JOINT IATTC AND WCPFC-NC WORKING GROUP INTERSESSIONAL MEETING ON THE MANAGEMENT OF PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA
THIRD SESSION (JWGI03)

11 – 13 March 2026
Newport Beach, California (Hybrid)

SUMMARY REPORT

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SUMMARY REPORT

AGENDA ITEM 1 OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The 3rd intersessional meeting of the Joint IATTC and WCPFC-NC Working Group on the Management of Pacific Bluefin Tuna (JWGI03) was held on 11-13 March, 2026. The meeting was opened by co-chairs, Mr. Masanori Miyahara (Japan, WCPFC Northern Committee Chair) and Mr. Josh Madeira (USA, IATTC). Co-chair Madeira thanked the United States for hosting the meeting, and the Secretariats from the IATTC and WCPFC and staff from Monterey Bay Aquarium for their assistance with meeting arrangements.

2. Drew Lawler, NOAA's Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Fisheries, delivered opening remarks, welcoming participants to Newport Beach.

3. Co-Chair Madeira noted that JWGI-03 represented the third meeting of this group in the Eastern Pacific, that good discussion had occurred at JWG10 after receiving results of the management strategy evaluation (MSE) for Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF), and that this meeting is an opportunity for JWG to make progress on developing a long-term harvest strategy prior to JWG11 in July. Co-Chair Madeira outlined three objectives for the meeting: 1) exchange views and advance discussion on the long-term harvest strategy, 2) discuss the catch documentation scheme (CDS) and Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS), and 3) Encourage further discussion among JWG members in advance of JWG11 in July.

4. A list of participants to the JWGI03 is included in **Attachment A**.

AGENDA ITEM 2 ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND MEETING PROCEDURES

5. The agenda was adopted (see **Attachment B**), and Ms. Valerie Post (USA) was confirmed as the rapporteur.

AGENDA ITEM 3 LONG-TERM HARVEST STRATEGY

AGENDA ITEM 3.1 DEVELOPMENT OF LONG-TERM HARVEST STRATEGY

6. Co-Chair Madeira provided an overview of the status and management of PBF, and noted that the IATTC and WCPFC are operating under an interim harvest strategy, which needs to be updated and replaced by a long-term harvest strategy now that the stock has achieved the second rebuilding target. Co-Chair Madeira noted that while JWG10 could not reach consensus on a long-term harvest strategy, the members agreed that the stock should be maintained above the second rebuilding target and intersessional discussions should continue. Co-Chair Madeira reminded delegates that the WCPFC and IATTC expected the JWG to complete the long-term harvest strategy in 2026, with implementation in 2027. Co-Chair Madeira also noted that the IATTC management measure expires in 2026. Finally, Co-Chair Madeira noted that JWG10 requested the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species (ISC) to develop criteria for exceptional circumstances for review by JWG11.

AGENDA ITEM 3.2 MANAGEMENT STRATEGY EVALUATION

7. Dr. Desiree Tommasi (ISC PBFWG) provided a presentation summarizing results of the MSE, including a demo of the Shiny App website and highlighting recent changes that were made to calculate total allowable catch (TAC) for the harvest control rules (HCRs) with a 70:30 WCPO:EPO fishery impact ratio.

8. Mexico noted that the MSE evaluated 16 HCRs, and asked if the ISC would be able to evaluate a new candidate HCR if one was developed by JWG.

9. The ISC PBFWG Chair responded that the PBFWG has a meeting scheduled next week and that there is very limited capacity for additional work, but it could be possible depending on the number of additional requests. He noted that the most influential element of HCR is its target level and some inferences could be made on performance if the members were interested in considering variations of different HCRs. If JWGI-03 were to develop a different candidate HCR, the ISC could calculate the TAC for JWG-11.

10. Japan stated that HCRs 1-8 were designed with the WCPO:EPO ratio of 80:20 and HCRs 9-16 were designed with the WCPO:EPO ratio of 70:30. They observed that some of the impact ratios displayed in the table indicated higher impact ratios for the EPO, and asked if ISC could explain why the impact ratios were higher than the design noting that the evaluation was based on the average 2015-2022 calculated impact.

