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STAFF'S PROPOSED MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE FOR TROPICAL TUNA IN THE EASTERN PACIFIC OCEAN: SUMMARY

SUMMARY

This document summarizes the key elements of the staff's proposed Management Procedure (MP) for tropical tunas in the EPO. For a detailed description of the proposed Management Procedure framework, see Documents [SAC-17-06](#), particularly option 2.c, and IATTC-104-02b.

The proposed MP provides for a staged, incremental reduction in purse-seine closure days, reducing the closure to **50 days during 2027–2029**, followed by a minimum closure of **40 days during 2030–2031**, as determined by the proposed **F30-S20** harvest control rule (HCR). This phased approach maintains a precautionary management framework while allowing the Commission to progressively realize the benefits of the improved stock status as additional performance evaluations and improved scientific information become available.

The proposed MP may be considered an *interim Multispecies Management Procedure* for the following reasons:

- The Commission has not yet formally adopted multispecies management objectives for tropical tunas in the EPO. By applying the proposed **F30-S20** HCR to all tropical tuna stocks, identifying the stock requiring the most restrictive management, and applying that outcome across all stocks, the proposed MP maintains the current precautionary approach while incorporating it into a formal Management Procedure. This provides a practical and precautionary framework for multispecies management while the Commission defines formal multispecies objectives and determines how best to operationalize them (e.g. through the decoupling of stocks, fisheries, and set types).
- The proposed duration of the MP, spanning **two management cycles** (6 years), would provide the Commission with sufficient time to define multispecies management objectives and develop an agreed framework for their implementation.
- The interim period would also allow the staff to reduce key sources of uncertainty in the stock assessments, complete the MSE development for yellowfin and skipjack tunas, and develop a full multispecies MSE that incorporates the multispecies objectives as adopted by the Commission.

1. MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

A comprehensive Management Procedure (MP) for tropical tunas in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) is proposed, the principal components of which have been evaluated using Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) ([SAC-17-05](#); [SAC-17 INF-Q](#)). This document provides an overview of the proposed MP. Additional technical details are provided in document SAC-17-06.

Stocks: All three tropical tuna species. The MP covers all three principal tropical tuna species in the EPO, bigeye (BET), yellowfin (YFT), and skipjack (SKJ), including the two plausible yellowfin stock structures (northeast [NE] and southwest [SW]).

Multispecies MP: Most restrictive stock. Management measures are determined by the stock requiring the most restrictive management, with the resulting management action applied across all tropical tuna stocks.

Management cycle: Three years. The MP operates on a three-year management cycle. It is evaluated every three years to determine the management measures for the subsequent three-year period. Once adopted, management measures remain unchanged throughout the cycle unless exceptional circumstances are identified. The status of the stocks and fisheries are monitored annually to evaluate whether any exceptional circumstances have occurred.

Start year: 2027. The MP begins in 2027. The first management cycle (2027–2029) includes a fixed purse-seine closure of 50 days. Management measures for the second and subsequent cycles are determined by the harvest control rules (HCRs) contained in the MP for both purse-seine and longline fisheries.

Initial implementation period: 2027–2032. The MP is initially implemented for two management cycles (six years), after which a comprehensive review is conducted using updated data and analyses for all three tropical tuna species. During this period, data collection and research are expanded to improve stock assessments and understanding of the stocks and fisheries, thereby reducing uncertainty in future management advice. As appropriate, the MSE for bigeye tuna (BET) will be updated to incorporate new information, while more comprehensive MSE development and testing will be completed for yellowfin (YFT) and skipjack (SKJ), and ultimately for a comprehensive multi-species MP. At the conclusion of this initial implementation period in 2032, the Commission will decide whether to adopt a revised MP or continue implementing the existing MP for the 2033–2035 management cycle.

Estimation model: Updated risk analyses. The estimation models are based on the median results of the risk analyses from the updated stock assessments for each species. Updated assessments incorporate new years of data and revisions to data from previous years, while maintaining the same model structure and assumptions as the corresponding benchmark assessments (BET, SAC-15-02; YFT, SAC-16-03; SKJ, SAC-15-04 and SAC-16-04).

Purse-seine harvest control rule (HCR):

- **F30-S20.** The proposed **F30-S20** harvest control rule is applied independently to each tropical tuna stock. The HCR sets the target fishing mortality at the level corresponding to a spawning biomass depletion of **30% of the dynamic unfished spawning biomass (F_{30})**. If spawning biomass falls below **20% of the dynamic unfished spawning biomass (S_{20})**, the target fishing mortality is reduced linearly, reaching zero at zero spawning biomass (Figure 1, Equation 1).

$$F_{HCR} = \begin{cases} F_{30\%} & \text{if } SBR \geq 20\% \\ F_{30\%} \frac{SBR}{0.2} & \text{if } SBR < 20\% \end{cases} \quad \text{E.q. 1}$$

- **Implementation:** Purse-seine closure days. The target fishing mortality specified by the HCR is implemented through adjustments to the number of purse-seine closure days according to Equation 2:

$$DoC_{new} = 365 - (365 - DoC_{old}) \frac{F_{HCR}}{F_{cur}} \quad \text{E.q. 2}$$

- **Stability: Limits on changes in closure days.** To promote stability and predictability in management, changes in purse-seine closure days ($DoC_{new} - DoC_{old}$) are limited to **10 days per management cycle**. Two exceptions apply: (1) during the first management cycle, a larger reduction to a **50-day closure** is permitted to provide a faster transition toward the target fishing mortality; and (2) beginning with the second management cycle, increases of up to **20 closure days** are permitted when spawning biomass falls below the S_{20} control point.

