



**NOAA  
FISHERIES**

# ICCAT: 2023 Meeting Outcomes and 2024 Outlook

Spring Meeting of the ICCAT Advisory Committee

April 30, 2023

# International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)



- Conservation and management recommendations for tunas, billfish, and swordfish, as well as bycatch species, including sharks, sea turtles, and sea birds caught in association with ICCAT fisheries
- Recommendations are binding and resolutions are non-binding; both are typically adopted by consensus
- Currently 52 Contracting Parties (including the European Union, with 27 member states)
- Membership and fisheries are diverse, complicating negotiations
- NOAA Fisheries' Atlantic HMS Management Division implements ICCAT recommendations



# 2023 Annual Meeting

- New Cairo, Egypt
- US delegation spanned three continents
- Domestic implementation of new measures to be completed by NOAA
- Some wins; some work that will continue



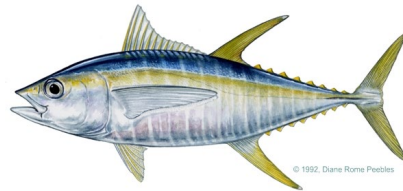
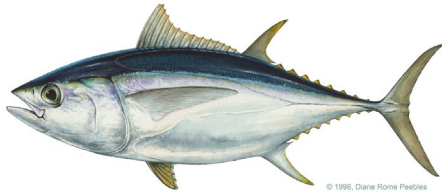
# Panel 1



# 2023 Meeting – Key Outcomes

## Bigeye and Yellowfin Tunas

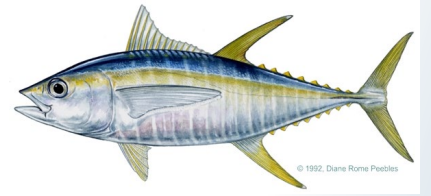
- Rec. 23-01, a one-year rollover recommendation:
  - Extends the current management measures from Recommendation 22-01 through 2024, including the current bigeye TAC of 62,000 mt
  - Maintains the current catch allocation structure, including: “Those CPCs with recent average catch of less than 1,000 t are encouraged to maintain catch and effort at recent levels,” which applies to the United States.
- No progress by the Commission on MSE, but SCRS work is ongoing.
- Change in Chair (Ghana) at the end of 2023.



# 2024 Interseasonal work

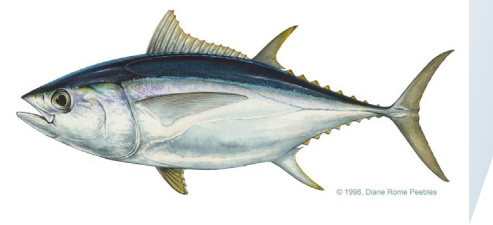
## 2024 Stock Assessments:

- Yellowfin Tuna



## Key 2024 Interseasonal Meetings:

- May 22-24, Second Interseasonal of Panel 1
- Nov 9-10, Third Interseasonal of Panel 1 (TBC)



## 2024 Annual Meeting

- Goal is to adopt:
  - (1) comprehensive tropical tuna management measure
  - (2) Western skipjack MSE
  - (3) advance work on a multistock MSE for bigeye, yellowfin, and eastern skipjack



# Panel 2



# 2023 Meeting – Key Outcomes

## **Bluefin Tuna Exception Circumstances Protocol**

- Completed Atlantic bluefin tuna MP with the adoption of this final protocol

## **Amendment of Eastern Atlantic/Mediterranean Bluefin Tuna Recommendation**

- Removing farming capacity limits
- New Cantabrian Sea pilot project

## **North Atlantic Albacore TAC set for 2024-26**

- TAC set at 47,251 t following application of the MP established in 2021
- 25% increase to the quota for other CPCs on the allocation table, including a quota limit of 889.4t for the United States





# Panel 4



# 2023 Meeting – Key Outcomes

## North Atlantic Swordfish

Rec. 23-04, a one-year rollover recommendation:

- Extends the management measures from Recommendation 17-02 through 2024, including the TAC of 13,200 mt
- Maintains the U.S. quota of 3,907 mt
- Includes one-time transfer of 200 mt U.S. quota to Morocco
- Specifies scientific work to be completed in 2024 on the management strategy evaluation (MSE), to allow the Commission to adopt a management procedure this year