11. Dr. Tommasi confirmed that for HCRs 1-8, the scenarios were not tuned for 80:20, and the WCPO:EPO ratio is an average of the impact across the 20 operating models. Operating Model 1 is closest to the stock assessment, and the estimated WCPO:EPO impact is close to 80:20, but the other operating models consider uncertainty and that is why the resulting WCPO:EPO impact is higher than 80:20 for some of those HCRs.

12. The ISC PBFWG Chair noted that the impact ratio may vary in the future depending on future changes to the assessment model.

AGENDA ITEM 3.3 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE LONG-TERM HARVEST STRATEGY

13. Co-Chair Madeira summarized the stages of the MSE, and emphasized the need to adopt a revised harvest strategy this year. He urged members to build a shared understanding of needs and objectives to help narrow the HCRs under discussion. Co-Chair Miyahara also noted that the development of the long-term harvest strategy is a year behind schedule and urged productive discussion at this meeting.

14. Mexico agreed that reducing the number of HCRs under consideration would be helpful, and suggested focusing first on HCRs that they would not accept. Specifically, Mexico proposed eliminating HCRs 3 and 11 which contained a target reference point (TRP) of FSPR40%. Mexico stated they could not support these HCRs because scientists have never estimated such high biomass for this stock, and there may be significant ecosystem impacts.

15. Japan supported Mexico's intervention to eliminate HCRs 3 and 11. Japan expressed support for HCR 5 which sets the TRP at 25% SSB, close to the estimated Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) level, which is a common benchmark for many countries. Japan noted that past management actions, including a 50% decrease in WCPO small fish catch limit, led to the successful rebuilding of the stock. They stated that the MSE results for HCR 5 show a high probability of maintaining the stock above 20%SSB and a low probability of the stock falling below the limit reference point (LRP). They also stated that they might be open to considering some changes to the HCR 5 based on discussion over the next few days.

16. Korea echoed support for Mexico's suggestion, and further proposed eliminating the more extreme HCRs, specifically HCRs 3, 6, 11 and 14. Korea noted that HCRs 3 and 11 would require substantial TAC reductions from current levels to achieve, and considered HCRs 6 and 14 too risky.

17. Chinese Taipei stated that it also supported the recommendations to eliminate HCRs 3 and 11. As their fishery is a WCPO large fish fishery, important elements for them include the expected TAC for the WCPO large fish, stability and long-term yield performance. Chinese Taipei stated that HCR 5 met all of those considerations, and is similar to the current management scheme so their fishermen are familiar with it.

18. The United States expressed support for narrowing down the Harvest Control Rules (HCRs) under consideration, agreeing with Mexico's and Korea's suggestions to remove HCRs 3, 6, 11, and 14 based on the rationale provided. The United States stated its support for HCR 10,

noting that it provides an adequate buffer between the target and threshold reference point (ThRP) and maintains spawning stock biomass (SSB) above current levels. The United States was not interested in HCRs that did not include explicit LRPs, as they stated LRPs are important components of harvest strategies and referenced the WCPFC CMM on harvest strategies. The United States also did not favor HCRs like HCR 5 where breaching the threshold reference point results in reverting back to prior management, as that management would be unresponsive to stock status. Finally, the United States stressed the need for the long-term harvest strategy to maintain stock status above the second rebuilding target.

19. Mexico responded that they were supportive of Korea's proposal to eliminate HCRs 6 and 14. Mexico stated that they were flexible with respect to the TRP, and could accept TRPs ranging from 25-30%. They noted that HCR 5 contains one control point, and that they prefer an HCR with a second control point or a LRP of 7.7%SSB0. On the location of the first control point, they did not support the ThRP at 25% as they viewed a ThRP above the second rebuilding target as inconsistent with the management objectives. Mexico felt that the ThRP should be around 20% SSB_0.