Longline Harvest Control Rule:

- **S_{20} control point.** The current CPC longline catch limits are retained except when the spawning biomass goes below 20% of the dynamic unfished spawning biomass (S_{20}) for which the limits are reduced linearly to zero at zero biomass (Figure 1, Equation 3).

$$C = \begin{cases} C_{limit} & \text{if } SBR \geq 20\% \\ C_{limit} \frac{SBR}{0.2} & \text{if } SBR < 20\% \end{cases} \quad \text{E.q. 3}$$

- **Longline catch limits: full utilization.** Full utilization of longline catch limits is allowed. A mechanism, acceptable to the effected longline fishing CPCs (China, Japan, Korea, Chinese Taipei, United States), is developed so the sum of the catch limits for all CPCs can be caught.

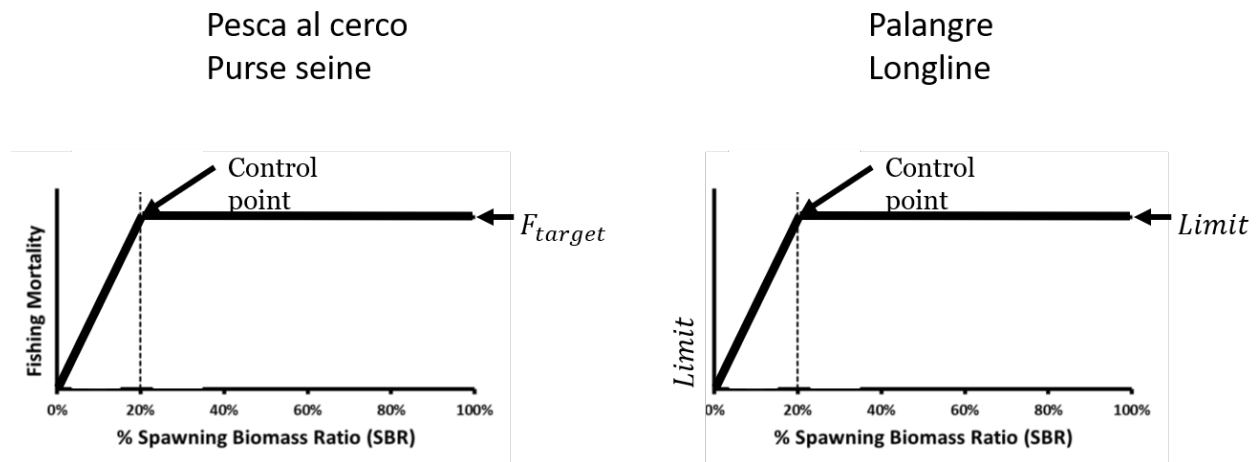


Figure 1. The F30-S20 HCR used in the MP for purse seine fishing mortality (left) and longline catch limits (right).

2. EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Exceptional circumstances are rare conditions that fall outside the range of stock, fishery, data, or implementation conditions under which a management procedure was tested through MSE. Under those conditions, continued automatic application of the harvest control rule may be unsafe, inappropriate, or technically impossible. They are essentially an emergency protocol surrounding the management procedure. They are not intended to provide routine discretion to override an inconvenient management result.

Exceptional circumstances shall be evaluated annually using the best scientific information available. This evaluation shall consider stock status indicators each year, updated stock assessments at each management cycle, and benchmark assessments according to the schedule established by the Commission.

Interim measures. If an exceptional circumstance is identified, the MP or the relevant management component shall be re-evaluated using the best scientific information available. Until the existing MP is confirmed as suitable to continue or a revised or new MP is adopted, interim management measures shall apply. By default, these shall be the measures established in Resolution C-25-01. When necessary, the staff shall recommend additional or alternative measures.