# 2023 Meeting – Key Outcomes

## North Atlantic Swordfish MSE

- A minimum TAC change threshold value of 200 mt
- A 3-year Management Cycle
- Operational Management Objectives:
  - Safety** - the Panel eliminated refined options to either 10 and 15% probability of stock biomass falling below the safety threshold (the 5% option was eliminated)
  - Status** - the Panel agreed to remove 51% PGK and selected 60% PGK *or greater* as the operational management objective.
  - Yield** - Maximize yield, assessed over different time periods (short, medium, and long)
  - Stability** - depends on model type



# 2023 Meeting – Key Outcomes

## Bycatch – Mobulid rays

- Rec. 23-14 prohibits retention of mobulid rays (family Mobulidae)
- Pending further SCRS advice and approval by the Commission in 2024, would go into effect in July 2025



## Cetaceans

- Res. 23-15 encourages countries to prohibit vessels from setting purse seine nets when cetaceans are sighted



# 2023 Meeting – Key Outcomes

## Sharks



### **North Atlantic blue sharks** (Rec. 23-10)

- Assessed in 2023; stock status remains healthy
- Reduced total allowable catch (TAC) from 39,102 mt to 30,000 mt, in line with scientific advice
- United States included in countries that “shall endeavour to maintain their catches below the level of their highest annual catches over the last ten years”

### **Whale sharks** (Rec. 23-12)

- Prohibits retention of whale sharks. Pending further SCRS advice and approval by the Commission in 2024, would go into effect in January 2025

### **Fins naturally attached**

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



# 2024 Intersessional work

## 2024 Stock Assessments:

- Blue marlin

## Key 2024 Intersessional Meetings:

- Focus on North Atlantic swordfish MSE -
- SCRS Swordfish Species Group, May 6-9
- MSE Ambassadors, date tentatively June 10<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup>
- Panel 4. June 25-26



# 2023 Meeting – Key Outcomes

## Bycatch – Sea Turtles

- Resulting from a years-long effort led by the United States, in 2022, ICCAT adopted its first measure on gear and bait modifications to mitigate the impacts of fishing interactions on sea turtles (Rec. 22-12)
- Requires science-based mitigation measures, such as the use of circle hooks in shallow-set longline fisheries, in the Atlantic Ocean
- Will reduce bycatch and increase post-release survival



# 2023 Meeting – Key Outcomes

## Bycatch – Sea Turtles

- This measure helps with “leveling the playing field” for the U.S. fisheries
- Delayed implementation for the Mediterranean
- Deep-set longline provisions and other fisheries
- More work to be done on hook size and other provisions of the measure
- In 2023, ICCAT adopted Rec. 23-13, which describes the southern boundary of sea turtles’ range in which this measure applies





# 2023 Meeting – Key Outcomes

## Implementation of Rec. 22-12

- Requires specific reporting on the mitigation measures used
- Rec. 22-12 entered into force in June 2023
- At the 2023 meeting, the Secretariat presented a document summarizing how each CPC is implementing Rec. 22-12
- Responses varied and the United States noted concerns in the Compliance Committee
- 2024 will be the first full year in which the measure was in force



# Compliance Committee



# 2023 Meeting – Key Outcomes

- *Online Reporting Technology Working Group (WG-ORT)* update; continued intersessional work in 2024 budget
- First year applying the agreed Schedule of Compliance Issues and Corresponding Actions ([Ref. 22-18](#))
- Letters on specific compliance issues will be sent from Chair to 33 CPCs
- Formal identification by ICCAT:
  - Angola, Cabo Verde, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, Guinea Bissou, Namibia, São Tomé e Príncipe, and Senegal
- Compliance tables endorsed, with several payback plans proposed and adopted



# PWG



# 2023 Meeting – Key Outcomes

## **Minimum Standards for Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS)**

- EU proposal adopted with strong support from UK, Canada, and United States
- Ensures robust standards for CPCs that choose to use EMS to meet ICCAT requirements (like scientific data reporting)

## **Labor Standards**

- U.S. Chair's proposal
- Non-binding set of principles for the safety and health of fishing crews in ICCAT fisheries

## **High Seas Boarding and Inspection (HSBI) Scheme**

- Despite how close negotiations came to consensus on this proposal in 2022, there was little (and perhaps backwards) progress on this issue in 2023



# For more information:

ICCAT website: [www.iccat.int](http://www.iccat.int)

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