20. New Zealand supported the point from the United States that every HCR should include an explicit limit reference point. New Zealand reiterated its position from last year that it preferred HCRs 3 and 11 as these are precautionary and align with their domestic policy. However, noting concerns expressed by Mexico, Japan and Korea, New Zealand stated that HCRs 2 and 10 would also be acceptable.

21. Pew stated that it believed HCRs should contain a defined LRP, even if not used as a control point. They also emphasized the need for an HCR shape that is responsive to stock status. Pew felt that HCRs 5 and 13 were too risky because they are not responsive to the status of the sock, and require high recruitment levels to be successful. Finally, Pew stated that the HCR should ensure a high probability of maintaining the stock above 20%SSB.

22. The ISC PBFWG Chair confirmed that FSPR40% would result in a stock biomass level that has never been observed in the history of the assessment period. The ISC PBFWG Chair also noted that MSY is calculated from the assessment model, but depends on assumptions of recruitment. He also stressed that rather than HCR shape, it is more important to focus on the performance of HCRs through the MSE.

23. The United States suggested that it would be good to discuss the merits of a second control point as some members seem hesitant on including it. The United States stated that a second control point builds in safety, and only sees positive benefits, but asked other members what concerns they have.

24. The ISC PBFWG Chair noted that a second control point results in a steeper slope which means reducing fishing mortality more quickly than in HCRs with one control point. Steeper reductions may result in greater catch variability, but could be safer because the reduced catch may allow the stock to recover quickly so it's a tradeoff between safety and stability. He also noted that one of the downsides of a 25% TAC change limitation is that if biomass falls below the LRP, the stock may quickly recover as 25% restriction is not applied, but then the stability clause kicks in and could slow increases to catch limits. He also emphasized that LRP can be set independent of the shape of HCRs.

25. Japan stated that they did not feel the second control point is needed as some HCRs that are under discussion in the IATTC for bigeye tuna do not contain a second control point. They felt that evaluating performance was most important, and asked the IATTC Secretariat if they had any advice on including a second control point.

26. IATTC scientific staff stated that it is currently conducting an MSE for bigeye tuna, and investigating different HCRs. They noted that an HCR was developed last year with only one control point of 20% and agreed with the ISC Chair that the main impact is the slope of the HCR. The IATTC scientific staff explained his view that the primary argument for not including the bigeye tuna LRP within the HCR as a control point is due to how the LRP is defined, and suggested that it might be better to use the LRP as an exceptional circumstance where if stock biomass drops below the LRP, a rebuilding plan should be implemented.

27. The United States asked for clarification on the timeline for exceptional circumstances, and the IATTC scientific staff explained that the timeline would be based on how often stock assessments are completed. IATTC scientific staff also noted that the MSE is designed to avoid the LRP, and if stock biomass were to drop below the LRP that suggests that the system had changed drastically from the parameters used in the MSE.

28. Following a request from the Co-Chairs, the ISC PBFWG Chair reviewed figures from the MSE report and explained the pros and cons of different HCR shapes and control points.

29. The United States asked about the figure that showed the risk of breaching the second rebuilding target, and noted a robustness figure shown earlier in the day that might have evaluated performance under scenarios with low recruitment.

30. The ISC PBFWG Chair responded that the presented results were from reference OMs, which were the most likely scenarios, and the robustness tests are additional considerations in less likely scenarios (but are still possible).

31. The United States reiterated their points about concerns with HCRs without a second control point, which would be less protective under a scenario of low recruitment. The United

States also brought up small fish catch in the WCPO, noting that it was the increase in this catch that contributed to the stock crash. The U.S. emphasized the importance of discussing protections for small fish, and age-0 fish in particular.

