected from the delegates, each for a 3-year term. On completion of their terms of office, Bureau members are not eligible for re-election to the same office for the succeeding term. The Finance Committee meets annually to discuss financial issues, to review the audit report, and to prepare proposed and forecast budgets for Bureau approval and subsequent presentation to the Council for approval at the annual meeting of Delegates in October.

To organize its work, ICES has established a structure of Committees and Steering Groups supported by a **Secretariat**. This organizational structure ensures an efficient delivery of products and services, and facilitates the participation of experts across a wide range of disciplines. The **Secretariat** is responsible for fostering the science, advisory, and data and information services of ICES by providing strategic inputs, and offering technical and administrative expertise and assistance.

The **Science Committee (SCICOM)** and the **Advisory Committee (ACOM)** are delegated to advance the scientific and advisory work of ICES, respectively, including integration of joint activities where appropriate. Both committees have one member per country (and alternate members) nominated by member countries. Both committees manage supporting structures, which include expert groups. **Data and Information Services** delivers needed data, data services, and products that enable the science and advisory work to be successfully accomplished.

- The **Science Committee (SCICOM)** oversees all aspects of ICES scientific work. SCICOM activities are aimed at attaining two major goals: (1) Develop an integrated, interdisciplinary understanding of the structure, dynamics, and the resilience and response of marine ecosystems to change; and (2) Understand the relationship between human activities and marine ecosystem, estimate pressures and impacts, and develop science-based sustainable pathways.
- The **Advisory Committee (ACOM)** oversees all aspects of the producing and delivering of ICES scientific advice to address the needs of member countries and partner management and regulatory commissions and authorities. ACOM activities are aimed at attaining the following goal: Evaluate and advise on options for the sustainable use and protection of marine ecosystems.
- **Data and Information Services (DIS)**, comprising the Data Information Group (DIG) and the ICES Data Center, oversees ICES data stewardship and its data management and delivery. DIS activities are aimed at attaining two major goals: (1) Promote the advancement of data and information services for science and advice needs; and (2) Catalyze best practices in marine data management, and promote the ICES data nodes as a global resource.
- The bulk of the work in ICES is accomplished in Expert/Working/Study Groups and these constitute the foundation of ICES science and advisory programs. ICES Expert/Working/Study Groups cover all aspects of the marine ecosystem from oceanography to fish, seabirds, and marine mammals.

In October 2021, Dr. William Karp (USA) was elected as President. Dr. Karp worked at NOAA Fisheries for a number of years.

For information on recent activities, please consult <http://www.ices.dk/>.

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PACIFIC OCEAN

North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES)

Basic Instrument

Convention for a North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES)

Implementing Legislation

No implementing legislation: self-executing treaty; under the general authority of the Secretary of State.

Member Nations

Canada, Japan, People's Republic of China, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, and the United States of America.

Organization Headquarters

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Web address: www.pices.int

Chair of Governing Council
Prof. Enrique Curchister
Environmental Sci/Institute of Marine and Coastal Sci.
Rutgers University
14 College Farm Rd.
New Brunswick, NJ
USA 08901

Vice Chair:
Dr. Tetsuo Fujii
Japan Fisheries Research and Education Agency
1-1-25 Shin-urashima, Kanagawa-ku
Yokohama, Kanagawa
Japan 221 8529

U.S. Representation

A. Appointment Process

The United States is represented on the PICES Governing Council by two delegates appointed by the Secretary of State in consultation with interested agencies and institutions: one from a major Federal Government research agency and one from a research university or other academic institution. The United States is represented on the Scientific Committees and Working Groups created by the Governing Council by individuals appointed by the U.S. delegates with the authorization of the Secretary of State and in consultation with interested agencies and institutions.

B. U.S. Delegates:

Federal Government Representative:
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Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

The PICES area is defined by the Convention as the temperate and sub-Arctic region of the North Pacific Ocean and its adjacent seas, especially northward from 30 North Latitude. Activities of the organization may, for scientific reasons, extend farther southward in the North Pacific Ocean.

The primary role of PICES is to promote and coordinate marine research undertaken by the Parties in the Convention Area; advance scientific knowledge about the ocean environment, global weather and climate change, living resources and their ecosystems, and the impacts of human activities; and promote the collection and rapid exchange of scientific information on these issues. PICES provides an international forum to promote greater understanding of the biological and oceanographic processes of the North Pacific Ocean and its role in the global environment.

B. Organizational Structure:

PICES is comprised of (1) a Governing Council, (2) a Science Board, (3) such permanent or *ad hoc* scientific groups and committees as the Governing Council may from time to time establish, and (4) a Secretariat.

Governing Council: The Governing Council oversees the administration and science activities of the organization, including the Rules of Procedure and Financial Regulations; amendments to the Convention; adoption of the annual report of the organization; the annual budget and financial accounts of the organization; appointment of the Executive Secretary; contact with other international organizations; and management of the overall activities of the organization. The Finance and Administration Committee (F&A) reports directly to the Governing Council.

Science Board: The Science Board identifies research priorities and problems pertaining to the Convention Area and appropriate methods for their solution; recommends coordinated research programs and related activities pertaining to the Convention Area through the national efforts of the participating Contracting Parties; promotes and facilitates the exchange of scientific data, information and personnel; considers requests to develop scientific advice pertaining to the Convention Area; organizes scientific symposia and other scientific events; and fosters the discussion of problems of mutual scientific interest. The Science Board also oversees the activities of the four scientific committees, the technical committee, and the scientific program. Its membership includes an overall chairman, as well as the chairmen from each of the six scientific committees.

Committees:

- BIO - Biological Oceanography;
- FIS - Fisheries Science;
- HD- Human Dimensions
- MEQ - Marine Environmental Quality;
- POC - Physical Oceanography and Climate;

Technical Committees:

- MONITOR – Technical Committee on Monitoring.
- TCODE – Technical Committee on Data Exchange;

Science Programs

Scientific Programs are established by PICES to address major scientific questions of general interest to the Organization. Typically, they will require significant resources and energy of the Organization for periods of up to a decade.

- FUTURE: Forecasting and Understanding Trends, Uncertainty and Responses of the North Pacific Ecosystem was established in October 2009.

Working Groups: A Working Group is a group of experts that is established with specific terms of reference, by Council, based on the recommendation of Science Board. Most Working Groups report to parent Scientific Committees, others directly to Science Board. Most Working Groups meet annually to undertake specific tasks within their terms of reference. Science Board suggests the members of Working Groups in consultation with the PICES Chairman, and seeks Contracting Parties' approval and support.

Active PICES Working Groups are:

- WG 51: Working Group on Exploring Human Networks to Power Sustainability (PICES-2022 - PICES-2025)
- WG 50: Working Group on Sub-mesoscale Processes and Marine Ecosystems (PICES-2021 - PICES-2024)
- WG 49: Working Group on Climate Extremes and Coastal Impacts in the Pacific (PICES-2021 - PICES-2022)
- WG 48: Working Group on Towards best practices using Imaging Systems for Monitoring Plankton (WGISMP) (PICES-2020 - PICES-2023)
- WG 47: Working Group on Ecology of Seamounts (PICES-2020 - PICES-2023)
- WG 46: Joint PICES/ICES Working Group on Ocean Negative Carbon Emissions (ONCE) (PICES-2019 - PICES-2022)
- WG 45: Joint PICES/ICES Working Group on Impacts of Warming on Growth Rates and Fisheries Yields (GRAFY) (Aug. 2020 - PICES-2023)
- WG 44: Joint PICES/ICES Working Group on Integrated Ecosystem Assessment for the Northern Bering Sea - Chukchi Sea (PICES-2019 - PICES-2023)
- WG 43: Joint PICES/ICES Working Group on Small Pelagic Fish (PICES-2019 - PICES-2023)
- WG 42: Working Group on Indicators of Marine Plastic Pollution (PICES-2018 - PICES-2023)
- WG 41: Working Group on Marine Ecosystem Services WG 41(PICES-2017 - final report completion)
- WG 40: Working Group on Climate and Ecosystem Predictability (PICES-2017 - final report completion)
- WG 39: Joint PICES/ICES/PAME Working Group on an Integrated Ecosystem Assessment for the Central Arctic Ocean (PICES-2016 – PICES-2022)
- WG 38: Working Group on Mesoscale and Submesoscale Processes (PICES-2016 - final report completion)
- WG 35: Working Group on Third North Pacific Ecosystem Status Report (WG-NPESR3) (May 2016 – final report completion)

Sections

A “Section” represents a sub-committee under a Scientific Committee that has a longer lifespan than a Working Group. Its purpose is to provide input to the parent Scientific Committee on specific issues for which expertise may be lacking on the parent committee. Sections should be reviewed periodically to ensure they continue to meet their objectives. Currently PICES has the following Sections:

- S-MBM: Section on Marine Birds and Mammals (PICES-2015 - PICES-2026)
- S-CCME: Section on Climate Change Effects on Marine Ecosystems (PICES-2011 - PICES-2025)
- S-HAB: Section on Ecology of Harmful Algal Blooms in the North Pacific (PICES-2003 - PICES-2025)
- S-CC: Section on Carbon and Climate (PICES-2005 - PICES-2027)

Study Group

The purpose of a Study Group is to analyze the scientific, policy, and/or financial implications of a proposal made by Science Board or Governing Council, and provide recommendations for Science Board or Council on the proposal. This type of group would typically be formed for a period of one-year and would provide a report of their findings and recommendations to Science Board or Council prior to the Annual Meeting after it was formed.

Active Study Groups:

- SG-ARC: Study Group on the Arctic Ocean and the Pacific Gateways (PICES-2022 - PICES-2023)
- SG-DATA: Study Group on encouraging Data Awareness and increased Transmission and Accessibility (PICES-2022 -)

- SG-GREEN: Study Group on Generating Recommendations to Encourage Environmentally- Responsible Networking (Jun. 2022 - Jun. 2023)
- SG-ER: Study Group on External Review of PICES

Advisory Panels

The purpose of an Advisory Panel is to provide scientific expertise to a Committee or Scientific Program to aid in accomplishment of a research issue or program of work that requires specific technical expertise, such as the design of an ocean experiment or sampling program, or the incorporation of certain scientific emphases (e.g. marine mammal and bird experts) into the PICES scientific scope. Most Advisory Panels report to parent Scientific Committees or Programs and meet annually to undertake specific tasks within their terms of reference.

Active Advisory Panels:

- AP-UNDOS: Advisory Panel on United Nations Decade of Ocean Science (Apr. 2022 -)
 - Joint PICES AP / ICES Council Strategic Initiative to plan participation in the UN Decade of Ocean Science (ICES–PICES Ocean Decade)
- AP-ECOP: Advisory Panel on Early Career Ocean Professionals (PICES-2021 -)
- AP-SciCom: Advisory Panel on Science Communications (PICES-2021 -)
- AP-NIS: Advisory Panel on Marine Non-indigenous Species (Jun. 2016 -)
- AP-NPCOOS: Advisory Panel on North Pacific Coastal Ocean Observing Systems (PICES-2015 -)
- AP-CREAMS: Advisory Panel for a CREAMS/PICES Program in East Asian Marginal Seas (Oct. 2005 - PICES-2024)

Task Teams

Currently, there are no active Task Teams.

Recent Activities

The 2023 PICES Annual Meeting will be held October 23-27 in Seattle, WA on the topic of “Connecting Science and Communities for Sustainable Seas”. Information of other meetings, symposia and workshops held in 2023 can be found at the PICES website: <http://pices.int/meetings/>

Appointments and Elections

Governing Council

Chair: Prof. Enrique N. Curchitser (USA)

Vice-Chair: Dr. Tetsuo Fujii (Japan)

F&A Committee

Ms. Kristen C Koch (USA), Chair;

Ms. Tia P Brown (USA)

Ms. Amanda Williams (USA)

Mr. Andrew Thomson(Canada)

Dr. Bernard Vigneault (Canada)

Mr. Yutaka Hiroe (Japan)

Mr. Tatsuki Oshima (Japan)

Mr. Antao Wang (China)

Mr. Yafeng YANG (China)

Ms. Jiin Kim (Korea)

Mr. Jun Hyung Kim (Korea)

Dr. Igor I. Shevchenko (Russia)

Science Board

Dr. Sukyung Kang (Korea); Chair
Ms. Jeanette C. Gann (USA); Vice Chair
Dr. Akash Sastri (Canada)
Prof. Mitsutaku Makino (Japan)
Prof. Xianshi Jin (China)
Dr. Lei Zhou (China)
Prof. Sung Yong Kim (Korea)
Prof. Hanna Na (Korea)
Dr. Igor I. Shevchenko (Russia)
Dr. Steven J. Bograd (USA)

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The Pacific Community (SPC)

The Pacific Community (SPC), previously known as the South Pacific Commission, is a regional organization providing scientific and technical assistance to 22 nations and territories of the Pacific Islands—a region of strategic importance to the United States. SPC provides services and capacity building to its island members across a broad range of sectors including fisheries, energy, geosciences, agriculture, health, education, human rights, gender, youth, and culture.

SPC has been involved in the Pacific Islands fisheries sector since 1952. Its Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Marine Ecosystems (FAME) Division provides SPC member countries and territories with the information needed to make informed decisions on the management and development of their marine and aquatic resources. SPC FAME has two programs: the Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture Program (CFAP), and the Oceanic Fisheries Program (OFP). OFP is the scientific services provider for the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). SPC serves its members' needs through generating scientific evidence, knowledge and innovation, enhancing individual and institutional capacity, and building trusted relationships in culturally and contextually responsive ways to support sustainable management of regional and national fisheries and aquaculture resources.

Basic Instrument

[Agreement](#) Establishing the South Pacific Commission

Membership

SPC has a total of 27 members, five of which are “metropolitan” or founding members—the United States, Australia, France, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. The 22 nation and territory members of SPC are American Samoa (US), Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia (FR), Guam (US), Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia (FR), Niue, Northern Mariana Islands (US), Palau, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn Islands (UK), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau (NZ), Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna (FR).

Budget

The United States is the fourth-largest contributor to SPC's assessed budget and the seventh-largest contributor to SPC's overall budget. The United States and its territories in the Pacific receive direct political and economic benefits from participation in the organization.

