



Recommendations to the 89th Meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission

29 June-3 July 2015, Guayaquil, Ecuador

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) is responsible for the conservation and management of tuna and other marine resources in the eastern Pacific Ocean. It is the obligation of Member States to enforce strict compliance with measures passed by the Commission.

The Pew Charitable Trusts calls on Members and Cooperating non-Members at the 89th Meeting of the IATTC to take these critical actions:

- **Implement strong conservation and management measures for tuna species.**
 - Adopt stronger catch limits and an effective rebuilding plan for Pacific bluefin tuna.
 - Electronically track fish aggregating devices and manage their use effectively.
 - Establish appropriate target and limit reference points for all tuna species.
 - Increase observer coverage on longline vessels.
- **Adopt conservation and management measures to protect shark species.**
 - Prohibit the retention of biologically vulnerable shark species, particularly silky and hammerhead.
 - Prohibit the retention of manta and mobula rays and require best practices to maximize their survival.
 - Limit the mortality of other shark species, including blue and shortfin mako, to sustainable levels.
 - Require best practices for reducing shark bycatch.
- **Improve compliance and combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.**
 - Strengthen port State measures.
 - Ensure that the IUU vessel list is effective and up to date.
 - Ensure timely compliance with new requirements on vessel monitoring systems and mandatory International Maritime Organization numbers.
 - Ban all forms of transshipment at sea.
- **Improve transparency and accountability.**
 - Improve transparency by requiring reporting for rights to fish.
 - Conduct a Commission performance review.

Recommendations

Implement strong conservation and management measures for tuna species

Pew is increasingly concerned about the health of tuna populations in the eastern Pacific Ocean. The current catch and effort-based limits have failed to protect the populations of several commercially and ecologically important stocks of tuna. Precautionary, science-based catch limits and gear controls are critical to safeguarding these depleted tuna populations.

Adopt stronger catch limits and an effective rebuilding plan for Pacific bluefin tuna

The Pacific bluefin tuna population remains in a dire state: It is overfished, and overfishing continues on a stock that is at just 4 percent of its unfished levels. Actions by the IATTC, however, have not followed the best available scientific advice on how to reverse the severe depletion. In 2014, the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) conducted a stock assessment that included an analysis of seven management scenarios and their potential effect on future population size. Only one predicted population growth under current conditions.



In late 2014, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) adopted catch limits for the western Pacific that matched that scenario. The IATTC did not take the needed complementary action to reduce mortality—the catch limits adopted remain 20 percent higher than those in the ISC scenario. The IATTC also has not adopted a long-term rebuilding target and timeline for Pacific bluefin, leaving the future of the species in doubt.

With new indications of substantial declines in recruitment in the western Pacific in recent years, it is clear that current management measures on both sides of the ocean are insufficient to reverse the population decline.

Based on the latest scientific information, Pew calls on the Commission to:

- **Adopt a yearly total commercial catch limit of 2,750 metric tons, including dead discards and recreational catch.**

- **Collaborate with the WCPFC and ISC to develop and implement a comprehensive, basin-wide rebuilding plan for Pacific bluefin tuna that returns the population to at least 25 percent of the original population size within 10 years. This plan should include shared management objectives and harvest strategy, as well as a commitment to carry out a management strategy evaluation to inform selection of the harvest strategy.**
- **Implement strong monitoring and enforcement measures, including a catch documentation system, full observer coverage at transfer to ranches and at harvest, and authorized vessels lists.**
- **Ensure that management measures are effective, complementary, and applied consistently on both sides of the Pacific, as required in Article XXIV of the Antigua Convention.**

If IATTC does not take appropriate fisheries management actions this year, other international measures such as regulation of international trade may have to be considered.

Electronically track fish aggregating devices and manage their use effectively

Purse seine vessels have been deploying greater numbers of fish aggregating devices in the eastern Pacific in recent years, and the IATTC has a responsibility to manage these FADs more effectively. Although fishing on FADs is an efficient method of catching skipjack and yellowfin tuna, it also snares other marine species, including juvenile Pacific bigeye tuna, which are overfished. With no limits on FAD deployments or sets, more bigeye are caught in the purse seine fishery than by the longline vessels targeting the species. Ninety-nine percent of the bigeyes caught in the purse seine fishery are caught using FADs.¹

In addition, more of these floating objects are being abandoned by purse seine vessels each year. Unrecovered FADs wash up on beaches or degrade until they sink, polluting the marine environment. The rapid growth of their use also complicates scientific analysis of the purse seine effort as part of fishery assessments. Currently, there is no reliable index of relative abundance for skipjack in the eastern Pacific.

