

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

89TH MEETING

Guayaquil, Ecuador

22 June-3 July 2015

RESOLUTION C-15-04

RESOLUTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF MOBULID RAYS CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH FISHERIES IN THE IATTC CONVENTION AREA

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC):

Recognizing that fish stocks covered by the Commission include other species of fish taken by vessels fishing for tunas;

Recalling that Article VII, paragraph 1 (f) of the Antigua Convention establishes that the Commission shall 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, the fish stocks covered by the Convention, with a view to maintaining or restoring populations of such species above levels at which their reproduction may become seriously threatened;

Considering that Mobulid rays (the family Mobulidae, which includes Manta rays and Mobula rays), are extremely vulnerable to overfishing as they take a long time to reach sexual maturity, have long gestation periods, and often give birth to only a few pups;

Recognizing that the giant manta ray (*Manta birostris*) is considered vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Munk's devil ray (*Mobula munkiana*) and the smoothtail devil ray (*Mobula thurstoni*) are considered near threatened by the IUCN;

Noting that Mobulid rays are caught as bycatch when fishing for tuna in IATTC fisheries, as presented at the IATTC Scientific Advisory Committee meeting in April 2013, and release methods for these animals do exist; and

Further noting the 2014 and 2015 IATTC staff's conservation recommendations and the fact that the Commission adopted recommendations on the handling of Mobulid rays on a voluntary basis;

Agrees that:

1. Members and Cooperating Non-Members (CPCs) shall prohibit retaining onboard, transshipping, landing, storing, selling, or offering for sale any part or whole carcass of Mobulid rays (which includes *Manta* rays and *Mobula* rays) caught in the IATTC Convention Area.
2. CPC's shall require their vessels to release all Mobulid rays alive wherever possible. Notwithstanding paragraph 1, in the case of Mobulid rays that are unintentionally caught and frozen as part of a purse-seine vessel's operation, the vessel must surrender the whole Mobulid ray to the responsible governmental authorities at the point of landing. Mobulid rays surrendered in this manner may not be sold or bartered but may be donated for purposes of domestic human consumption
3. CPCs shall require vessels flying their flag to promptly release unharmed, to the extent practicable, Mobulid rays caught in the IATTC Convention Area as soon as they are seen in the net, on the hook, or on the deck, and do it in a manner that will result in the least possible harm to the Mobulid rays captured without compromising the safety of any persons, following the guidance in the 2014 and

2015 recommendations of the IATTC scientific staff at all times, as detailed in Annex 1 to this Resolution.

4. CPCs shall record, *inter alia* through the observer programs, the number of discards and releases of Mobulid rays, indicating the status (dead or alive) and report it to the IATTC, including those surrendered under paragraph 3.
5. As an exception, the requirements of this resolution do not apply to developing CPCs' small-scale¹ and artisanal fisheries exclusively for domestic consumption.
6. No later than in 2017, the Commission, on the basis of recommendations by the IATTC scientific staff in cooperation with the Scientific Advisory Committee, shall establish a species-specific Mobulid ray data-collection program for all fisheries. Such a program shall include technical assistance and capacity-building measures to assist developing CPCs in its implementation.
7. This Resolution shall enter into force on 1 August 2016 and will be revised at the 2018 Annual meeting to take into account any new scientific evidence.

Annex I.

1. Prohibit the gaffing of rays.
2. Prohibit lifting rays by the gill slits or spiracles.
3. Prohibit the punching of holes through the bodies of rays (*e.g.* to pass a cable through for lifting the ray).
4. Require that, to the extent possible, rays too large to be lifted safely by hand be brailed out of the net using methods such as those recommended in document WCPFC-SC8-2012/ EB-IP-12 (Poison *et al.* 2012, Good practices to reduce the mortality of sharks and rays caught incidentally by the tropical tuna purse seiners).
5. Require that large rays that cannot be released safely before being landed on deck, be returned to the water as soon as possible, preferably utilizing a ramp from the deck connecting to an opening on the side of the boat, or if no such ramp is available, lowered with a sling or net.

¹ Less than 1.99 net tonnage, as defined by the 1969 International Convention on Tonnage Measurement of Ships.