FAME Work Areas and Programs

FAME Work Areas: fisheries data, ecosystems and marine biology, stock assessments, fisheries management, livelihoods and food security, and aquaculture.

FAME Programs: WCPFC services and data management, implementation of regional observer services, climate change and tuna fisheries, management strategy evaluation, Pacific Tuna Tagging Program, Pacific Fisheries Leadership Program

Secretariat Headquarters

Pacific Community Headquarters
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SPC FAME Director: Neville Smith
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Web address: <https://fame.spc.int/>

Strategic Priorities for FAME

SPC FAME Heads of Fisheries (HOF) meeting is held in the first half of the calendar year. The HOF provides oversight of all SPC work in the field of fisheries and aquaculture, as well as an opportunity to discuss relevant topics of regional interest. The annual HOF meeting reviews and evaluates activities within and across OFP and CFAP. This “big-picture” view of fisheries is essential for SPC’s longer-term planning and is also of considerable assistance to other agencies, institutions, regional non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, and donors, including the United States, which is responsible for managing domestic and international fisheries and several fishing fleets in the region. Most prominently, outcomes from the HOF are presented to Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) ministers for decision early each summer. Often, the decisions related to OFP are related to and significantly affect negotiations in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and in the multilateral fisheries treaty between the United States and the Pacific Islands (SPTT).

U.S. Representation

The U.S. Department of State is the lead representative of the United States to SPC and relies on NOAA Fisheries to lead engagement with SPC FAME and its programs.

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GLOBAL

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

Basic Instrument

Participating countries initially approved the [Instrument](#) for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility (GEF) in March 1994. The Instrument was formally adopted by the three Implementing Agencies of the GEF: the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the World Bank. The Instrument became effective on July 7, 1994 and was most recently amended at the Fifth GEF Assembly in 2014.

Implementing Legislation

No new implementing legislation needed. U.S. participation in the GEF is dependent on contributions from the Department of the Treasury to the GEF Trust Fund based on annual appropriations by Congress.

Member Nations

Currently, 184 member governments, including both recipient governments and donor governments, participate in the GEF. See www.thegef.org for a complete list.

Secretariat Headquarters

The GEF Secretariat
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Washington, DC 20433
Telephone: (202) 473-0508
Fax: (202) 522-3240/3245
Email: secretariat@thegef.org
Website: <http://www.thegef.org>
GEF Chief Executive Officer and Chairman: Naoko Ishii

Budget

Today, the GEF is the largest multilateral fund for projects that improve the global environment, and the U.S. has historically been the largest contributing member government. Since its establishment in 1991, the GEF has provided funds for more than 4,800 projects in more than 170 developing countries and countries with economies in transition. These grants amount to almost \$20.5 billion from the GEF alongside an additional \$112 billion in co-financing from various multilateral, bilateral, governmental, and private sector sources. Through its Small Grants Programme (SGP), the GEF has also made more than 24,000 small grants directly to civil society and community initiatives in 133 countries. GEF budget replenishment cycles occur every four years. On June 21, 2022, twenty-nine donor governments finalized \$5.33 billion in pledges to the Global Environment Facility for the next four years, an increase of more than 30 percent from its last operating period and a surge of support for international efforts to meet nature and climate targets.

U.S. Representation

The Department of the Treasury and the Department of State share the lead for the U.S. Government. The NOAA Office of International Affairs represents the agency on an interagency team that reviews and comments on GEF project proposals and provides feedback to the Department of Treasury and Department of State on funding directions and documents for GEF Council meetings and replenishment meetings. NOAA also often collaborates with implementing agencies to provide technical and capacity-building support to recipient countries on project activities.

Description

The GEF is a global partnership between 184 countries and international institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector to address global environmental issues through the support and expansion of pre-existing national sustainable development initiatives in recipient countries. It provides grants for projects related to six focal areas: biodiversity, chemicals and waste, climate change, forests, international waters, and land degradation.

The GEF was established in October 1991 as a \$1 billion pilot program in the World Bank to assist in the protection of the global environment and to promote environmentally sustainable development. The GEF set out to provide new and additional grants and concessional funding to cover the "incremental" or additional costs associated with transforming a project with national sustainable development benefits into one with global environmental benefits. In 1994 at the Rio Earth Summit, the GEF was restructured and moved out of the World Bank system to become a permanent, independent institution.

As part of the restructuring, the GEF was entrusted to become the financial mechanism for both the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The GEF subsequently was also selected to serve as financial mechanism for three more international conventions: The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (2003), and the Minamata Convention on Mercury (2013). The GEF also supports implementation of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer in countries with economies in transition.

The United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Environment Program, and the World Bank were the three initial partners implementing GEF projects. Fifteen more agencies joined the GEF family over the years: The Food and Agriculture Organization; the Inter-American Development Bank; the United Nations Industrial Development Organization; the Asian Development Bank; the African Development Bank; the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; the International Fund for Agricultural Development; the West African Development Bank; the Development Bank of Latin America; Conservation International; the Development Bank of South Africa; the Foreign Economic Cooperation Office – Ministry of Environmental Protection of China; the Brazilian Biodiversity Fund; the International Union for the Conservation of Nature; and the World Wildlife Fund U.S.

Marine Issues

Marine projects of interest to NMFS may be funded under the Biodiversity focal area and/or the International Waters (IW) focal area. The Biodiversity focal area aims "to maintain globally significant biodiversity in landscapes and seascapes." The three GEF-7 biodiversity objectives are to (1) mainstream biodiversity across sectors as well as landscapes and seascapes; (2) address direct drivers to protect habitats and species; and (3) further develop biodiversity policy and institutional frameworks. The IW focal area has the unique mandate to support transboundary cooperation in shared marine and freshwater ecosystems, which involves building trust between governments. GEF-7 investment in International Waters has three key objectives: (1) strengthening national blue economy opportunities; (2) improving management in the areas beyond national jurisdiction; and (3) enhancing water security in freshwater ecosystems. Through the IW focal area, the GEF has funded twenty-three large marine ecosystem (LME) projects to implement ecosystem-based management (EBM) of transboundary marine resources. NOAA often provides in-kind technical and capacity-building assistance, facilitated through the NMFS Office of Science and Technology, NOS Marine Protected Areas Center, and NOAA Office of International Affairs. For example, NOAA has partnered with the Humboldt Current Large Marine Ecosystem Project on a marine spatial planning (MSP) pilot project for the region of Ica, Peru, as well as provided capacity-building assistance with technical experts and trainers for MSP workshops. Additionally, through NOAA, the United States is a full country member of the Gulf of Mexico LME Project and the Caribbean Sea and North Brazil Shelf LMEs (CLME+) project. For more information on LMEs, please refer to the entry in this publication on Large Marine Ecosystems.

The GEF is showing increasing flexibility and breaking new ground both in types of projects and as a coordination mechanism between the UN, bilateral, and multilateral development bank assistance mechanisms. For example, the GEF is funding a Global Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) Program, commonly referred to as the Common Oceans ABNJ Program, part of the IW and Biodiversity focal areas that promotes efficient and sustainable management of fisheries resources and

biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ. Often considered the world's last global commons, the complex ecosystems in the ABNJ include the water column and seabed of the high seas and are typically far from coasts, making the sustainable management of fisheries resources and the conservation of biodiversity in those areas extremely challenging. The Common Oceans ABNJ Program was approved by GEF Council in November 2011. Since then, the GEF has provided \$50 million of grants in the Biodiversity and IW focal areas for the Common Oceans ABNJ Program, leveraging over \$269.7 million in co-financing from public and private partners including: Food and Agriculture Organization; the World Bank; the United Nations Environment Programme; the International Coalition of Fisheries Associations; the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation; the South Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement; the International Union for Conservation of Nature; the World Wildlife Fund; and the Global Oceans Forum. NOAA serves on the project steering committees of two ABNJ programs focusing on tuna management and deep-seas biodiversity. An additional \$27 million in financing for the new phase of the Common Oceans Program was endorsed by the GEF's governing body at the 58th Council meeting in June 2020. In this second phase, NOAA is increasing engagement in relevant ABNJ Program Child Projects that deal with ocean governance, such as the newly funded *Strengthening the stewardship of an economically and biologically significant high seas area -the Sargasso Sea*. NOAA is the U.S. governmental focal point for the *Hamilton Declaration on Collaboration for the Conservation of the Sargasso Sea*, signed in 2014, and is working with the other Signatory States to help guide the project as it progresses.

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PART IV:
OTHER INTERNATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS OF INTEREST

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Oceans and Fisheries Working Group

Description

[APEC](#) was established in 1989 to promote open trade and economic cooperation among economies around the Pacific Rim. APEC members account for over 90% of global aquaculture production, more than 75% of the world's capture fisheries, and approximately 70% of global consumption of fish products. Given that they represent nine of the top ten fish producers in the world, APEC economies are an important voice internationally on fishery-related issues and collectively have a significant impact on the global sustainability of fisheries and responsible practices in fish trade. Similarly, the APEC region encompasses large and varied marine and coastal environments that support marine biodiversity and contribute to marine-related industries, associated economic growth, and food security.

Oceans and fisheries work in APEC was originally divided between the APEC Marine Resource Conservation Working Group (MRCWG -- established in 1990) and the APEC Fisheries Working Group (FWG – Established in 1991). For over twenty years, these groups actively pursued regional capacity building projects and other activities to address such issues as: impacts of marine pollution on coastal habitat; coral reef conservation; destructive fishing practices; export seafood safety; illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; and sustainable development of aquaculture. All decisions in APEC are taken by consensus and project work is funded by the broader APEC organization, with individual members supplementing where possible/appropriate. In 2011, the MRCWG and the FWG merged to the current Ocean and Fisheries Working Group (OFWG). This effort was led by the United States with the goal of cultivating synergy and efficiency between two groups with overlapping/similar mandates. The first meeting of the new OFWG took place during 2012.

The OFWG's mission is to support APEC's mission to foster sustainable economic growth, development and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. The OFWG works to facilitate free and open trade in the region and promotes the sustainable use of fisheries, aquaculture, and marine ecosystem resources and related goods and services. The OFWG will promote cooperation among its members, governments, academia, private industry, and regional and international organizations to advance this process. The OFWG maintains a Strategic Plan and an annually-updated Workplan that provide both aspirational and practical/implementation details of its work. At a higher organizational level, oceans work in APEC is guided by APEC Senior Officials and advanced through periodic Oceans Ministerial Meetings. The first APEC Oceans-related Ministerial Meeting ([AOMM1](#)) was held in Seoul, Korea in 2002, and subsequent Oceans Ministerial meetings have been held in Indonesia in 2008 ([AOMM2](#)), Peru in 2010 ([AOMM3](#)), and China in 2014 ([AOMM4](#)).

In addition to the Ministerial Statements and Declarations resulting from these meetings, in 2019, APEC senior leadership adopted the APEC Marine Debris Roadmap and the APEC IUU Fishing Roadmap. The Marine Debris Roadmap encourages the development of tools to assess and address the physical and economic impacts of marine litter, marine debris, and ghost fishing gear on APEC economies, fisheries, and the marine environment. The IUU Fishing Roadmap calls on APEC Economies to take continued action to end illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, build capacity to address the negative impacts of IUU fishing on APEC Economies, sustainable fisheries, food security, and continue enacting measures to combat IUU fishing. Implementation of both Roadmaps falls to the OFWG, which has adopted implementation plans that have been fully integrated into the OFWG Strategic Plan and Annual Work Plans.

Recent events

The 21st Ocean and Fisheries Working Group plenary meeting took place on 29-30 July 2023, in Seattle. OFWG members engaged in discussions of the updated implementation plans of the [2019 APEC Roadmap on Marine Debris Management](#), the [2019 Roadmap on Combatting IUU Fishing](#), and how the group should move forward on development of a [Small-scale Fisheries and Aquaculture Roadmap](#). They discussed how OFWG's work could contribute to implement the [APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040](#) including through the [Aotearoa Plan of Action](#), ECOTECH mid-term priorities and [Bangkok Goals on Bio-Circular-Green \(BCG\) Economy](#) as well as the [2023 host economy's priorities](#). The OFWG reaffirmed its commitment to “[Strong Balanced, Secure, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth](#).” Member economies also shared updates of their economies' ongoing projects and potential projects.

Upcoming Meetings

The next meeting of the will take place in February 2024 (place and time TBD)

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Canada/Mexico/US Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management

In 1996, the wildlife conservation agencies of the United States, Mexico, and Canada signed a Memorandum of Understanding establishing the Canada/Mexico/US Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management. This agreement formally brought together for the first time the three nations of North America, consolidating a continental effort for wildlife and ecosystem conservation and management. The Trilateral Committee facilitates and enhances cooperation and coordination among the wildlife agencies of the three nations in projects and programs for the conservation and management of wildlife, plants, biological diversity, and ecosystems of mutual interest.

The Trilateral also facilitates the development of partnerships with other associated and interested entities. Delegations from each country come together annually for discussions on a wide range of topics ranging from joint, on-the-ground projects to issues of law enforcement to the development of information databases. Discussions take place under the auspices of working tables that report to an executive body comprising the directors of the three wildlife agencies. Currently, there are six active working tables: Species of Common Concern, Law Enforcement, Ecosystem Conservation, Migratory Birds, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), and the Executive Committee.

Next Meeting:

The 27th Annual Meeting was hosted virtually by Mexico on June 27- 30, 2023.

Web address: <http://www.trilat.org/>

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Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) Projects

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has funded a series of projects in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems (the “CLME+ Region”) since 2006. Given the projects’ regional and comprehensive nature, they have been uniquely positioned to address the root causes of environmental degradation in the region, in particular the gaps and weaknesses in **transboundary and cross-sectoral governance arrangements**.

CLME Project (2009-2014)

The first full project phase produced a series of Transboundary Diagnostic Assessments (TDAs) that served as the science basis for the development of a Strategic Action Programme (SAP). The SAP was endorsed by twenty-six States and territories in the CLME+ region, including the United States.

Website: <https://www.clmeproject.org/phaseone/geosclme.html>

CLME+ Project (2015-2022)

The second phase, the CLME+ Project, was implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) from 2015-2022. It aimed to catalyze implementation of the SAP, including by facilitating **Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM)** and implementation of the **Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF)**, to ensure the sustainable and climate-resilient provision of goods and services from shared living marine resources.