Although the Commission has taken steps to focus on FADs, it needs to recognize the urgency of this issue. IATTC Resolution C-13-04,² adopted two years ago, required the Commission to begin gathering information in January 2015 on the deployment, use, and recovery of FADs. It also requires scientific staff to present management recommendations no later than the annual meeting in 2016. Although the Commission could not agree last year to a standardized scheme for FAD marking to assist in that data collection, a promising option exists: The satellite-based FAD tracking and monitoring systems already used by purse seine vessels to track their own FADs can provide near real-time data to the Secretariat without additional cost to industry.

Based on the increasing number of FADs used in the eastern Pacific and their negative impact on the bigeye population, Pew calls on the Commission to:

- **Adopt an electronic tracking and monitoring system that collects information about the locations and uses of FAD satellite buoys, in line with the advice from the scientific staff.**
- **Share tracking information with the Commission's scientific staff in order to improve stock assessments, determine the extent of FAD use, and inform research on FADs' potential impact on ocean ecosystems.**
- **Ensure that recommendations on FAD management are discussed no later than the annual Commission meeting in 2016.**
- **Develop a management option that limits FAD sets to levels that prevent overfishing of juvenile bigeye tuna.**
- **Annually review compliance with FAD measures and take action in response to instances of non-compliance.**

Establish appropriate target and limit reference points for albacore, bigeye, Pacific bluefin, skipjack, and yellowfin tuna

The IATTC's Antigua Convention, in force since 2010, requires the Commission to apply the precautionary approach, which includes setting target and limit reference points in accordance with the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries adopted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Reference points and associated harvest strategies should be designed to prevent overfishing and rebuild and maintain tuna populations at healthy, sustainable levels.

The Commission and Secretariat should abide by the agreement reached at the 2014 annual meeting to test a range of candidate reference points for tropical tunas using a management strategy evaluation.

In light of that agreement and considering the IATTC's mandate to apply the precautionary approach, Pew calls on the Commission to:

- **Set limit reference points, such as FMSY and BMSY, and target reference points that are consistent with the Antigua Convention, the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, and the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.**
- **Agree to a process and timeline for establishing reference points and harvest strategies for all tuna species within the Convention Area.**

Increase observer coverage on longline vessels

Scientists have identified deficiencies in the quality of data provided by Members for longline fisheries in the Convention Area, including poor availability, lack of spatial and temporal data, and inconsistencies in the types of data reported.³ To increase the accuracy and standardize the data collected, the IATTC should increase overall observer coverage.

Pew calls on the Commission to:

- **Adopt a measure that mandates 20 percent observer coverage on longline vessels, in line with the advice of the IATTC scientific staff.**
- **Develop standards for electronic reporting and electronic monitoring of longline fisheries and promote the use of such systems.**

Adopt conservation and management measures to protect sharks

Approximately 100 million sharks are killed in commercial fisheries every year, an unsustainable number.⁴ Whether this catch is unintended, unwanted, or highly sought after, the practice and its effect on ocean ecosystems require urgent action. Sharks should be treated like the endangered marine species they are and released alive wherever possible. Any targeted take should be permitted only when scientific advice has confirmed its sustainability.

Prohibit the retention of biologically vulnerable shark species, particularly silky and hammerhead

The silky shark (*Carcharhinus falciformis*) is the shark species most commonly caught in purse seines, though it is also caught in longline fisheries. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species has classified silky sharks as Near Threatened globally, but in the eastern-central and south-eastern Pacific, they have been classified as Vulnerable to extinction.