32. The ISC PBFWG Chair agreed that protecting small fish will benefit PBF but that not increasing impacts to small fish cannot be incorporated into the current MSE evaluation. The U.S. clarified they were not asking to incorporate consideration of age-0 fish in the MSE but simply noting this is an important issue to be considered in the CMM. Co-Chair Miyahara agreed that not increasing Age-0 fish catch was part of the package agreed to in 2024 and that commitment should be reviewed at JWG-11in July.

33. Japan echoed their commitment not to increase Age-0 fish catch from 50% of 2002-2004 levels as provided in paragraph 10 of CMM 2024-01 and noted they have been making that effort. They requested that ISC present the figure on age-specific fishing mortality. Co-chairs Madeira and Miyahara requested that this figure and the review of robustness test results as requested by the U.S. be presented the following day.

34. The U.S. asked Japan about the methodology their fleets use to reduce their small fish catch. Japan responded that they have cut the catch limit for small fish in accordance with WCPFC management measures. Once the fleet uses their limit, they are no longer permitted to catch small fish. They also encourage their fishermen to convert their small fish limit into a large fish limit using the conversion factor.

35. The U.S. asked Japan how they count discards. Japan responded that dead discards are counted against their catch limit, so that is why there are overshootings of the catch limit in some management sectors.

36. Co-chair Miyahara noted that Japan made an effort to change purse seine methods so they would catch larger fish. Japan responded that large purse seiners are prohibited from landing Age-0 fish at port in line with its commitment at JWG09. Sometimes they catch small PBF for farming operations, but they are encouraged to catch larger fish for farming operations which has reduced Age-0 catch from purse seine vessels.

37. The U.S. asked Japan exactly how much small fish catch limit was converted to large fish catch. Japan did not have the numbers immediately available but stated they would report back the next day.

38. The U.S. requested to see the figure in the 2024 stock assessment showing percentage of PBF catch by age. The co-chairs assured the U.S. this would be provided along with the other figures in the morning.

39. The first day of the meeting adjourned at 4:30pm.

40. The second day of the meeting began with a brief discussion by the co-chairs on logistics followed by a presentation from the ISC PBFWG Chair showing the figures requested by the various delegations the day prior. Dr. Tommasi also presented more details on the robustness tests, explaining that HCRs with higher TRPs perform better in terms of risk in scenarios with low recruitment.

41. The ISC PBFWG Chair noted that a low recruitment scenario is unlikely to not be detected in reality because Japan is conducting recruitment monitoring and it is unlikely we would not notice a drop in recruitment when it happens. Co-Chair Madeira emphasized the importance of exceptional circumstances, and asked the ISC PBFWG Chair if the members will have more information on those in July. The ISC PBFWG Chair confirmed they will be presenting information on exceptional circumstances at the July meeting. The ISC PBFWG will be meeting soon to discuss exceptional circumstances, and intends to start with the exceptional circumstances developed for North Pacific albacore as a template.

42. Co-chair Madeira requested that members focus on reducing the number of HCRs during discussions, and noted that the issues regarding Age-0 fish and recruitment will need to be discussed in July. He stated the focus of discussions should be narrowing candidate targets, acceptable control points and stability considerations.

43. Japan responded to the United States' question from the previous day, stating that out of 4,007 metric tons of small fish catch limit, 931 metric tons were converted to large fish catch. They also asked the ISC to confirm that all MSE calculations include all fisheries. The ISC PBFWG Chair stated that the TAC is provided for the WCPO and EPO, and is assumed to be total mortality including sport catch and discards, but later issued a correction to this statement. The ISC PBFWG Chair clarified that they do not know the precise number for discards but include an assumption on discard numbers that is not part of the TAC. The TAC only includes removals by the fleets.

44. The United States proposed that discussions continue on narrowing the scope of potential HCRs, reiterating their preference for a TRP of 30% and two control points. They also brought up the fishery impact ratio, expressing that a way forward might be to try and reach agreement on target, threshold, and limit reference points before discussing impact ratio in July.