Early SAP implementation results included:

- Establishment of the CLME+ Partnership in 2017;
- Establishment of the Interim Fisheries Coordination Mechanism in 2016;
- Regional Action Plan for management and conservation of the queen conch for WECAFC in 2016;
- Regional Action Plan for spiny lobster fisheries;
- Several new marine protected areas established in the region;
- 8th simultaneous closed spiny lobster fisheries in Central American Integration System;
- Marine Spatial Planning in region increasing;
- Increase in ratification of the Cartagena Convention Protocols on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) and Land-based Sources of Pollution (LBS); and
- Increased financial support.

The CLME+ Project also supported development of a draft Memorandum of Understanding that would enable the creation of a regional “Ocean Coordination Mechanism.” Once created, the Coordination Mechanism is anticipated to serve as a platform to enhance communication, collaboration, and coordination between countries and intergovernmental organizations that work on marine and coastal issues in the region.

Website: CLME+: <https://clmeplus.org/project-overview/>

PROCARIBE+ Project (2023-2027)

The current project phase, approved by the GEF in 2021, is a regional initiative for “Protecting and Restoring the Ocean’s Natural Capital, building Resilience and supporting region-wide Investments for sustainable Blue socio-Economic development in CLME+ Region” (PROCARIBE+). Project goals include:

- Implementing integrated ocean management arrangements;
- Enabling and developing sustainable and resilient ocean-based (blue) economies through Marine Spatial Planning, marine conservation, sustainable fisheries and addressing land-based sources of pollution, while taking into account cross-cutting issues such as climate change, gender and post COVID-19 recovery; and
- Catalyzing the next iteration of key regional processes, such as the TDAs and SAPs.

All States and territories in the region are invited to participate in the Project Steering Committee, which provides overall guidance for the project. A number of regional intergovernmental organizations also participate, including IOCARIBE, the UN Caribbean Environment Programme (Secretariat to the Cartagena Convention), and the Western

and Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (WECAFC). The IOCARIBE Offices of the IOC of UNESCO currently host the PROCARIBE+ Project Coordination Unit in Cartagena, Colombia.

Website: <https://clmeplus.org/procaribe-plus-project/>

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Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)

The signing of the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA) in 1993 created the world's largest trading bloc. At the same time, the NAFTA partners (Canada, Mexico, and the United States) sought to build environmental safeguards into the trade liberalization pact and signed the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), creating the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC). In 2018, the three countries signed the successor to NAFTA, the United States-Canada-Mexico Agreement, which entered into force on July 1, 2020. Canada, Mexico, and the United States also signed the Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA), a new environmental side agreement and successor to the NAAEC, which continues collaboration through the CEC.

The CEC's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan structures the Commission's work around six main themes: (1) Clean Air, Land and Water; (2) Preventing and Reducing Pollution in the Marine Environment; (3) Circular Economy and Sustainable Materials Management; (4) Shared Ecosystems and Species; (5) Resilient Economies and Communities; and (6) Effective Enforcement of Environmental Laws. The Strategic Plan also identifies two crosscutting themes: (a) Innovative and Effective Solutions and (b) Diverse and Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement and Public Participation. Projects focus on the protection of the North American environment, and therefore trilateral environmental problems, issues, and cooperation are given priority in funding.

The 2022 Operational Plan includes cooperative projects on trilateral priorities on supporting teamwork, promoting outreach, supporting learning opportunities, and fostering the exchange of knowledge. The CEC supports stakeholder engagement and capacity building by developing innovative tools and information resources, supporting citizens, communities, industry, and governments to take informed and effective action. Current cooperative projects with a marine focus include: 1) Enhancing Co-Benefits of Marine Protected Areas (including support to the North American Marine Protected Areas Network – NAMPAN); and 2) Finding Community Solutions to Reduce Marine Litter; A new Operational Plan will be developed for the 2023-2024 biennium.

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Coral Disease and Health Consortium (CDHC)

The National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Department of Interior (DOI) developed the framework for the CDHC for the United States Coral Reef Task Force through an interagency effort in March 2000. The Coral Reef Task Force was established by Executive Order in June 1998 (Executive Order 13089 on the Protection of Coral Reefs) to help preserve and protect the biodiversity, health, heritage, and social and economic value of U.S. coral reef ecosystems. The purpose of the CDHC is to organize and coordinate the scientific resources of the United States and its territories to document the condition of coral reef ecosystems, determine causes of declines in coral reef health, and provide technical information and assistance to managers and scientists regarding coral reef health. The CDHC is a network of national and international partners, including U.S. federal (EPA, DOI, NOAA) and state agencies, academia, non-profit groups and industry representing field and laboratory scientists, health professionals, coral reef managers, and agency representatives devoted to understanding coral health and disease. It is extensive, highly collaborative, and completely voluntary. Members share information and ideas and contribute their time and expertise for a common set of goals *to understand and address the effects of natural and anthropogenic stressors on corals in order to contribute to the preservation and protection of coral reef ecosystems.*

The CDHC has been working closely with our partners to assist in addressing the key goals and objectives related to coral health and disease issues. Four thematic areas have been identified as key areas of focus:

- Establishing diagnostic criteria and diagnostic tool development
- Conducting mechanism-based research on coral health and disease
- Web-based communication and distance learning tool development
- Capacity building among the community through training and continuing education

Through these objectives, the CDHC aims to significantly enhance current assessments of coral health, reproduction and fitness; improve the effectiveness of management decisions by providing early warning of disease and disease outbreaks; identify putative causative factors and possible prevention and mitigation strategies; and offer managers viable risk management options.

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Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF)

The Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF), the FAO regional fishery body for the Central Atlantic, plays a vital role in promoting the sustainable utilization of marine resources in its area of competence. Through effective fishery management, development, and monitoring of fishing operations, CECAF ensures the preservation and responsible use of the living marine resources in the region.

To this end, the Committee has the following functions and responsibilities:

- to keep under review the state of the resources within its area of competence and of the industries based on them;
- to promote, encourage, and coordinate research in the area related to the living resources thereof and to draw up programs required for this purpose and to organize such research as may appear necessary;
- to promote the collection, interchange, dissemination and analysis or study of statistical, biological, environmental and socio-economic data and other marine fishery information;
- to establish the scientific basis for regulatory measures leading to the conservation and management of marine fishery resources to formulate such measures through subsidiary bodies, as required;
- to make appropriate recommendations for the adoption and implementation of these measures;
- to provide advice for the adoption of regulatory measures by Member Governments, subregional, or regional organizations, as appropriate;
- to provide advice on monitoring control and surveillance, especially as regards issues of a subregional and regional nature;
- to encourage, recommend, and coordinate training in the priority areas of the Committee;
- to promote and encourage the utilization of the most appropriate fishing craft, gear, and techniques;
- to promote liaison among and with competent institutions within the sea area served by the Committee and to propose and keep under review working arrangements with other international organizations which have related objectives within that area.

The Committee has no regulatory powers, and recommendations are not binding on Committee members. It operates through a Main Committee and a Scientific Subcommittee, the latter of which provides scientific advice.

The CECAF Members are Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, European Union, France, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Liberia, Mauritania, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Spain, Togo, and the United States.

The Committee, which is composed of all CECAF member States, is the central body in CECAF. Sessions of the Committee are normally held every two years. Decisions of the Committee are taken by a majority of the votes cast, unless otherwise provided. Each member has one vote.

The Committee also established a Scientific Sub-Committee in 1998. The main function of the Scientific Sub-Committee is to provide appropriate advice to the Committee for fisheries management recommendations to members.

The 23rd session of CECAF was held in Monrovia, Liberia from 11 to 14 July 2023. Delegates from nearly twenty countries, who are members of CECAF, convened in Liberia. The goal of this session was to find and discuss practical solutions for sustainable regional fishery management. The discussion explored concrete mechanisms, collaboration, and cooperation among various stakeholders, including governments, regional organizations, development partners, and non-state actors.

CECAF Website: <https://www.fao.org/cecaf/en/>

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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Committee on Fisheries (COFI)

FAO

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was founded in October 1945 with a mandate to raise levels of nutrition and standards of living, to improve agricultural productivity, and to better the condition of rural populations. It was the first specialized agency of the United Nations that was established.

Today, FAO is the largest autonomous agency within the United Nations system with 194 member countries plus the European Community (Member Organization) and two Associate Members (Faroe Islands and Tokelau).

The Organization offers direct development assistance; collects, analyzes, and disseminates information; provides policy and planning advice to governments; and acts as an international forum for debate on food, agriculture, and forestry issues. FAO is active in land and water development, plant and animal production, forestry, fisheries, economic and social policy, investment, nutrition, food standards and commodities, and trade. It also plays a major role in dealing with food and agricultural emergencies. A specific priority of the Organization is encouraging sustainable agriculture and rural development, a long-term strategy for the conservation and management of natural resources. It aims to meet the needs of both present and future generations through programs that do not degrade the environment and are technically appropriate, economically viable, and socially acceptable.

FAO is governed by the Conference of Member Nations, which meets every two years to review the work carried out by the organization and approve a Program of Work and Budget for the next biennium. The Conference elects a Council of 49 Member Nations to act as an interim governing body. Members serve 3-year, rotating terms. The Conference also elects a Director-General to head the agency for a four-year term. The current Director-General, Mr. QU Dongyu took office on August 1, 2019, and was re-elected to a second term in July 2023.

The Organization's work falls into two categories. The Regular Program covers internal operations, including the maintenance of staff that provides support for field work, the provision of advice to governments on policy and planning, and support for a wide range of development needs. It is financed by Member Nations who contribute according to levels set by the Conference. The Field Program implements FAO's development strategies and provides assistance to governments and rural communities. Projects are usually undertaken in cooperation with national governments and other agencies.

FAO's overall program of work is funded by assessed and voluntary contributions. The assessed contributions are member countries' contributions, set at the biennial FAO Conference. The total FAO Budget planned for 2018-19 is USD 2.6 billion. Of this amount, 39 percent comes from assessed contributions paid by member countries, while 61 percent is mobilized through voluntary contributions from Members and other partners. The voluntary contributions provided by Members and other partners support technical and emergency (including rehabilitation) assistance to governments for clearly defined purposes linked to the results framework, as well as direct support to FAO's core work.

COFI

COFI, a subsidiary body of the FAO Council, was established by the FAO Conference at its Thirteenth Session in 1965. The Committee presently constitutes the only global inter-governmental forum other than the United Nations General Assembly, where major international fisheries and aquaculture problems and issues are examined and recommendations addressed to governments, regional fishery bodies, NGOs, fishworkers, and the international community on a world-wide basis. COFI has also been used as a forum in which global binding agreements as well as non-binding instruments were negotiated.

COFI membership is open to any FAO Member and non-Member eligible to be an observer of the Organization. Representatives of the UN, UN bodies and specialized agencies, regional fishery bodies, national and international non-governmental organizations participate in the debate, but without the right to vote.

The two main functions of COFI are to review the programs of work of FAO in the field of fisheries and aquaculture and their implementation and to conduct periodic general reviews of fishery and aquaculture problems of an international character and appraise such problems and their possible solutions with a view to concerted action by nations, by FAO, inter-governmental bodies and the civil society. The Committee also reviews specific matters relating to fisheries and aquaculture referred to it by the Council or the Director-General of FAO, or placed by the Committee on its agenda at the request of Members, or the United Nations General Assembly. In its work, the Committee supplements rather than supplants other organizations working in the field of fisheries and aquaculture.

COFI is empowered to establish subcommittees on specific issues and these subsidiary bodies meet in the intersessional period of the parent Committee. COFI has a Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (<http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/cofi-sub-committee-on-fish-trade/en/>) and a Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (<http://www.fao.org/cofi/aq/en/>) and is advised by the FAO Advisory Committee on Fishery Research. COFI35 also agreed to establish a third Subcommittee on Fisheries Management.

The 35th Session of COFI met in Rome September 5-9, 2022. The meeting report can be found at <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc3652en> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6882e.pdf>.

The 36th Session of COFI is scheduled to meet in Rome July 2024.

Website: <http://www.fao.org>

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Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)

The United States has negotiated multiple bilateral and regional Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). NOAA has the opportunity to participate in negotiation and implementation of these agreements as appropriate, including the environmental chapter, the environmental assessment, the environmental cooperation agreement and associated work plan.

- *Environment Chapters* of FTAs are negotiated by the United States Trade Representative (USTR), and formulated through an interagency process in the United States with public input. The text is generally similar across FTAs, with differences most apparent between developed and developing countries. Key provisions of these chapters include commitments to maintain high levels of environmental protection, to not waive or derogate from environmental laws to encourage trade or investment, and to not fail to effectively enforce one's environmental laws. Environment chapters also contain measures to enhance public participation and transparency in environmental and natural resource management. Future trade agreements may also contain provisions that more specifically address trade-related conservation issues of interest to NOAA, including ocean governance and marine fisheries issues.
- *Environmental Assessments* of FTAs are also prepared by USTR. These evaluate the anticipated impact of FTAs on the environment of all countries participating in the FTA.
- The State Department negotiates *Environmental Cooperation Agreements* and associated *Work Plans* for each FTA. These may be binding or non-binding documents that address cooperative and capacity building work related to trade and the environment, and require varying levels of commitment from the participating countries.

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Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS)

GOOS is a programme executed by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France, and, sponsored by but its success relies on the coordinated contributions of several people and organizations world, eg., the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), The World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and the International Council for Science (ICS).

GOOS aims to develop an integrated, responsive and sustained observing system through partnership of an internationally coordinated ocean observing community. The objective of GOOS is to ensure the establishment of a permanent system of global and systematic observations adequate for forecasting climate variability and change; for assessing the health or the state of the marine environment and its resources, including the coastal zone; and for supporting an improved decision-making and management process, which takes into account potential natural and man-made changes in the environment and their effects on human health and marine resources. GOOS planning and operations are guided by the Framework for Ocean Observing (http://www.oceanobs09.net/foo/FOO_Report.pdf; [FOO 2.0 System Report](#)). GOOS is implemented by member states via their government agencies, navies, and oceanographic research institutions working together in a wide range of thematic panels and regional alliances.