At this year's Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting, further evidence was presented of the poor state of silky shark stocks. The latest science finds that the population is declining in all IATTC-managed fisheries; earlier evidence of a more positive stock status was found to be inaccurate. Because of the continued declines, silky sharks require immediate action to promote recovery of the stock. These sharks produce few young and are considered among the most vulnerable to both purse seine⁵ and longline⁶ fishing gear. Faced with similar information and advice about silky shark declines, the WCPFC adopted a measure in December 2013 to prohibit all retention of these sharks. In response to the results of the SAC's 2015 advice on the state of the silky shark stock, IATTC should match this action and prohibit all retention of these sharks.

Hammerhead sharks are targeted for their highly valued fins and are caught as bycatch. The hammerhead is one of the top shark species caught in the eastern Pacific Ocean's purse seine and longline fisheries. In addition, juvenile and neonate hammerheads are targeted in coastal fisheries, particularly with gillnets.

The IUCN Red List classifies scalloped (*Sphyrna lewini*) and great hammerheads (*S. mokarran*) as Endangered and smooth hammerheads (*S. zygaena*) as Vulnerable, making them some of the most threatened shark species in the world.



The Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) recognized the need to protect scalloped, great, and smooth hammerheads. In March 2013, CITES adopted proposals to include them in its Appendix II, which regulates international trade in such species and ensures that it is sustainable and legal.

With the CITES listings now in force, IATTC must help Member States meet the convention's requirements. Given the status and vulnerability of hammerhead sharks, and following the example of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), a precautionary prohibition on retention of all hammerhead sharks (*S. spp.*) should be adopted at this year's IATTC meeting. At the same time, the SAC should collect and analyse data to determine levels of catch and trade that could be sustainable.

Pew calls on to the Commission to:

- **Reduce silky shark mortality by prohibiting all retention of the species.**
- **Adopt a prohibition on retention of all hammerhead sharks and request that the Scientific Advisory Committee collect and analyse data to determine levels of catch and trade that could be sustainable.**

Limit the mortality of other shark species, including blue and shortfin mako, to sustainable levels

Other species, such as blue and shortfin mako sharks, also are being caught at unsustainable levels. For example, one recent study showed that standardized catch rates of longline fleets in the North Pacific have declined significantly for blue sharks (by 5 percent per year) and mako sharks (by 7 percent per year).⁷ It is time for IATTC to put in place precautionary measures to limit mortality of these species; catches should be limited to current levels while the SAC prioritizes assessment of what level of catch for various species is sustainable.

Pew calls on the Commission to:

- **Implement precautionary measures to limit mortality of shark species, including blue and shortfin mako, to sustainable levels.**

Require best practices for reducing bycatch

Mobulid rays—part of the family Mobulidae, which includes manta rays and mobula rays—are extremely vulnerable to overfishing and are caught as bycatch by purse seines and longlines fishing for tuna.

This year, the SAC recommended that retention of incidentally caught rays be prohibited and outlined a range of techniques that facilitate live release of any rays that are caught.

Because of the vulnerability of these rays, retention of all mobulid species should be prohibited and live release guidance should be adopted.

Shark bycatch in IATTC fisheries is taking a toll on many populations. Shark bycatch is higher with longlines that use wire leaders (also known as steel traces), because sharks are unable to break the wires to escape.⁸ The use of wire leaders, therefore, creates a de facto targeted—but unregulated—shark fishery. A ban on wire leaders would help reduce shark bycatch in longline fisheries. Furthermore, the use of monofilament fishing lines can actually increase the catch of some target species of tuna⁹ and swordfish.¹⁰

As part of the requirements for establishing precautionary management measures, Pew calls on the Commission to establish the following best practices for reducing bycatch:

- **Prohibit the catch of mobulid rays.**
- **Ban the use of wire leaders.**

Improve compliance and combat IUU fishing

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing is a threat around the globe.¹¹ The eastern Pacific is no exception. Cases of non-compliance with IATTC rules by authorized vessels continue to arise; 14 vessels remain on the Commission's list of known IUU vessels. In addition to proposals above to increase observer coverage, develop standards for electronic reporting and monitoring for longline vessels and FAD satellite buoys, and implement a catch documentation system, Members need to take the following actions, with a priority on strengthening controls at port.