Examples of potential exceptional circumstances considered by the staff:

- **Limit reference point breached:** If the probability that spawning biomass is below the IATTC limit reference point exceeds an agreed risk threshold, the Commission would develop a rebuilding plan designed to restore the stock to the agreed target within an appropriate timeframe. For example, consistent with paragraph 3.c. in Resolution C-23-06, if the probability that spawning biomass is below the IATTC limit reference point, defined as an equilibrium spawning biomass of 7.7% of the unfished level, exceeds 10%, a rebuilding plan shall be developed to restore the stock to the agreed target within an appropriate time frame (two generations, equivalent to six years).
- **Unexpectedly high fishing mortality:** If the fishing mortality produced by the harvest control rule exceeds an agreed historical or precautionary level, that level could be used temporarily in calculating the closure while the MP is being re-evaluated. For example, if the fishing mortality rate specified by the harvest control rule (F_{HCR}) exceeds the average fishing mortality rate during 2019–2021 ($F_{2019-2021}$), which represents the maximum historical level, the duration of the closure shall be calculated using $F_{2019-2021}$ instead of F_{HCR} .
- **New assessment information:** An updated or benchmark assessment indicates that assumptions concerning stock structure, productivity, selectivity, fishing mortality, or other relevant factors have changed sufficiently to warrant re-evaluation of the MP.
- **Indicators outside expected ranges:** Stock status or fishery indicators that fall outside historical ranges or the ranges evaluated in the MSE could prompt additional analysis or an updated assessment.
- **Reduced effectiveness of the IVT:** If the staff determines that the IVT measure no longer provides sufficient incentives for fleets to reduce catches of bigeye tuna in sets on floating objects, the MP shall be re-evaluated, including consideration of refinements to the incentives associated with the IVT. Potential trigger conditions include unusually high catches of bigeye tuna that cannot be explained solely by increased recruitment, or analyses indicating changes in fleet behavior that

reduce the effectiveness of the measure (e.g. [SAC-16 INF-S](#)).

- **Loss or deterioration of essential data:** Discontinuation of the IPSP, or loss of reliability of a principal CPUE index for one of the stocks, could require changes to the information used by the MP.
- **Closure duration outside the expected range:** A change in closure duration substantially greater than expected could indicate unusual stock or fishery conditions and warrant re-evaluation of the MP. Examples:
 - If the harvest control rule produces an unusually long closure (e.g. exceeding 72 days), additional or alternative measures could be considered to achieve the required reduction in fishing mortality.
 - If the change calculated by the harvest control rule exceeds 20 days.
- **Global longline catch limit exceeded:** If the total longline catch exceeds the applicable global catch limit, the longline management measures and the MP shall be reevaluated.
- **Unexpected decline in bigeye longline CPUE:** A decline in the bigeye longline CPUE index beyond the range expected under the adopted management measures could indicate an unexpected deterioration in stock condition and warrant an updated stock assessment and re-evaluation of the MP. For example, if, in 2027 or 2028, the index falls below the Xth percentile, such as the 20th percentile, of the distribution projected in the 2026 risk analysis under the adopted closures, an updated stock assessment shall be conducted and the MP shall be re-evaluated.

3. ADDITIONAL WORK

The proposed MP will span two three year management cycles, covering an initial six year period. This period will provide the staff with sufficient time to complete further work to reduce uncertainty in the stock assessments, complete ecosystem research and, if desired by the Commission, develop a fully explicit multi-species management procedure. It should be noted that large reductions in uncertainty are highly unlikely under routine collection of current data and new types of data are necessary.

Substantial data collection, research, and analytical work will be carried out during the first two management cycles, from 2027 to 2032.

Work by the staff:

- Develop benchmark assessments for all stocks;
- Complete single species MSEs for yellowfin and skipjack;
- Conduct a multispecies MSE once multispecies management objectives have been defined; and
- Continue implementing the IATTC workplans on ecosystem based fisheries management, ecosystem indicators and EcoCards, and climate change, including the development of improved ecosystem indicators and tools to support management advice.

In addition, the Commission will have the opportunity, if desired, to define the elements required for a fully explicit multispecies management procedure and to further incorporate ecosystem considerations into the management framework.

Potential work by the Commission:

- Develop multispecies management objectives and measures;
- Consider appropriate ecosystem objectives and their potential incorporation into the management procedure; and

- Update the MP, if necessary, based on the results of this work.

A proposed timeline for this work is provided below.

		2026	MP cycle 1			MP cycle 2			2033
			2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	
MANAGEMENT (PROPOSED MP)	PS closure days	64	50	50	50	Min 40	Min 40	Min 40	Maitain / new MP
	Determine closure days for next cycle				Run HCR			Run HCR	
	Evaluate exceptional circumstances	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Evaluate MP							X	
MULTI-SPECIES DISCUSSIONS	Objectives								
	Measures and operationalization								
STOCK ASSESSMENTS	BET	UA	BA		UA	BA	BA		
	YFT		UA		BA-UA		BA		
	SKJ			Exploratory	BA-UA, Explor	BA	UA		
MSE	BET	Finalize							
	YFT	Start	Start	Finalize					
	SKJ				Start	Finalize			
	Multi-species						Start	Finalize	
RESEARCH	Tagging program: All species OBJ		Start	Tag recovery	Tag recov / Analysis	Analysis			
	Tagging program: Large YFT on DEL				Start				
	Growth		Start			Analysis			