GOOS represents the ocean component of the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) within the WMO and liaises through OOPC with GCOS and directly with the Rolling Review of Requirements. Status of GCOS climate components are assessed regularly in the GCOS Implementation Plan and against WMO targets.

The success of GOOS is dependent on work being carried out within its six key components:

- Governance and steering through a **GOOS Steering Committee and sponsors** (the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, the World Meteorological Organization, United Nations Environment Programme, and the International Science Council);
- Core coordination through a central **GOOS Office** in Paris and distributed nodes supporting its structures and engagement;
- **Expert panels** including the Ocean Observations Physics and Climate Panel (OOPC), Biogeochemistry Panel (IOCCP), and Biology and Ecosystems (BioEco), that synthesize across requirements and provide guidance on observing system design and Essential Ocean and Climate Variables (EOVs, ECVs);
- The **Observations Coordination Group** with its **global observing network, OceanOPS**, and **GOOS Regional Alliances (GRA)**, implement observing system platforms and ensure the flow of observations across networks and regional observing structures;
- An **Expert Team on Operational Ocean Forecast Systems** (ETOOFS) creating guidance to improve capacity, quality and interoperability of ocean forecast products;
- **GOOS Projects** advance innovation and expand into new areas and capabilities for the observing system, service and product delivery through operational and other service providers; (e.g., Tropical Pacific Observing System, AtlantOS, Deep Ocean Observing System, and Ocean Best Practices System (OBPS)).

The United States contribution to GOOS is through the Global Ocean Monitoring and Observing Program (GOMO) and the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS). Within NOAA, GOMO supports ~50% of global open ocean in situ observations of GOOS through its Program Managers and the work carried out by OceanOPS and OOPC. In addition it provides leadership at various levels to the GOOS infrastructure. US IOOS is composed of 11 Regional Coastal Observing Systems, or Regional Associations, which encompass all US coastal and Great Lakes waters. Remote sensing under NASA is also a contribution to GOOS and part of U.S. IOOS. Web address:

<http://www.ioos.noaa.gov>

GOOS comprises many [observation platforms](#):

- Argo floats which collect high-quality temperature and salinity profiles from the upper 2000m of the ice-free global ocean and currents from intermediate depths and being expanded into deeper ocean depths and collecting BGC data;
- Data Buoy Cooperation Panel (DBCP) which coordinates autonomous data buoys to observe atmospheric and oceanographic conditions over ocean areas where few other measurements are taken;
- Global Sea Level Observing System (GLOSS) producing high-quality sea level observations;

- Animal-Borne Ocean Sensors (AniBos) deploying instruments on marine animals to provide salinity and temperature profiles and behavioral data;
- OceanSITES a worldwide system of long-term, deepwater moored reference stations measuring many variables and monitoring the full depth of the ocean;
- The Global High Frequency Radar Network (HF Radar) measuring coastal surface currents to support monitoring of marine and coastal ecosystems;
- Ocean Gliders shares the requirements, efforts and scientific knowledge needed for glider data collection and supports sharing glider data;
- Drifting buoys which record the currents of surface waters, the temperature and the atmospheric pressure;
- Embarked systems on commercial or cruising yachts which collect temperature, salinity, the oxygen, and carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the ocean and the atmosphere, and atmospheric pressure;
- Research vessels (Global Ocean Ship-Based Hydrographic Investigations Programme) which measure all the physical, chemical, and biological parameters between the surface of the sea and the ocean floor every 30 nautical miles out of 25 transoceanic lines;
- Tsunami buoys, or tsunameters, report sea level information measurements to the Tsunami Warning Centers, where the information is processed to produce a new and more refined estimate of the tsunami source;
- Commercial ships (Ship observations team) which launch probes measuring the temperature and salinity between in the upper ocean on their transoceanic ways;
- Moorings in open sea which are used as long-term observatories, recording weather, chemical and biological parameters on a fixed site between the surface and the bottom.

GOOS and the UN Decade

GOOS is spearheading three Ocean Decade Programmes, Ocean Observing Co-Design, Observing Together and CoastPredict, that aim to actively drive the transformation needed to achieve the Ocean Decade outcomes and enhance the global observing system. GOMO's Director David Legler is the chair of the Ocean Observing Co-Design program and Ann-Christine Zinkann the Early Career Ocean Professional.

WMO Connections

- JCB: The Joint WMO-IOC Collaborative Board (JCB) is represented through WMO and IOC scientific and technical bodies and programmes, including co-sponsored entities. The JCB aims to coordinate the collaborative development, integration and implementation of the activities related to oceanographic and meteorological observation, data and information management, services, modeling and forecasting systems as well as research and capacity development carried out by WMO and IOC.
- AG Ocean: The Advisory Group on the Oceans of the Commission for Observation, Infrastructure, and Information Systems (INFCOM) of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). The role of AG-Oceans is to ensure that the connections are developed and strengthened between WMO infrastructure and ocean infrastructure (observation, data and prediction systems) in a way that is enabling for both. NOAA's Ann-Christine Zinkann, Darin Figurskey and Karen Grissom sit on this group.
- Rolling Review of Requirements (RRR): The RRR is used by the WMO to collect, vet and record user requirements and match them against observational capabilities. GOOS is developing engagement and leadership opportunities for the ocean to be more adequately represented in this process.
- GBON: The Global Basic Observing Network (GBON) is a new approach by WMO to international exchange of observational data, which underpin all weather, climate and water services and products. Ocean observations integration to GBON is a primary request from the WMO Members. Currently, a GBON Ocean Integration working group is working on establishing regulatory guidance for WMO Members for ocean observations within exclusive economic zones (EEZ).

GOOS Recent Developments

- GOOS welcomes a new Director Dr. Joanna Post (late 2023);
- Dialogues with Industry (GOOS & MTS & NOAA) Collaboration
- WMO RRR important engagement for GOOS Office, OCG/OceanOPS, OOPC, BG Panel, and ETOOFS – GBON technical specifications SSS and SSP – SOFF opportunity for SIDS and developing countries – ocean greater visibility
- Updated Terms of Reference for GOOS National Focal Points
- New EOVS – Bottom Pressure

- Canadian Integrated Ocean Observing System (CIOOS) proposal to be a new GRA - adopted
- Arctic ocean observing Task Team – with some modifications
- New GOOS Projects - SMARTCables starting to work with OCG – pathway an emerging network, Integrated Marine Debris Observing System (IMDOS) also starting to engage with OCG

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Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) serves a unique role in the United Nations as the focal point for global ocean science. As the only UN body focused specifically on ocean science, the IOC coordinates efforts to understand the global ocean and applies this understanding to improving human welfare, saving lives, promoting sustainable development, and fostering human and environmental resilience and capacity.

The IOC is also recognized through the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as the competent international organization in the fields of Marine Scientific Research (Part XIII) and Transfer of Marine Technology (Part XIV).

There are four regional subsidiary bodies of the IOC located in the Caribbean (IOCARIBE), the Western Pacific (WESTPAC), Africa (IOCAFRICA), and the Indian Ocean (IOCINDIO). Regional subsidiary bodies strengthen IOC's presence and the implementation of its programmes in their region through targeted, decentralized activities, taking into account the specific interests and priorities of the Member States in their region.

The IOC's core functions include:

- Sustainable management and governance
- Assessment information for policy
- Observing system/data management
- Ocean research
- Early warning and services
- Capacity development

The IOC's high level objectives in its current Medium Term Strategy are:

- Healthy ocean ecosystems and sustained ecosystem services
- Effective early warning systems and preparedness for tsunamis and other ocean related hazards
- Increased resilience to climate change and variability and enhanced safety, efficiency and effectiveness of all ocean-based activities through science-founded services, adaptation and mitigation strategies.
- Enhanced knowledge of emerging ocean science issues

IOC Develops a United Nations system wide Implementation Plan for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

- The UNGA proclaimed a UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development in December 2017. The UN General Assembly accepted the Implementation Plan in December 2020 and the Decade officially launched on January 1, 2021.
- The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to deliver scientific knowledge, foster technological innovation, and build capacity to achieve the 2030 Agenda and reverse the decline of ocean health.
- The US is a leader in the Ocean Decade, hosting 24% of all decade actions with the USG hosting 10% globally (93 of 386 Actions). Many agencies are involved in the UN Decade (NASA, NSF, State, etc.), however NOAA hosts and partners with 8% of global Decade Actions.
- The Six Decade outcomes include:
 - **A clean ocean** whereby sources of pollution are identified, quantified and reduced and pollutants removed from the ocean.
 - **A healthy and resilient ocean** whereby marine ecosystems are mapped and protected, multiple impacts, including climate change, are measured and reduced, and provision of ocean ecosystem services is maintained.
 - **A predicted ocean** whereby society has the capacity to understand current and future ocean conditions, forecast their change and impact on human well-being and livelihoods.

- **A safe ocean** whereby human communities are protected from ocean hazards and where the safety of operations at sea and on the coast is ensured.
- **A sustainably harvested and productive ocean** ensuring the provision of food supply and alternative livelihoods
- **A transparent and accessible ocean** whereby all nations, stakeholders and citizens have access to ocean data and information, technologies and have the capacities to inform their decisions.
- **An inspiring and engaging ocean** to engage new stakeholders, including local and indigenous local communities and young professionals.

IOC Recent Developments

- Working through the IOC's role as a convener of international expertise, capabilities, resources and common interests, the U.S. has helped to build key IOC programs and partnerships including the Global Ocean Observing System, hazard prediction, severe weather prediction, climate understanding, and large marine ecosystem management.
- The U.S. renewed its 5-year non-binding MOU of Cooperation with the IOC in 2021.
- The IOC held its 56th Executive Council and 32nd Assembly from June 19-30, 2023 in Paris, France.
 - The IOC received a budget increase at the Assembly. New funds will be prioritized to support regional subsidiary bodies, IODE, GOOS, and capacity development.
 - The United States successfully retained a seat on the IOC Executive Council during Elections on June 28, 2023.
- The IOC recently approved the establishment of the Ocean Decade IOC Tsunami Ready Recognition Programme, as well as the Terms of Reference for the Tsunami Ready Coalition. Priorities for the United States, these initiatives help build resilient communities through awareness and preparedness strategies for protection from tsunamis in different regions.
- The current IOC Executive Secretary, Dr. Vladimir Ryabinin, is set to retire at the end of 2023. The next Executive Secretary will be decided by the UNESCO Director General and their tenure will begin on January 1, 2024.
- The IOC endorsed the updated IODE Strategic Plan, and the revised IOC Oceanographic Data Exchange Policy, which provides necessary and timely updates to the twenty year old Data Exchange Policy. The IOC further welcomed the alignment between the new IOC data policy and that of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), which will encourage closer collaboration between the two organizations.
- The IOC approved the Global Ocean Observing System 2030 Strategy and its 11 Strategic Objectives in 2019.
 - The U.S. invests \$80-100 million annually in global ocean observing infrastructure. By most estimates, the US supports GOOS directly through staffing (eg at Oceanops and at WMO) and through in-kind support and leadership. The US has 3 seats in the GOOS Steering Committee and also chairs the GOOS Regional Alliances, the GOOS Biology and Ecosystem Panel and the Observations Coordination Group (OCG).
 - The US (NOAA) will "loan" Dr. Emily Smith to the GOOS Office/Paris for a 1 year period in early Fall 2023.
- The IOC established a Group of Experts on Capacity Development in 2017 to implement its adopted strategy and provide advice on implementing a capacity clearinghouse function consistent with the IOC Criteria and Guidelines on the Transfer of Marine Technology. The updated IOC Capacity Development Strategy (2023-30) was adopted at the Assembly in June 2023 and ensures alignment of CD objectives with the Implementation Phase of the UN Ocean Decade.
 - The IOC launched a new Capacity Development Hub, an online compendium of CD opportunities worldwide launched earlier this year, and serves an important matchmaking function to connect those with capacity needs to providers.
- The IOC officially elevated the Central Indian Ocean (IOCINDIO) Regional Committee to an IOC Sub-Commission in 2023, securing increased funding for the region.
- A new IOC-wide Strategy on Sustainable Ocean Planning and Management was endorsed by the IOC in 2023 and is currently under development.
- The WMO-IOC Joint Collaborative Board (JCB) was established in 2019, replacing the Joint WMO-IOC Commission for Oceanography and Marine Meteorology (JCOMM). In 2023, the Assembly endorsed the

JCB undertaking a “self-evaluation” of its performance to date, and supported ongoing discussion of specific areas for increased WMO-IOC collaboration.

- Since 2005, the IOC and its member states created a global tsunami warning system (Pacific, Caribbean, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean/Atlantic). NOAA currently provides warning services for the Pacific and Caribbean regions. NOAA, USAID, State and USGS provide a suite of capabilities to the global system including U.S. warning services, research, modeling and capacity building/preparedness training. NOAA also hosts an International Tsunami Information Center in partnership with the IOC, based at the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre and its Caribbean Tsunami Program.

United States re-entry to UNESCO:

- On June 30, 2023, the UNESCO General Conference adopted the decision to accept the U.S. proposal and restore full membership privileges. The United States was officially readmitted to UNESCO on July 10, 2023.
- The U.S. intends to continue to participate as a Member of the IOC and UNESCO.
- The IOC remains the appropriate forum through which the United States can foster partnership for global ocean science for sustainable development.

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IOC Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (IOCARIBE)

IOCARIBE is a sub-commission of the IOC of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The aim of IOCARIBE is to promote, develop, and coordinate IOC marine scientific research programs, ocean services, and related activities, in the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions. In establishing its programs, it takes into account the specific interests and needs of the Member States in the region.

IOCARIBE Members are Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curacao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, France, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Martin, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, USA, and Venezuela.

Web address: <http://iocaribe.ioc-unesco.org/>

The Major Objectives of IOCARIBE are to:

- Reinforce and broaden scientific co-operation, regionally and internationally through networking and institutional arrangements with organizations operating within and without the region, for example, UN bodies, IGOs, NGOs, the scientific community;
- Provide regional input to global ocean sciences and observation programs;
- Promote and facilitate implementation of IOC global science programs and ocean services at the regional level;
- Foster the generation of knowledge, sharing of information, expertise and experience on the wider Caribbean and its coastlines; and to
- Assist Member States to develop their capacity to formulate national policies and plans to meet their needs in marine science and technology.