Strengthen port State measures

Port State measures (PSMs) are instrumental in preventing the entry of illegal fish into the world's markets and, as a result, removing economic incentives for illegal operators. In other ocean regions, implementation of PSMs, combined with timely information-sharing, regional cooperation, and transparency, has demonstrated the effectiveness of port controls in keeping illegally caught fish out of international trade.¹²

Many IATTC Members are working to build their national port inspection schemes. At the same time, a number of regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) around the world have adopted and strengthened port State control requirements in recent years.¹³ IATTC does not have a port inspection scheme. In addition, IATTC Members are not required to inspect IUU-listed vessels when they are in port because the Commission has not adopted that essential requirement. This represents a serious gap in regional efforts to stop IUU fishing. At this meeting, the Commission should prioritize the adoption of a port inspection scheme. Moreover, IATTC Members should provide needed financial and technical assistance to any contracting parties that do not have the capacity to effectively implement PSMs in the short or medium term. To encourage this, the Commission should establish a special fund for implementation of PSMs, supported principally by developed Member States.

To stop IUU fishing vessels at port, Pew calls on the Commission to:

- **Adopt minimum standards for port inspections effective 1 January 2016.**
- **Establish a special fund to assist with implementation of port State measures.**

Ensure that the IUU vessel list is effective and up to date

Resolution C-05-07,¹⁴ which established an IUU vessel list, should be improved so it can be used more effectively to deter any illegal practices in the Convention area.

Pew calls on the Commission to:

- **Ensure that the IUU vessel list applies to all vessels, regardless of their size.**
- **Ensure that any vessel included on the IUU vessel list is subject to port inspections.**
- **Permit the listing or delisting of vessels between meetings of the Commission so that active IUU vessels can be duly identified.**

Ensure timely compliance with new requirements on vessel monitoring systems and mandatory International Maritime Organization numbers

Last year, the Commission made important strides toward improving the tracking of fishing vessels by agreeing that by 1 January 2016, all Members and cooperating non-members must ensure that their vessels weighing at least 100 gross metric tons have unique and permanent International Maritime Organization (IMO) numbers¹⁵ and that all vessels 24 meters or longer are equipped with satellite-based vessel monitoring systems (VMS).¹⁶

Pew calls on the Commission to:

- **Take all the necessary steps to ensure there is no delay in complying with existing IMO and VMS requirements.**

Ban all transshipment at sea

Transshipment at sea continues to provide loopholes for proper catch reporting providing opportunities to launder illegally caught fish. The IATTC should introduce a ban on all transshipment at sea until the Commission has clear evidence that such operations do not assist IUU fishing. This measure would require a robust monitoring system that ensures full transparency and includes, but is not be limited to, requiring observers aboard offloading and receiving vessels. Successful implementation would require comprehensive oversight by the Commission of *all* transshipment operations in the Convention Area.

Improve transparency and accountability

IATTC has taken important steps to improve Member compliance with Commission mandates. However, a lack of transparency continues. To effectively manage its resources, IATTC must require complete transparency from all Members and accountability for existing commitments.

Improve transparency by requiring reporting for rights to fish

IATTC has moved to improve compliance, particularly with the adoption of Resolution C-11-07,¹⁷ which requires compliance with resolutions adopted by the Commission, and through the work of the committee set up to review implementation of Commission-adopted measures. However, to ensure adequate transparency in this process, the Commission should require that all responses to compliance questionnaires be made permanently available on the IATTC website. To encourage full compliance, the Commission should penalize Members for failure to comply with IATTC requirements.

When required data are not provided, Members and cooperating non-members should have their fishing rights revoked for the following fishing season. This “no data, no fish” approach to target compliance is already in use by other RFMOs, including ICCAT.

To strengthen efforts to ensure compliance with IATTC obligations, Pew calls on the Commission to:

- **Amend Resolution C-11-07 to require that compliance questionnaires be published permanently on IATTC's website.**
- **Deny fishing authorization to any cooperating non-member that does not provide required data.**

Conduct a performance review

The IATTC is the only RFMO for tuna that has not completed a performance review. It has been almost 10 years since the United Nations' resumed Review Conference urged RFMOs to undertake these reviews. The Conference stipulated that the reviews should include independent evaluation, ensure that results are publicly available, and use transparent criteria based on the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement and examination of other relevant instruments, including best practices of RFMOs.