45. Mexico agreed with the United States proposal on focusing discussions around the three reference points. They also emphasized their preference for moving from the 80:20 WCPO:EPO impact ratio to another value, but that could be discussed in July. Mexico predicted that the HCR agreed to in the end would likely be a hybrid of the HCRs currently under consideration. They suggested that members could go around the room and state their preferences for the different reference points, and Mexico stated they preferred a TRP of between 25 and 30%. They also

acknowledged concerns about slow increases in catch in HCRs with LRPs and catch stability clauses, and expressed there may be a way to allow for greater increases in catch if the stock were to recover after a period of low SSB.

46. Japan agreed with the idea to discuss the HCR structure first, and that discussion on the impact ratio would not be constructive at this stage. They reiterated their preference for HCR 5, but agreed on the possibility of a hybrid HCR.

47. Korea stated a preference for HCRs 4, 5, 7, and 8, but expressed reservations about HCRs 4 and 8 because they would result in a reduction of WCPO small fish catch. They expressed they may have flexibility on those HCRs if the conversion factor for small to large fish could be adjusted to reflect the most recent paper from ISC.

48. Co-Chair Madeira asked for clarification on the conversion factor from the ISC. The ISC PBFWG Chair confirmed that the ISC provided a different conversion factor last year. The first version of the conversion factor was very conservative, but the second one calculated a general average weight of small fish converted to the general average weight of large fish to maintain equal impact so that they could be interchangeable. The co-chair responded that there will be time in July to discuss this in more detail.

49. Chinese Taipei expressed a preference for HCR 5. They indicated a preference for a TRP of 25-30% and were open to considering an HCR with one or two control points.

50. The Co-Chairs convened a small group closed session to discuss targets and reference/control points.

51. Co-chair Madeira presented the compromise proposal as **Attachment C**.

52. The ISC PBFWG Chair suggested not to label the second control point as LRP. JWG agreed that deleting the word “LRP” would be better at this point.

53. JWG agreed to use Attachment C for further internal consideration with their stakeholders and discussion at JWG11.

54. Korea asked for clarification on the process in the July meeting. Co-chair Miyahara stated that if a harvest strategy can be agreed to, a TAC can be generated, and that the Co-Chairs could prepare draft measures for both commissions to consider. Co-chair Madeira noted that other issues for consideration are still on the table and that they will bring a proposal with bracketed text to advance discussion.

AGENDA ITEM 4 CATCH DOCUMENTATION SCHEME

55. Co-chair Miyahara read a report from the Chair of the CDS Technical Meeting, Mr. Shingo Ota, describing the progress of the 6th CDS meeting which was held on July 9, 2025. The meeting discussed options for budgetary and administrative consideration, and generally agreed to support one system for both IATTC and WCPFC. A final decision will be made after evaluating the technical and financial implications and the feasibility of developing an ePBCD (electronic Pacific bluefin CDS) based on the CCSBT's e-CDS system. The meeting also discussed the draft CMM on the ePBCD. The meeting agreed that given the difference in the conservation measures for PBF between the IATTC and WCPFC, certain flexibility should be considered when formulating actual measures for the CDS in each commission. It was agreed that the small working group will work intersessionally to refine the draft CMM. The next CDS Technical WG will be held in Nagasaki, Japan on July 8 this year. There were no questions or comments.

AGENDA ITEM 5 MONITORING, CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE (MCS)

56. Japan introduced their working document compiling the MCS measure implemented by each member based on information provided to JWG10 in July and IATTC. The Co-Chair asked Japan to prepare a revised measure for July. There were no questions or comments.

AGENDA ITEM 6 OTHER BUSINESS

57. The ISC PBFWG Chair emphasized the importance of exceptional circumstances and encouraged members to start thinking about them, noting that the ISC intends to use the exceptional circumstances developed for North Pacific albacore as a template (Attachment C of the NC21 report). He also noted that the agreement of the exceptional circumstances provision can wait another year after the adoption of the management procedure if there is insufficient time available.