17th Session of IOCARIBE

The 17th Intergovernmental Session of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO's Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (IOCARIBE) was held from May 8th-11th, in Bogotá, Colombia. The IOCARIBE intergovernmental session brought together government agencies, marine scientific communities, and other ocean stakeholders to foster ocean science and policy development, promote capacity building for ocean science, and jointly develop ocean science projects and solutions to critical challenges for sustainable development in the region. NOAA objectives were to continue long-standing leadership in the region, advance on IOCARIBE-GOOS (Global Ocean Observing System), coordinate bilateral meetings with new and existing partners, and support implementation of seven UN Ocean Decade projects. The U.S. Delegation was led by Dr. Renellys Perez, Deputy Director of the AOML Physical Oceanography Division and Zoraida P. Pérez Delgado, OAR/International Activities, and Dr. Ann-Christine Zinkann, OAR/Global Ocean Monitoring and Observing Program, as the official advisor and subject matter expert on GOOS. Dr. John Cortinas, Director of the Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory (AOML/OAR) was reelected for a second term as one of three IOCARIBE Board of Officers Vice-Chairpersons. IOCARIBE-GOOS also held a hybrid International Marine Science Conference which was organized by OAR. The conference focused on jointly developing a critical ocean and coastal observation network across the Tropical Americas and Caribbean region to provide the region with the information they need to make important decisions in marine areas. Dr. Cortinas served as the moderator for the event and was confirmed by the IOCARIBE Member States as the Coordinator of IOCARIBE-GOOS.

Some of the activities agreed upon during the 17th session included strengthening governance and architecture for Ocean Observations; establishing the Ocean Decade regional governance structure; reconfiguring IOCARIBE regional programmes to align with the UN Ocean Decade; completing the Updated Strategic Science Plan and draft a Communications Plan that focuses on outreach to end-users; and ensuring the inclusion of youth and Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) in IOCARIBE's work.

A total of ten recommendations were drafted during the IOCARIBE-XVII session, and were later adopted during the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (of UNESCO) Thirty-second Session of the Assembly in Paris, France, 21–30 June 2023. The adopted recommendations focused on: (i) Regional Implementation of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development; (ii) IOCARIBE-GOOS; (iii) Data, Information,

Knowledge, and Tools; (iv) Awareness, (v) Collaboration, (vi) Communication, (vii) Youth Engagement, (viii) Stakeholder engagement, (ix) Governance, and (x) Prioritization.

United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

The United Nations UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development runs from 2021-2030. It aims to provide: 1) a common framework to ensure that ocean science can fully support countries to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2) a ‘once in a lifetime’ opportunity to create a new foundation across the science-policy interface to strengthen the management of our oceans and coasts for the benefit of humanity, and 3) strengthened international cooperation needed to develop scientific research and innovative technologies that can connect ocean science with the needs of society. The UN Ocean Decade requires the engagement of many different stakeholders to create new ideas, solutions, partnerships and applications, these include scientists, governments, academics, policymakers, business, industry and civil society.

There are a total of eight IOCARIBE endorsed UN Ocean Decade actions:

- *Enhancing Capacity Development*
 - [Joint Exploration of the Twilight Zone Ocean Network \(JETZON\)](#) - Increase Caribbean capabilities in the marine sciences while strengthening governmental structures and implementing blue economy policies.
- *MACHC-IOCARIBE Seabed 2030 Project*
 - [The Nippon Foundation-GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project](#) - Create an accurate, observation-based bathymetric map of the region through multi-sector partnerships and collaboration.
- *Integrating Coastal Hazard Warning Systems*
 - [Coast Predict](#) - Prioritize the integration of existing and new coastal hazards early warning systems and services, considering ocean-related hazards and their impacts.
- *Gain Knowledge to Respond to Multiple Stressors*
 - [MarineLife 2030](#) - Fill priority knowledge gaps of ecosystems and their responses to multiple stressors; develop tools to implement management frameworks that build resilience; recognize thresholds and avoid ecological tipping points.
- *Pollutants Observatory*
 - [MarineLife 2030](#) - Develop an inventory of contaminant sources along with a regional baseline database and current values, to better understand the impact of the synergy between pollutants and climate change on marine life.
- *Ocean Observing and Forecasting System*
 - [ForeSea - The Ocean Prediction Capacity of the Future](#) - Co-design an operation of a sustained integrated ocean observation and forecasting system for the region.
- *Ocean Literacy*
 - [Ocean Literacy With All](#) - Address the regional need to promote OL as a tool to transform ocean knowledge into actions that lead to ocean sustainability, increasing visibility to local efforts, understanding that OL is a gap for decision-makers.
- *Ocean Best Practices*
 - [Marine Life 2030](#)- Promote deep-seabed studies; establish efficient data sharing mechanisms; address lack of equipment, funding, and trained researchers; and improve cooperation, management, and governance.

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Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

Climate change is a complex issue affecting the physical, chemical and biological components of the planet including people. Policymakers need an objective source of information about the causes of climate change, its potential environmental and socio-economic consequences, and the adaptation and mitigation options to respond to it. The [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\)](#) was established by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 1988 to provide an authoritative statement of scientific opinion on climate change and its impacts on the planet.

The main activity of the IPCC is to prepare comprehensive assessment reports (AR) about climate change at regular intervals, typically of about five to seven years. IPCC reports are prepared by international experts selected to serve as Lead Authors on three Working Groups (WG). NOAA scientists have contributed to IPCC reports in variety of ways.

The first IPCC assessment report (AR1) was completed in 1990. In 2023, the IPCC is finalizing the Sixth Assessment Report which consists of three Working Group contributions and a Synthesis Report. The Working Group I contribution was finalized in August 2021, the Working Group II contribution in February 2022, the Working Group III contribution in April 2022 and the Synthesis Report in March 2023. During this cycle, the Panel has also produced three Special Reports ([Global Warming of 1.5C](#), [Climate Change and Land](#), [The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate](#)) and a report on [Refinement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories](#).

Definition of Climate Change: Climate change refers to a statistically significant variation in either the mean state of the climate or in its variability, persisting for an extended period (typically decades or longer). Climate change may be due to natural internal processes or external forces, or to persistent anthropogenic changes in the composition of the atmosphere or in land use.

Member Nations

It is open to all member countries of WMO and UNEP.

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Description

The [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\)](#) is the leading international body for the assessment of climate change. It was established by the [United Nations Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](#) and the [World Meteorological Organization \(WMO\)](#) in 1988 to provide the world with a clear scientific view on the current state of knowledge in climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts. In the same year, the UN General Assembly [endorsed the action by WMO and UNEP in jointly establishing the IPCC](#).

The IPCC is a scientific body under the auspices of the United Nations (UN). It reviews and assesses the most recent scientific, technical and socio-economic information produced worldwide relevant to the understanding of climate change. It does not conduct any research nor does it monitor climate related data or parameters.

Thousands of scientists from all over the world contribute to the work of the IPCC on a voluntary basis. Review is

an essential part of the IPCC process, to ensure an objective and complete assessment of current information. IPCC aims to reflect a range of views and expertise. The [Secretariat](#) coordinates all the IPCC work and liaises with Governments. It is supported by [WMO and UNEP](#) and hosted at WMO headquarters in Geneva.

The IPCC is an intergovernmental body. It is open to all member countries of the United Nations (UN) and WMO. Currently 195 countries are members of the IPCC. Governments participate in the review process and the plenary Sessions, where main decisions about the IPCC work programme are taken and reports are accepted, adopted and approved. The IPCC Bureau Members, including the Chair, are also elected during the plenary Sessions.

Because of its scientific and intergovernmental nature, the IPCC embodies a unique opportunity to provide rigorous and balanced scientific information to decision makers. By endorsing the IPCC reports, governments acknowledge the authority of their scientific content. The work of the organization is therefore policy-relevant and yet policy-neutral, never policy-prescriptive.

The scientific evidence brought up by the first IPCC Assessment Report of 1990 underlined the importance of climate change as a challenge requiring international cooperation to tackle its consequences. It therefore played a decisive role in leading to the creation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the key international treaty to reduce global warming and cope with the consequences of climate change.

Since then, the IPCC has delivered on a regular basis the most comprehensive scientific reports about climate change produced worldwide, the Assessment Reports. It has also responded to the need for information on scientific and technical matters from the UNFCCC, through Methodology Reports and Special Reports, and from governments and international organizations through Special Reports and Technical Papers. Methodology Reports serve as methodologies and guidelines to help Parties to the UNFCCC prepare their national greenhouse gas inventories.

The IPCC Second Assessment Report of 1995 provided important material drawn on by negotiators in the run-up to adoption of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. The Third Assessment Report came out in 2001 and the Fourth in 2007.

The Fourth Assessment Report paid greater attention to the integration of climate change with sustainable development policies and relationships between mitigation and adaptation.

At the end of 2007 the IPCC was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The participation of the scientific community in the work of the IPCC has grown greatly, in terms of the number of authors and contributors involved in writing and reviewing the reports, geographical distribution of authors, and the topics covered by the reports.

The IPCC completed the [Sixth Assessment Report](#) and associated documents in 2023.

The IPCC reports are of high scientific and technical standards, based on scientific evidence, and reflect a range and diversity of views, expertise, and geographical coverage within the scientific community. The comprehensiveness of the scientific content is achieved through contributions from experts in all regions of the world and all relevant disciplines including, where appropriately documented, industry literature and traditional practices. The IPCC multi-stage review by experts and governments ensures an objective, unbiased, transparent, and comprehensive assessment of current scientific and technical information. Because of its intergovernmental nature, the IPCC is able to provide scientific technical and socio-economic information to decision makers in a policy-relevant but policy-neutral way.

Recent Activities

In 2023, the IPCC is finalizing the Sixth Assessment Report which consists of three Working Group contributions and a Synthesis Report. The Working Group I contribution was finalized in August 2021, the Working Group II

contribution in February 2022, the Working Group III contribution in April 2022 and the Synthesis Report in March 2023.

During this cycle, the Panel has also produced three Special Reports

[Global Warming of 1.5C](#)

[Climate Change and Land](#),

[The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate](#))

and a report on [Refinement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories](#).

[More information about the IPCC](#).

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International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC)

The ISC was established in 1995 through an intergovernmental agreement between the governments of Japan and the United States. Since then, it has undergone a number of changes including a name change in 2005 from “Interim Scientific Committee” to the current “International Scientific Committee” and to membership qualifications. Membership is open to coastal states and fishing entities that border the region or that have vessels fishing for tuna and tuna-like species in the region, and to relevant intergovernmental fishery or marine science organizations. Current members of the ISC are Canada, China, Chinese-Taipei, Japan, Korea, Mexico, and the United States. Non-voting members are the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the North Pacific Science Organization (PICES) and Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

The purpose of the ISC is to enhance scientific research and cooperation for conservation and rational utilization of the species of tuna and tuna-like fisheries which inhabit the North Pacific Ocean and to establish the scientific groundwork for the conservation and rational utilization of these species in the region. The Committee is organized into five Working Groups – Statistics, Pacific Bluefin Tuna, Albacore, Billfish, and Sharks -- that report to a Plenary body. Results of the ISC are made available to participating members and Highly Migratory Species Regional Fishery Management Organizations of the Pacific Ocean. Through a Memorandum of Understanding, the ISC provides scientific support for the work of the Northern Committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

A report of the ISC23 Plenary Meeting is available [online](#). ISC24 will be held in Canada, June 19-24, 2024.

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Joint Project Agreement between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Korean Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF) For Scientific and Technical Cooperation in Integrated Coastal and Ocean Resources Management

Basic Instrument

The main instrument is a Joint Project Agreement (JPA) between NOAA and the Korean Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF). The JPA is a scientific and technical cooperation agreement in integrated coastal and ocean resources management.

Member Nations

Republic of Korea and United States

Meetings

The parties meet annually, generally alternating annually between the United States or Korea to review accomplishments and plan cooperative projects for the following year. In addition, the subject Working Groups of the JPA meet separately on an annual or biennial basis to progress cooperative research projects.

U.S. Representation

The NOAA Office of International Affairs (OIA) is the lead of the JPA. There are 5 Working Groups: Integrated Coastal Management, Marine Observation and Data Information, Sea Grant Cooperation, Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Polar Research. Overall coordination is managed by Heather Coll of OIA (heather.coll@noaa.gov)

NMFS has representation on the JPA through F/ST and Alaska Fisheries Science Center.

Description

The JPA provides for exchange of knowledge, data, and information between Korea and the United States to improve the application of sound marine resource management principles and assessment of global marine habitat status and trends. It facilitates communications and exchange of expertise and information between NOAA and Ministry of Oceans & Fisheries.

The projects in the Agreement are run by four Panels. The Panels for the projects are the (1) Integrated Coastal Management, (2) Marine Observations and Data Management Panel, (3) Fisheries Panel (4) Aquaculture Panel, and (5) Polar Research Panel. Each Panel has a Korean and U.S. lead. Each Panel runs agreed to cooperative research projects. Each project has a Korean and U.S. principal investigator. OIA is the overall NOAA lead. NOAA Fisheries has the lead for two of the four Panels. The JPA is unique in the sense that direct project funding is provided by the Korean side. NOAA provides in-kind resources that are equivalent to the dollar funding through involvement of personnel and use of research equipment and facilities.

Activities of the Fisheries Panel

NOAA Fisheries is involved mainly through two Panels of the JPA – the Fisheries Panel and the Aquaculture Panel. The Alaska Fisheries Science Center has the lead for the Fisheries Panel. The Panel's recent research projects fall under 3 categories (1) Fisheries Dependent and Independent Monitoring, (2) Fisheries Ecology, Economics, and Management in a Changing Climate, and (3) Open Ocean Fisheries Exploratory Research and Assessment.

Activities of the Aquaculture Panel

The recent projects for the Aquaculture Panel are: (1) Meeting of the Joint Coordination Panel for Aquaculture Cooperation, (2) Development of Oyster Hatchery for Stable production, evaluation of pilot-scale, low-energy culture systems in Korea and US, (3) Macroalgae Feed for Sablefish (previously Starry flounder), (4) Cold-water Fish Culture with focus on salmon with an evaluation of other candidate species, (5) Development of Shrimp Culture Technology for Sustainable Production, (6) Joint research on seaweed (Undaria, Saccharina) cultivation

technology, and Sustainable Aquaculture Workshop focusing on automation, artificial intelligence, and other technologies that can be used to make aquaculture more economically and environmentally sustainable.