The 2016 resumed Review Conference will evaluate each RFMO's implementation of the United Nations agreement.

Pew calls on the Commission to:

- **Undertake a performance review on an urgent basis.**



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Endnotes

- 1 Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, *Stock Status Indicators for Fisheries of the Eastern Pacific Ocean* (2014), <http://www.iattc.org/Meetings/Meetings2014/MAYSAC/PDFs/SAC-05-11c-Indicators-of-stock-status.pdf>.
- 2 Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, "Resolution C-13-04: Collection and Analyses of Data on Fish Aggregating Devices" (June 2013), <https://www.iattc.org/PDFFiles2/Resolutions/C-13-04-FADs.pdf>.
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- 4 Boris Worm et al., "Global Catches, Exploitation Rates, and Rebuilding Options for Sharks," *Marine Policy* 40 (2013): 194–204.
- 5 Hilario Murua et al., "Preliminary Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA) for Shark Species Caught in Fisheries Managed by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)," IOTC-2012-WPEB-31, <http://ebfmtuna-2012.sciencesconf.org/file/23488>.
- 6 Enric Cortés et al., "Ecological Risk Assessment of Pelagic Sharks Caught in Atlantic Pelagic Longline Fisheries," *Aquatic Living Resources* 23 (2010): 25–34, doi:10.1051/alr/2009044, http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FALR%2FALR23_01%2FS0990744009000448a.pdf&code=9ba3e7c4d1df7949d298f403f4d38dc7.
- 7 Shelley C. Clarke et al., "Population Trends in Pacific Oceanic Sharks and the Utility of Regulations on Shark Finning," *Conservation Biology* 27, no. 1 (2013): 197–209, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1523-1739.2012.01943.x/full>.
- 8 Peter Ward et al., "Large-Scale Experiment Shows That Nylon Leaders Reduce Shark Bycatch and Benefit Pelagic Longline Fishers," *Fisheries Research* 90 (2008): 100–8, http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Rebecca_Darbyshire/publication/223934672_Large-scale_experiment_shows_that_nylon_leaders_reduce_shark_bycatch_and_benefit_pelagic_longline_fishers/links/00b4951ef7272a8bb0000000.pdf.
- 9 Eric Gilman et al., *Shark Depredation and Unwanted Bycatch in Pelagic Longline Fisheries: Industry Practices and Attitudes and Shark Avoidance Strategies* (Honolulu, USA: Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, 2007), https://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/shark_depredation_2.pdf.
- 10 Rodrigo Vega and Roberto Licandeo, "The Effect of American and Spanish Longline Systems on Target and Non-Target Species in the Eastern South Pacific Swordfish Fishery," *Fisheries Research* 98 (2009): 22–32.
- 11 The United Nations General Assembly has repeatedly stated that "IUU fishing remains one of the greatest threats to fish stocks and marine ecosystems and continues to have serious and major implications for the conservation and management of ocean resources, as well as the food security and the economies of many States, particularly developing States," UNGA Resolution 69/109, para. 56.
- 12 As an example, see "Poaching Vessel Kunlun Detained in Thailand," *The Maritime Executive*, <http://www.maritime-executive.com/article/poaching-vessel-kunlun-detained-in-thailand>.
- 13 See CCAMLR Conservation Measure 10-03 (2012), http://www.ccamlr.org/sites/drupal.ccamlr.org/files//10-03_2.pdf; ICCAT Recommendation 12-07 (2012) <http://www.iccat.int/Documents%5CRecs%5Ccompendiopdf-e%5C2012-07-e.pdf>; IOTC Resolution 10/11 (2010), <http://www.iotc.org/files/CMM/Resolution%2010-11.pdf>; North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission's PSMA-aligned port State measures (2015), <http://www.neafc.org/scheme/2015/januarytojune/Chapter5>; South East Atlantic Fisheries Organization (SEAFO) Conservation Measure 2/11 (2011), integrated in Chapter VI of SEAFO's new system of observation, inspection, compliance, and enforcement (2014), <http://www.seafo.org/Management/Conservation-Measures>; and South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO), <https://www.sprfmo.int/assets/Fisheries/Conservation-and-Management-Measures/CMM-2-07.pdf>.
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For further information, please visit:

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