58. Korea commented that they believe there are some discrepancies between the management systems in place in IATTC and WCPFC. For example, the IATTC does not manage small fish and large fish separately and has a bienniel catch limit management system. They asked if there is a possibility of consistency between the two organizations. The JWG took note of this.

59. Japan asked if Korea’s intention was for the WCPFC to adopt a catch limit without consideration of size, and expressed that may be difficult.

60. Korea clarified that they are not suggesting WCPO manage the stock without separating the sizes, but that there should be some kind of consistency between the two RFMOs and perhaps in the future they could task ISC with this kind of work. They expressed an interest in a biennial catch limit management system for WCPFC for consistency.

61. The co-chairs reminded Korea that the members will discuss management periods in July. They noted that different approaches are taken in different RFMOs because there are differing implications for conservation. Co-chair Miyahara reminded the room of the history behind these measures.

62. Mexico echoed their willingness to discuss Korea's suggestion in July, but emphasized that the separation between large and small fish is very important because small fish catch has the biggest impact on the stock. The United States echoed Mexico's comments on the importance of small fish, emphasizing that the fisheries in the EPO do not catch many small fish. On the management period, United States noted that the WCPFC measure does not expire so that is an alternative duration to consider. The United States stated that the July meeting is an opportunity to imagine how future cycles will move from stock assessment to producing the TAC through an MP and setting any changes to management measures for both sides.

63. JWG requested that the ISC provide an update on the PBF recruitment index at JWG11.

AGENDA ITEM 7 ADOPTION OF REPORT

64. JWG adopted the summary report.

AGENDA ITEM 8 CLOSE OF MEETING

65. The meeting closed at 11:05 am on 13 March 2026.

Attachment A

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Attachment B

JOINT IATTC AND WCPFC-NC WORKING GROUP INTERSESSIONAL MEETING ON THE MANAGEMENT OF PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA
THIRD SESSION (JWGI03)

11 – 13 March 2026
Newport Beach, California (Hybrid)

AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting

2. Adoption of Agenda and Meeting Procedures

3. Long-term Harvest Strategy

3.1 Development of long-term harvest strategy

The Co-Chairs will provide a summary of the development of the long-term harvest strategy to date and expectations for 2026.

3.2 Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE)

The ISC will provide a summary of the MSE results (completed in 2025), relevant updates, and resources available to support management decisions.

3.3 Discussion and recommendations on the long-term harvest strategy

JWG Members will discuss elements of the long-term harvest strategy, including harvest control rules, reference points, and other related issues. The Co-Chairs will work with JWG Members to develop any recommendations or requests, as appropriate.

4. Catch Documentation Scheme (CDS)

The Co-Chairs will provide an update on the development of the catch documentation scheme for Pacific bluefin tuna and expectations for 2026.

5. Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS)

JWG Members will review current MCS measures (IATTC C-24-03 and WCPFC 2024-02) and

discuss approaches to updating these measures in 2026.

6. Other Business

The JWG will discuss other business as appropriate.

7. Adoption of Report

8. Close of Meeting

Attachment C

JOINT IATTC AND WCPFC-NC WORKING GROUP INTERSESSIONAL MEETING ON THE MANAGEMENT OF PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA
THIRD SESSION (JWGI03)

11 – 13 March 2026
Newport Beach, California (Hybrid)

Newport Beach Management Procedure

The JWG proposes to continue discussion on the long-term harvest strategy with these elements:

F-target	Control Point 1 (ThRP)	Control Point 2	No. of Control Points	Fmin	Review
FSPR 27.5%	20% $SSB_{F=0}$	7.7% $SSB_{F=0}$	2	SPR70%	MP will be reviewed after 6 years (3 x 2-year cycles)

- Other issues to be considered at JWG-11:
  - West – East fishery impact
  - Small fish / age-0 control measures
  - Recruitment drop/ exceptional circumstances
  - Conversion factor
  - Additional LRP considerations
  - Implementation measures

- The JWG requests that ISC provide an updated TAC calculation based on proposed harvest strategy elements in advance of JWG-11 (July 2026).