Next Meeting

The last annual JPA meeting was held on August 22-23, 2023, in Honolulu, HI. MOF is scheduled to host the 2024 meeting, the dates and locations of which have yet to be determined.

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Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and Their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia (IOSEA) (concluded under the auspices of the Convention on Migratory Species)

The Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia ([IOSEA](#)) was completed on June 23, 2001, in Manila, Philippines. IOSEA is the second memorandum of understanding of its kind to be concluded under the auspices of the Convention on Migratory Species. It is a non-binding agreement and provides a framework through which States of the region--as well as other concerned States--can work together to conserve and replenish depleted marine turtle populations for which they share responsibility. It acknowledges a wide range of threats to marine turtles, including habitat destruction, direct harvesting and trade, fisheries bycatch, pollution and other human induced sources of mortality. The IOSEA recognizes the need to address these problems in the context of the socio-economic development of the States concerned, and to take account of other relevant instruments and organizations.

The IOSEA has a potential membership of at least 40 countries, covering the entire Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia. Activities may also be coordinated through subregional mechanisms in South-East Asia, as well as in the northern, western, and southwestern Indian Ocean. Thirty-five States have signed the IOSEA: Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Comoros, Egypt, Eritrea, France, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Vietnam, and Yemen. The fourth meeting of the Signatory States was held in Oman in March 2006. The fifth signatory state meeting was held in Bali, Indonesia in August 2008. The signatory states discussed and passed a fisheries bycatch resolution. The signatory states also discussed the impacts of coastal development on sea turtles, as well as funding for the agreement. The Sixth Signatory States meeting was in Bangkok, Thailand in January 2012. The major discussion topics included regional updates, illegal traffic of sea turtles, adoption of a site network and adoption of the work plan and budget. Intersessional work is focused on developing candidate sites for the Site Network of Important Marine Turtle Habitats. At the September 2014 meeting in Bonn, Germany, the Signatory States agreed to add ten sites to the Site Network. These sites were identified because of their critical importance for sea turtle conservation. The eighth signatory state meeting was held in October 2019 in Da Nang, Vietnam. An intersessional working group was established to review the national report format and advise on recommended changes. Other key topics included synthesis of recommendations from prior meetings, development of a draft work program for the next five years, illegal trade, RFMOs and bycatch reduction, and endorsement of inclusion of Con Dao National Park, Vietnam into the IOSEA Site Network. The Conservation and Management Plan, containing 24 programs and 105 specific activities, aims to reverse the decline of marine turtle populations throughout the region. The measures to be taken focus on reducing threats, conserving critical habitat, exchanging scientific data, increasing public awareness and participation, promoting regional cooperation, and seeking resources for implementation.

The Secretariat, located in Bonn, Germany, is under the auspices of the Convention on Migratory Species. The Advisory Committee consists of seven members with expertise from various disciplines, appointed by the Signatory States. The majority of the financial support has come from Australia, France, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States, Convention on Migratory Species Trust Fund, and United Nations Environment Programme.

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National Marine Fisheries Service/Institute of Marine Research, Norway, Scientific Cooperation

Basic Instrument

The basic instrument establishing scientific cooperation between the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and Norway's Institute of Marine Research (IMR) is the *First Addendum to the Memorandum of Understanding [MOU] Between NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, USA, and the Institute of Marine Research, Norway, on Cooperation in Marine Ecosystems Research and Assessment* [the "Addendum"]. The Addendum became effective on February 16, 2012. It is an addendum to the *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation on Fisheries Issues Between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the United States of America and the Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs of Norway* (discussed earlier in this publication). Due to the expiration of the MOU in 2018, this addendum no longer remains in effect, however, the annual bilateral coordination between NMFS and IMR continues.

Members

The United States and Norway.

Meetings

The Parties agreed that their designated representatives will meet as needed.

U.S. Representation

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Norway

Dr. Geir Huse
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Description

The Addendum served to encourage and support cooperation in four areas: (1) joint sponsorship of workshops or symposia on the assessment and management of living marine resources of the northern hemisphere and aquaculture; (2) exchange of scientific expertise and information; (3) extended visits of scientists; and (4) cooperative research on common scientific issues and methodological problems.

Recent Activities

Representatives from NMFS, NOAA, and IMR met in Bergen, Norway on April 24, 2023 to continue dialog on collaborative research activities. The meeting offered the opportunity to have in-depth discussions on arrange of issues of mutual interest. The following issues were discussed in detail:

- Stock assessments
- Survey design
- Oil and climate impacts on Arctic Cod
- eDNA research/mesopelagic surveys
- Integrated ecosystem assessments/ecosystem risk assessments
- Climate & Fisheries

- Machine learning
- New observing platforms
 - o Aquaculture
- Offshore wind
- Survey vessel design

Next meeting

The next science meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 2024, in Seattle, WA, USA; on the margins of the 9th World Fisheries Congress.

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Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

OECD is a Paris-based international organization that provides a forum for consultations on a wide range of economic issues among developed countries. The OECD Committee for Fisheries (the Fisheries Committee) meets twice annually (in the spring and fall) and occasionally holds ad hoc technical meetings.

The Fisheries Committee has agreed on certain basic guidelines in developing its program of work:

- The Committee's role should mainly be to constitute a policy forum for an open and frank exchange of views and experiences on various fisheries matters;
- The Committee should carry out in-depth studies and objective analysis which should lead to potential solutions to problems common to Member countries;
- The Committee should address fishery economic and policy questions at the international level, while avoiding duplicating work done in other international organizations; and
- The Committee should take an interdisciplinary approach in its work, thus exploiting the OECD's comparative advantage.

OECD recently released the 2022 biennial update to the OECD *Review of Fisheries* which is a publication of the major events and developments in OECD countries' fisheries sector. Web address: <http://www.oecd.org/>

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The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) is the Pacific region's major intergovernmental organization charged with protecting and managing the region's environment and natural resources. It started as a small program attached to the South Pacific Commission (SPC) in the 1980s, and grew into an autonomous intergovernmental organization with the signing of the Agreement Establishing SPREP in 1993. The establishment of SPREP sent a clear signal to the global community of the deep commitment of the Pacific islands region to sustainable development, especially in light of multilateral attention to sustainable development issues facing small island developing states.

The United States is a party to the treaty establishing SPREP and participates in SPREP as a member. The U.S. islands of Guam, American Samoa, and Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas are also members of SPREP. The head office is based in Apia, Samoa with about 100 staff. SPREP has an annual budget of \$29 million in 2018.

Mandate

SPREP's mandate is to promote cooperation in the Pacific islands region and to provide assistance in order to protect and improve its environment and to ensure sustainable development for present and future generations.

Vision

SPREP's vision is "A resilient Pacific environment, sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures."

Members

SPREP has 26 members, including 21 Pacific island countries and territories (American Samoa, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Northern Marianas, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Wallis & Futuna) plus five developed countries (the United States, Australia, New Zealand, France, and the United Kingdom).

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Programmes/Strategic Priorities

SPREP organizes its work under four strategic priority areas: (1) Climate Change Resilience; (2) Island and Ocean Ecosystems; (3) Effective Waste Management and Pollution Control; and (4) Environmental Governance. These core priorities tie into SPREP's four regional goals to achieving resilience and sustainable Pacific communities: (1) Pacific people benefit from strengthened resilience to climate change; (2) Pacific people benefit from healthy and resilience island and ocean ecosystems; (3) Pacific people benefit from improved waste management and pollution control; and (4) Pacific people and their environment benefit from commitment to and best practice of environmental governance.

NOAA's engagement with SPREP spans the breadth of NOAA's equities, including fisheries, oceans and coastal resource management, disaster risk reduction, etc. NOAA resources are often published to the SPREP website, including documents on coral reef conservation, ocean acidification, ocean noise, and marine debris, as well as coral reef status reports. In 2016, NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and SPREP signed a Statement of Intent

to work together to enhance marine mammal conservation in the Pacific. Most recently in 2020, NOAA has been engaged in coordination on oil spill response and prevention capacity building with Pacific Island countries, joining an interagency working group to provide expertise and technical resources in support of the implementation of the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Spill Contingency Plan (PACPLAN), administered by SPREP.

NOAA Office of International Affairs provides a representative to SPREP, who is responsible for the coordination of NOAA's engagement.

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Protocol for Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention)

The SPAW Protocol was adopted in Kingston, Jamaica, by the member governments of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Caribbean Environment Programme on January 18, 1990. It entered into force on June 18, 2000, after ratification by its ninth Contracting Party. It is one of three Protocols to the Cartagena Convention--the other two deal with cooperation to combat oil spills, adopted in 1983, and land-based sources of marine pollution, adopted in 1999. The SPAW Protocol preceded other international environmental agreements in utilizing an ecosystem approach to conservation and supports implementation of the global Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The Cartagena Convention is the only legally binding environmental treaty specific to the Wider Caribbean Region. The Convention and its Protocols constitute a legal commitment by the participating governments to protect, develop, and manage the marine environment of the Wider Caribbean Region individually and/or jointly. UNEP provides the Secretariat in Kingston for the Convention and its Protocols.

The stated objectives of the SPAW program are:

- To significantly increase the number, and improve the management, of national protected areas and species in the Wider Caribbean Region;
- To support the conservation of threatened and endangered species and the sustainable use of natural resources to prevent them from becoming threatened and endangered;
- To develop a strong regional capability for the coordination of information exchange, training and technical assistance in support of national biodiversity conservation efforts; and,
- To coordinate activities and enhance partnerships with the relevant international biodiversity treaties and initiatives such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar), Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), International Whaling Commission (IWC), and the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) and its global networks.

The Parties to the SPAW Protocol are the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, France, Grenada, Guyana, Honduras, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States, and Venezuela. On September 5, 2002, the United States Senate, with reservations, an understanding, and a declaration, gave its advice and consent to the ratification of the Protocol.

The SPAW Protocol has three Annexes that pertain to threatened or endangered species of flora and fauna. Plant species subject to the highest levels of protection are listed in Annex I, and animal species subject to the highest levels of protection are listed in Annex II. Plants and animals subject to some management, but lesser protections than those afforded to species listed in Annexes I or II, are listed in Annex III.

Website address: <https://www.unenvironment.org/cep/>

Recent Developments

The 10th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC10) to the SPAW Protocol was held virtually from January 30 - February 1, 2023. The STAC meeting provides the opportunity to review, evaluate, and refer proposals to the Contracting Parties for adoption at the SPAW Conference of Parties (COP). STAC10 recommended that the SPAW COP adopt proposals on the uplisting of the Oceanic Whitetip Shark and Lesser Antillean Iguana from Annex III to Annex II, as well as proposals on the inclusion of all Parrotfishes and the Caribbean reef shark in Annex III. It also recommended that the SPAW COP decide on proposals to uplist the whale shark, giant manta ray, and hammerhead sharks from Annex III to Annex II of the SPAW Protocol, noting the lack

of consensus among the Contracting Parties. The STAC further recommended adoption of recommendations related to the conservation of Sawfishes, Nassau Grouper, and sea turtles, as well as development of recommendations related to the conservation and management of parrotfish. With respect to marine mammals, STAC10 requested Contracting Parties to submit comments on an updated Marine Mammal Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals in the Wider Caribbean Region so the Action Plan could be presented to the SPAW COP for adoption. Additionally, the STAC recommended a path forward to continue elaborating mechanisms for establishing a potential Marine Mammal Regional Activity Network (RAN). Finally, STAC10 made recommendations related to programme coordination and management, the Programme of Work and Budget for 2023-2024, protected areas, exemptions reports, Sargassum, and emerging issues.

The 12th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the SPAW Protocol (SPAW COP12) was held in Aruba from October 3-6, 2023.

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United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

Historically, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) was not traditionally a forum for the discussion of fisheries issues, but this changed in the 1990s when it took up the problem of large-scale, pelagic driftnet fishing on the high seas. UNGA Resolution 44/225, adopted in 1990, called for a moratorium on the use of this fishing gear on the high seas by June 30, 1992. This Resolution was supplanted by UNGA Resolution 46/215, which delayed the effective date of the moratorium until December 31, 1992.

Since that time, the United Nations General Assembly has annually provided guidance for the sustainable management of global living marine resources in an annual Sustainable Fisheries Resolution. UNGA fisheries resolutions address: achieving sustainable fisheries; illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; monitoring, control and surveillance as well as compliance and enforcement; fishing overcapacity; large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing; fisheries by-catch and discards; subregional and regional cooperation; responsible fisheries in the marine ecosystem; capacity building; implementation of the Food and Agriculture Organization Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas; and implementation of the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 Relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UNFSA).

In 2004, the UNGA Sustainable Fisheries Resolution included calls to States and RFMOs to take action regarding the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems from significant adverse impacts. In 2006, 2009, 2011, 2016, and 2022, the UNGA conducted, in conjunction with the annual negotiations, a review of progress by States and RFMOs in implementing these provisions of the Resolutions, with a view to providing further recommendations, where necessary. A workshop was held in advance of the annual negotiations to discuss implementation of paragraphs 113, 117 and 119 to 124 of resolution 64/72, paragraphs 121, 126, 129, 130 and 132 to 134 of resolution 66/68 and paragraphs 156, 171, 175, 177 to 188 and 219 of resolution 71/123 on sustainable fisheries, addressing the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks. The relevant documents can be found here: https://www.un.org/depts/los/bottom_fishing_workshop.htm

Additionally, the UN General Assembly negotiates a resolution that focuses on broader oceans issues, which can affect fisheries management, such as initiatives to address marine debris, marine protected areas and coastal zone management. The United States is represented at each of these negotiations by the Department of State and supported by NOAA and NOAA Fisheries technical expertise.

Web address: www.un.org/Depts/los/index.htm

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World Trade Organization (WTO)

The WTO (formerly the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) was established in 1994 and is the international organization that negotiates and enforces trade rules and periodically convenes multilateral trade negotiations. NOAA Fisheries' interests at the WTO are in the Agreements covering Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) issues, Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM), and the recently adopted but not yet in force Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. NOAA Fisheries is also engaged in the negotiations on disciplines to address subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing to supplement the 2022 Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies.

Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. After over a decade of negotiations, the WTO adopted at its 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) in 2022 an Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies establishing new disciplines on government provision of certain subsidies to the fisheries sector. The United States accepted the Agreement on April 11, 2023.

Web address: <http://www.wto.org/>

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PART V:
APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Governing International Fishery Agreements (GIFAs) Between the United States and Foreign Entities

Pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), 16 U.S.C. 1821, foreign fishing within the U.S. 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) may be conducted only when a Governing International Fisheries Agreement has been concluded between the United States and a foreign nation.

GIFAs were concluded with a number of foreign nations in the early years of implementing the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, NMFS worked closely with the U.S. Regional Fishery Management Councils to determine which fish stocks within the U.S. EEZ had surpluses available for directed fishing by foreign-flagged vessels or could be harvested within the context of joint ventures between U.S. catcher vessels and foreign fishing companies.

As the United States developed its fishing fleet and expanded fishing activity within its EEZ, surpluses available for foreign fishing were greatly reduced. By 2020, all GIFAs have lapsed. The Agreement on Mutual Fisheries Relations with the Russian Federation (including the GIFA) expired on December 31, 2018.

APPENDIX II: Membership Lists for Selected Organizations / Agreements

Country	CCSBT	ICCAT	IATTC	IOTC	WCPFC	UNFSA	CCAMLR	ICES	CMS	ACAP
Afghanistan									P	
Albania		P							P	
Algeria		P							P	
Angola		P							P	
Antigua & Barbuda									P	
Argentina							P		P	P
Armenia									P	
Australia	P			P	P	P	P	A	P	P
Austria						P			P	
Bahamas						P				
Bangladesh				P					P	
Barbados		P				P				
Belarus									P	
Belgium						P	P	P	P	
Belize		P	P			P				
Benin									P	
Bolivia		CNP	CNP						P	
Bosnia and Herzegovina									P	
Brazil		P				P	P		P	P
Bulgaria						P	A		P	
Burkina Faso									P	
Burundi									P	
Cameroon									P	
Canada		P	P		P	P	A	P		
Cape Verde		P							P	
Central African Republic									P	
Chad									P	
Chile			CNP			P	P	A	P	P
China		P	P	P	P		P			
Colombia		CNP	P							
Comoros				P						
Congo									P	
D.R. Congo									P	
Cook Islands					P	P	A		P	
Costa Rica		CNP	P			P			P	
Cote d'Ivoire		P							P	
Croatia									P	
Cuba									P	
Curaçao		P			CNP					
Cyprus						P			P	
Czech Republic						P			P	
Denmark						P		P	P	
Djibouti									P	
Dominican Republic									P	

Country	CCSBT	ICCAT	IATTC	IOTC	WCPFC	UNFSA	CCAMLR	ICES	CMS	ACAP
Ecuador			P		CNP				P	P
Egypt		P							P	
El Salvador		P	P		CNP					
Equatorial Guinea		P							P	
Eritrea				P					P	
Estonia						P		P	P	
Eswatini									P	
Ethiopia									P	
European Union	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Fiji					P	P			P	
Finland						P	A	P	P	
France		P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Gabon		P							P	
Gambia		P							P	
Georgia									P	
Germany						P	P	P	P	
Ghana		P							P	
Greece						P	A	A	P	
Grenada (Republic of)		P								
Guatemala		P	P							
Guinea Rep.		P				P			P	
Guinea-Bissau		P							P	
Guyana		CNP								
Honduras		P	CNP						P	
Hungary						P			P	
Iceland		P				P		P		
India				P		P	P		P	
Indonesia	P		CNP	P	P	P				
Iran (Islamic Republic of)				P		P			P	
Iraq									P	
Ireland						P		P	P	
Israel									P	
Italy						P	P		P	
Jamaica										
Japan	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
Jordan									P	
Kazakhstan									P	
Kenya				P		P			P	
Kiribati (Republic of)			P		P	P				
Korea (Republic of)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
Latvia						P		P	P	
Lebanon									P	
Liberia		P	CNP	CNP	CNP	P			P	
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya		P							P	
Liechtenstein									P	
Lithuania						P		P	P	

Country	CCSBT	ICCAT	IATTC	IOTC	WCPFC	UNFSA	CCAMLR	ICES	CMS	ACAP
Luxembourg						P			P	
Macedonia (FYR of)									P	
Madagascar				P					P	
Malawi									P	
Malaysia				P						
Maldives (Republic of)				P		P			P	
Mali									P	
Malta						P			P	
Marshall Islands					P	P				
Mauritania		P							P	
Mauritius				P		P	A		P	
Mexico		P	P							
Micronesia (Fed States of)					P	P				
Moldova (Republic of)									P	
Monaco						P			P	
Mongolia									P	
Montenegro									P	
Morocco		P							P	
Mozambique				P		P			P	
Namibia		P				P	P			
Nauru					P	P				
Netherlands						P	P	P	P	
New Zealand	P				P	P	P	A	P	P
Nicaragua		P	P		CNP					
Niger									P	
Nigeria		P				P			P	
Niue					P	P				
Norway		P				P	P	P	P	P
Oman (Sultanate of)				P		P				
Pakistan				P			A		P	
Palau (Republic of)					P	P			P	
Panama		P	P		CNP	P	A		P	
Papua New Guinea					P	P				
Paraguay									P	
Peru			P				A	A	P	P
Philippines	CNP	P		P	P				P	
Poland						P	P	P	P	
Portugal						P		P	P	
Romania						P			P	
Russia		P				P	P	P		
Rwanda									P	
Saint Lucia						P				
Samoa					P	P			P	
Sao Tome e Principe		P							P	
Saudi Arabia									P	
Senegal		P		CNP		P			P	

Country	CCSBT	ICCAT	IATTC	IOTC	WCPFC	UNFSA	CCAMLR	ICES	CMS	ACAP
Serbia (Republic of)									P	
Seychelles				P		P			P	
Sierra Leone		P		P						
Slovakia						P			P	
Slovenia						P			P	
Solomon Islands					P	P				
Somalia				P					P	
South Africa	P	P		P		P	P	A	P	P
Spain						P	P	P	P	P
Sri Lanka				P		P			P	
St. Vincent, the Grenadines		P								
Sudan				P						
Suriname		CNP								
Sweden						P	P	P	P	
Switzerland									P	
Syrian Arab Rep.		P							P	
Chinese Taipei	P	CNP	P		P					
Tajikistan									P	
Tanzania				P					P	
Thailand				P	CNP					
Togo									P	
Tonga					P	P				
Trinidad and Tobago		P				P			P	
Tunisia		P							P	
Turkey		P								
Tuvalu					P	P				
Uganda									P	
Ukraine						P	P		P	
United Arab Emirates									P	
United Kingdom		P		P		P	P	P	P	P
United States of America		P	P		P	P	P	P		
Uruguay		P				P	P		P	P
Uzbekistan									P	
Vanuatu		P	P		P		A			
Venezuela		P	P							
Vietnam					CNP					
Yemen				P					P	
Zimbabwe									P	

P: Party

CNP: Cooperating non party

A: Affiliate

Country Name	NAFO	NASCO	NPAFC	NPFC	IPHC	PSC	SPTT	SEAFO	SPRFMO
Angola								P	
Australia							P		P
Canada	P	P	P	P	P	P			
Chile									P
China				P					P
Colombia									
Cook Islands							P		P
Curaçao									CNP
Cuba	P								P
Denmark	P	P							P
Ecuador									P
European Union	P	P						P	P
Federated States of Micronesia							P		
Fiji							P		
France	P								
Iceland	P								
Japan	P		P	P				P	
Kiribati (Republic of)							P		
Korea (Republic of)	P		P	P				P	P
Liberia									CNP
Marshall Islands (Republic of)							P		
Namibia								P	
Nauru							P		
New Zealand							P		P
Niue							P		
Norway	P	P						P	
Palau (Republic of)							P		
Panama									CNP
Papua New Guinea							P		
Peru									P
Russia	P	P	P	P					P
Samoa							P		
Solomon Islands							P		
South Africa								P	
Chinese Taipei				P					P
Tonga (Kingdom of)							P		
Tuvalu							P		
Ukraine	P								
United Kingdom	P								
United States of America	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		P
Vanuatu				P			P		P

P: Party

CNP: Cooperating non party

A: Affiliate

**APPENDIX III:
List of Selected Acronyms**

Acronym/ Short Form	Meaning
ACAP	Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels
AIDCP	Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
APFIC	Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission
CAFF	Program for the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna
Cartagena Convention	Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCAMLR	Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
CCAS	Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals
CCSBT	Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna
CDHC	Coral Disease and Health Consortium
CEC	Commission for Environmental Cooperation
CECAF	Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
COFI	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Committee on Fisheries
FAO	Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FTAs	Free Trade Agreements
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIFAs	Governing International Fishery Agreements
GLFC	Great Lakes Fishery Commission
GLOBEC	Global Ocean Ecosystem Dynamics
GOMC	Gulf of Maine Council
GOOS	Global Ocean Observing System
IAC	Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles
IATTC	Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission
ICC	U.S.-Russia Intergovernmental Consultative Committee
ICCAT	International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
ICES	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea
IJC	U.S.-Canada International Joint Commission
IOC	International Oceanographic Commission
IOCARIBE	IOC Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions
IOSEA	Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and Their Habitats Of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia
IOTC	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

IPHC	International Pacific Halibut Commission
IPY	International Polar Year
ISC	International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species in the North Pacific Ocean
IWC	International Whaling Commission
JPA	Joint Project Agreement
LMEs	Large Marine Ecosystems
MIFAFF	Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (Republic of Korea)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAFO	Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization
NASCO	North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization
NMFS	NOAA's National Marine Fishery Service
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NPAFC	North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission
NPFC	North Pacific Fisheries Commission
NSF	National Science Foundation
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PICES	North Pacific Marine Science Organization
PSC	Pacific Salmon Commission
RUSALCA	Russian-American Long-term Census of the Arctic
SEAFO	Convention on the Conservation and Management of Fishery Resources in the Southeast Atlantic Ocean
SIOFA	Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement
SPAW	Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
SPRFMO	South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation
SPTT	South Pacific Tuna Treaty
UN	United Nations
UNFSA	United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
WCPFC	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention
WECAFC	Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission
WHO	World Health Organization of the United Nations
WTO	World Trade Organization

APPENDIX IV: Geographic Delimitations

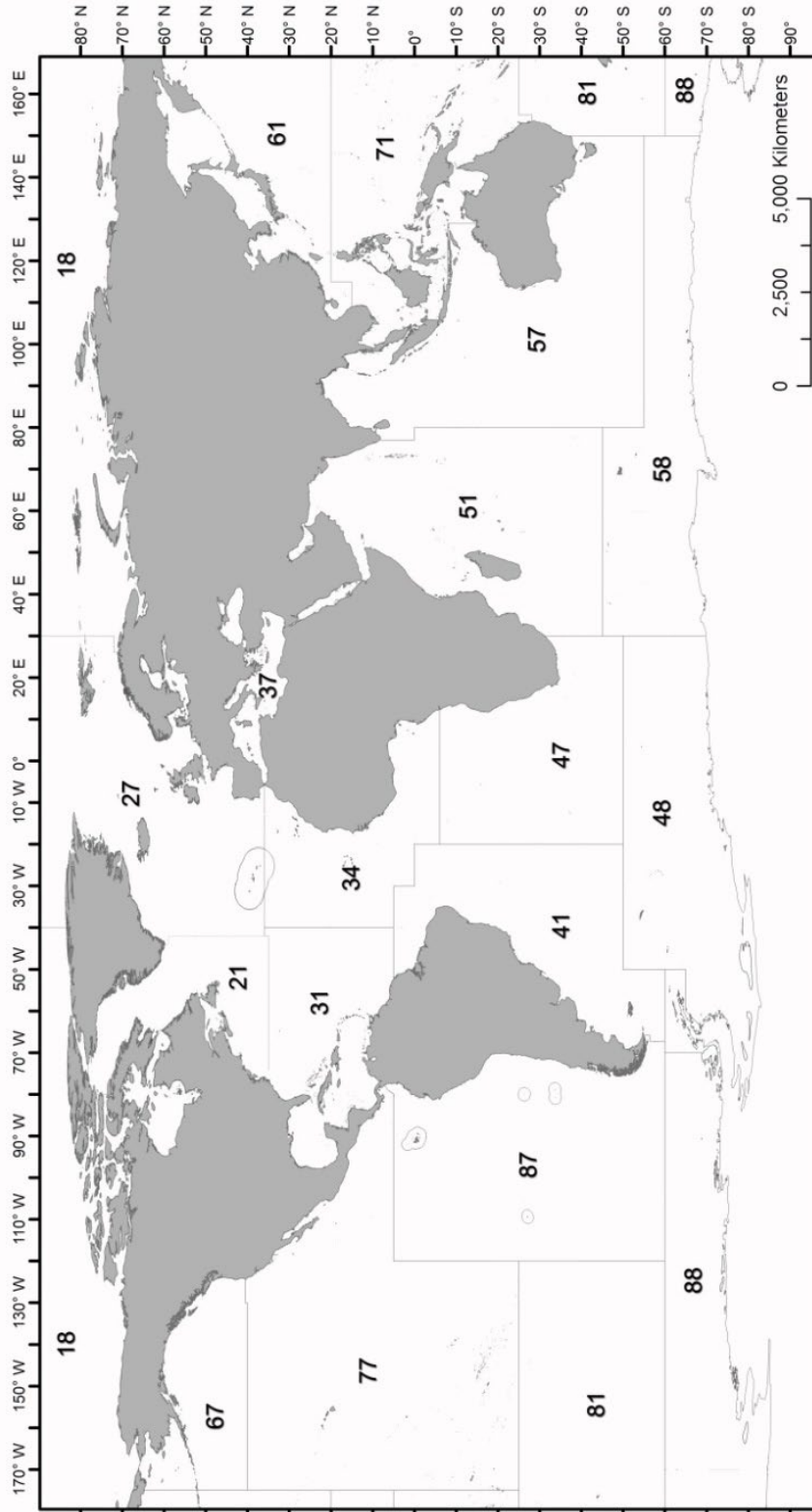


Figure 1. Global Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) statistical fishing areas. From upper left to lower right: Area 18 (Arctic Sea); Area 67 (Pacific, Northeast); Area 77 (Pacific, Eastern Central); Area 81 (Pacific, Southwest); Area 87 (Pacific, Southeast); Area 88 (Pacific, Antarctic); Area 27 (Atlantic, Northeast); Area 21 (Atlantic, Northwest); Area 31 (Atlantic, Western Central); Area 34 (Atlantic, Eastern Central); Area 37 (Mediterranean and Black Sea); Area 41 (Atlantic, Southeast); Area 47 (Atlantic, Southeast); Area 48 (Atlantic, Antarctic); Area 51 (Indian Ocean, Western); Area 57 (Indian Ocean, Eastern); Area 58 (Indian Ocean, Antarctic and Southern); Area 61 (Pacific, Northwest); Area 71 (Pacific, Western Central). See <http://www.fao.org/fishery/area/search/en> for source material and interactive maps.

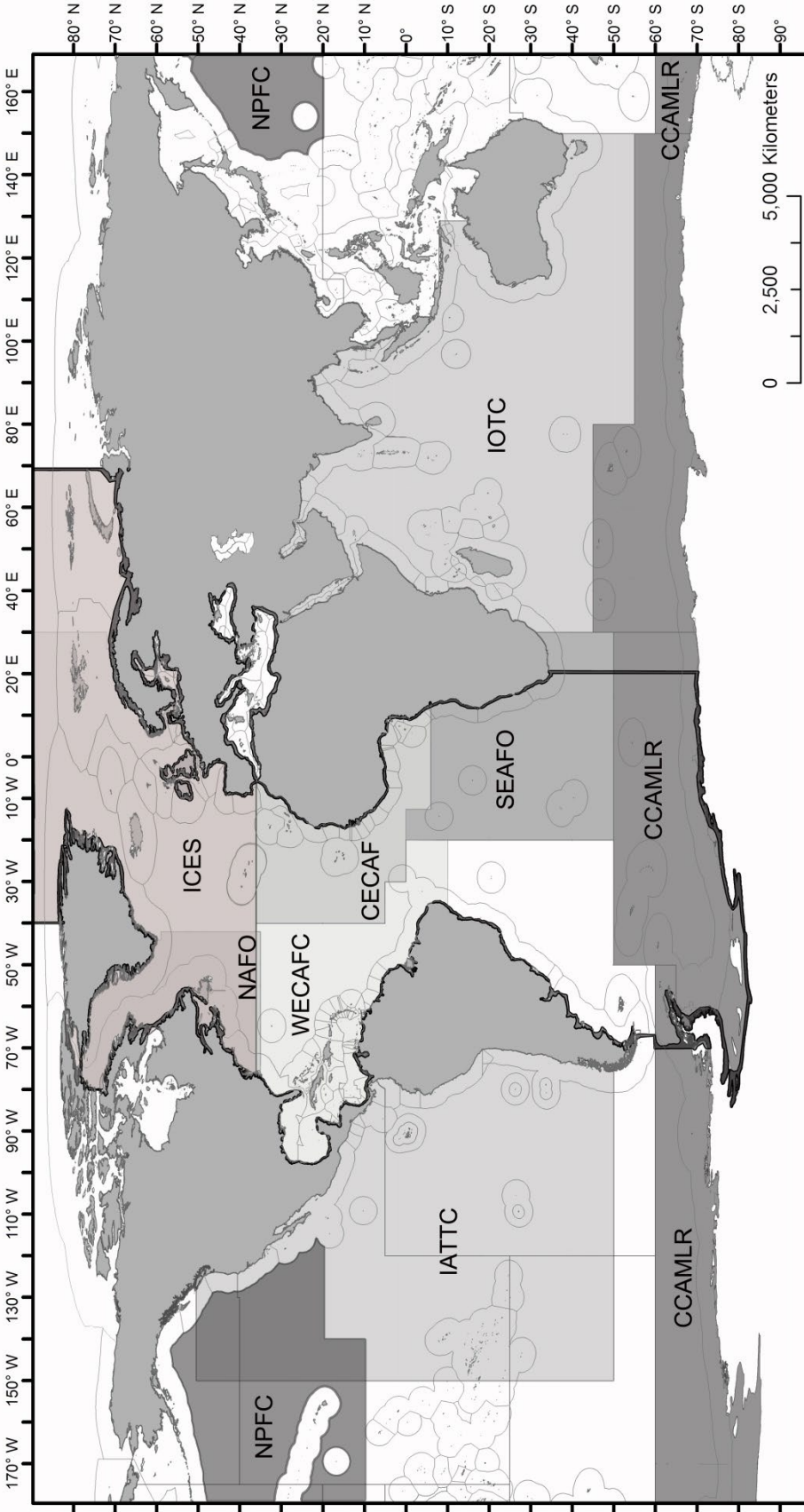


Figure 2. Approximate spatial extent of select Regional Fishery Management Organizations and Scientific Councils including the boundaries of country-specific exclusive economic zones (EEZs). The thick black outline around the Atlantic Ocean represents the spatial extent of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). NPFC: North Pacific Regional Fishery Management Organization; IATTC: Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission; CCAMLR: Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Living Marine Resources; NAFO: North Atlantic Fishery Organization; ICES: International Commission for the Exploration of the Seas; WECAFC: Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission; CECAF: Fishery Committee for the East Central Atlantic; SEAFO: Southeast Atlantic Fishery Organization; IOTC: Indian Ocean Tuna Commission. Modified from: <http://www.fao.org/fishery/area/search/en>

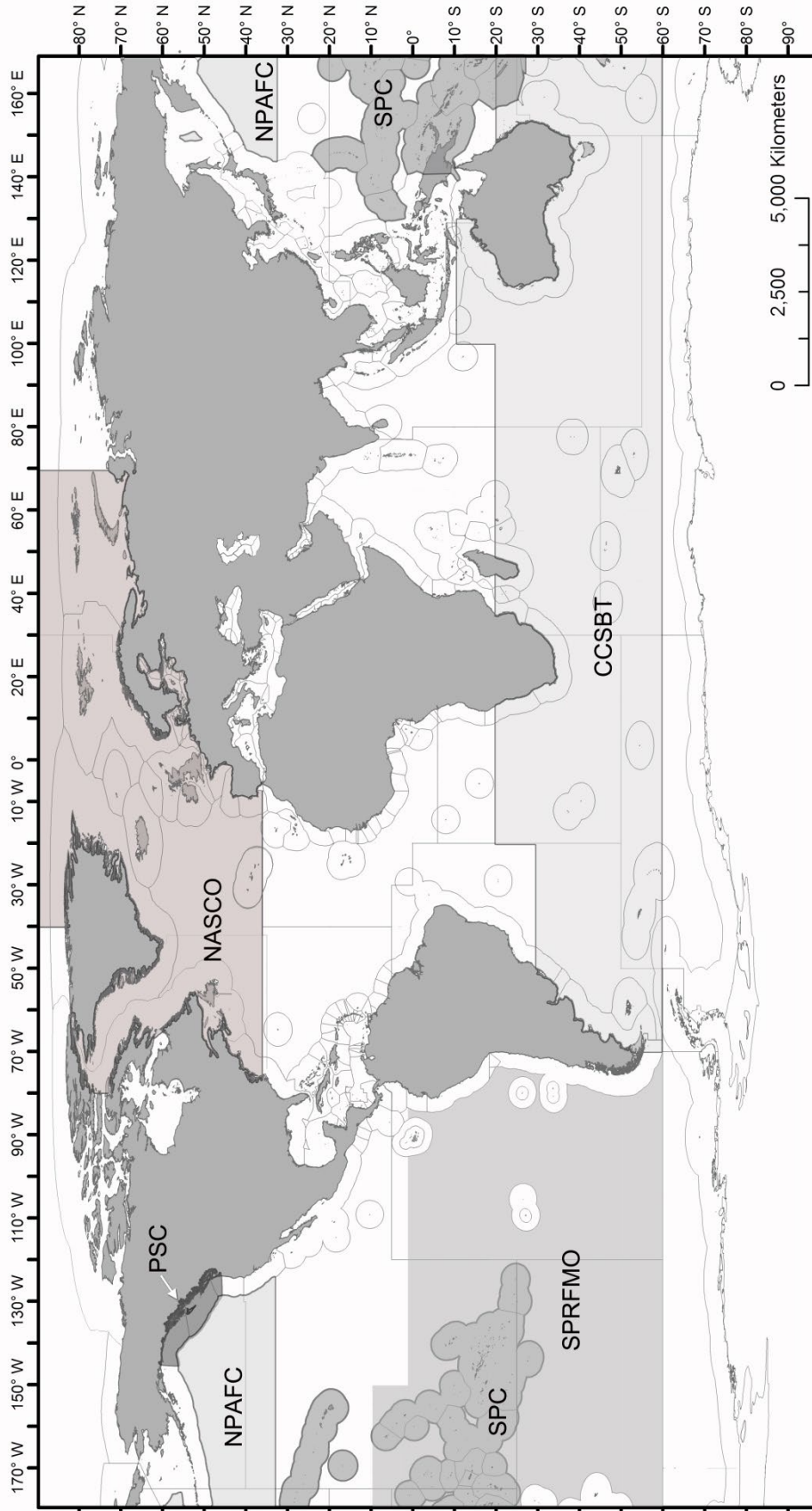


Figure 3. Approximate spatial extent of select Regional Fishery Management Organizations and Scientific Councils including the boundaries of country-specific exclusive economic zones (EEZs). PSC: Pacific Salmon Commission; NPAFC: North Pacific Anadromous Fishery Commission; SPC: Secretariat of the Pacific; SPRFMO: South Pacific Regional Fishery Management Organization; NASCO: North Atlantic Salmon Commission; CCSBT: Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna. Modified from: <http://www.fao.org/fishery/area/search/enj>

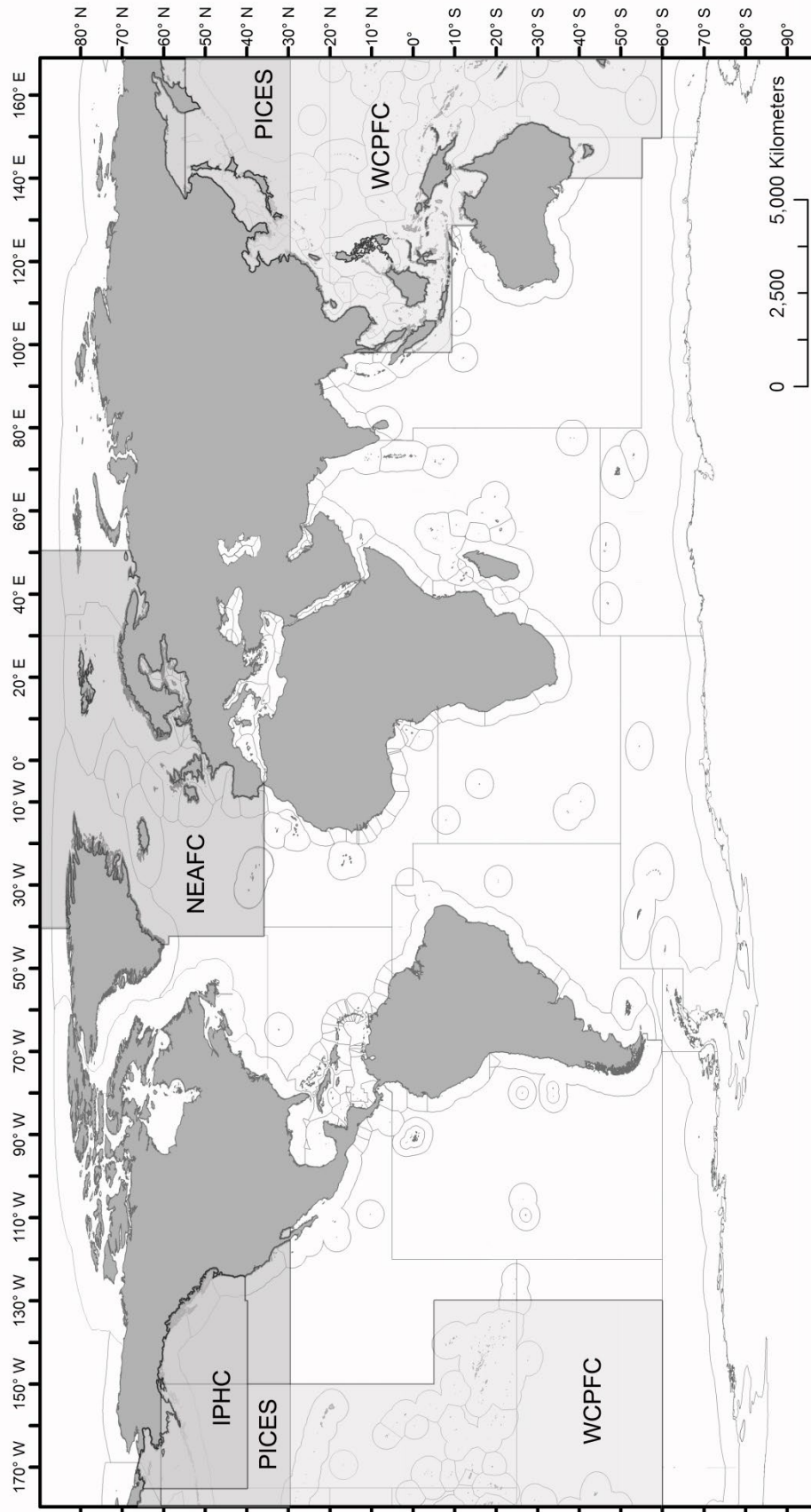


Figure 4. Approximate spatial extent of select Regional Fishery Management Organizations and Scientific Councils including the boundaries of country-specific exclusive economic zones (EEZs). IPHC: International Pacific Halibut Commission; PICES: North Pacific Marine Science Organization; WCPFC: Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission; NEAFC: Northeast Atlantic Fishery Commission. Modified from: <http://www.fao.org/fishery/area/search/en>



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