

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

RESOLUTION ON BIGEYE TUNA

October 1999

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), having responsibility for the scientific study of the tunas and tuna-like fishes of the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO), which for the purpose of this resolution is the area bounded by the coastline of the Americas, the 40°N parallel, the 150°W meridian, and the 40°S parallel, and for the formulation of recommendations to the High Contracting Parties with regard to these resources, and having maintained since 1950 a continuing scientific program directed toward the study of those resources:

Recalling the provisions of its Resolutions on the conservation and management of bigeye tuna in the EPO approved at the 61st and 64th meetings of the IATTC, including the establishment of a limit of 40,000 metric tons on the catch of bigeye tuna in the surface fishery in 1999, and

Considering the information presented by the IATTC staff and the report of the Bigeye Working Group on the need to take measures to ensure that catches of small bigeye by the surface fishery do not threaten the sustainable yield of bigeye tuna in the EPO, and

Reiterating the need for improved procedures for monitoring the fishery and estimating the total catch to ensure reliable data for all fisheries that take bigeye tuna, in particular the fishery on floating objects, and

Concerned about the reduction in the average size of bigeye tuna caught by the purse-seine fishery in the EPO during 1994-1998, and

Aware that there was an increase in the average size of the bigeye tuna in the catch of the surface fishery in 1999, the significance of which is unknown, and

Recognizing the uncertainties about the life history parameters of the bigeye stock, and

Observing that catches of bigeye tuna in 1999 were made at a faster rate than expected, resulting in considerable uncertainty and management difficulties for the surface fishing fleets of the EPO and for the IATTC, and

Desiring to avoid the difficulties that would arise in the year 2000 if bigeye catches in the surface fishery were to occur at the same rate as in 1999, such that the surface fishery could be faced with uncertainty and possibly unanticipated immediate closure of the fishery on floating objects in order to maintain the productivity of the bigeye stock, and

Noting that it is necessary to limit the catch of bigeye tuna by the surface fishery in the EPO in the year 2000:

Therefore recommends to the High Contracting Parties and non-parties under whose jurisdiction vessels operate in the EPO that they:

1. Provisionally agree to limit the catch of bigeye tuna in the purse-seine fishery in the EPO to 40,000 metric tons in 2000, this limit to be implemented by prohibiting sets on all types of floating objects if the limit is reached by the time of the Meeting of the IATTC in June 2000;

2. Review the status of the bigeye tuna stock and consider adjusting the catch limit for bigeye tuna at the Meeting of the IATTC in June 2000, including, as agreed in the Resolution of the 64th Meeting, consideration of further reductions in the catch of bigeye, taking into account:

- the patterns of catches of bigeye tuna to that time;
- any data available at that time on size composition of the bigeye catches;
- the extent to which the total catch of bigeye tuna in the surface fishery in the EPO in 1999 exceeded the limit of 40,000 metric tons;
- the information from research carried out in accordance with the resolution of the 64th Meeting;
- previous evaluations of the impact of catches by longline and small purse-seine vessels and of interactions between the longline and purse-seine fisheries;
- alternative methods for reducing the catch of juvenile bigeye tuna; and
- other relevant information provided for consideration by the IATTC.

3. Convene a Working Group prior to the Meeting of the IATTC in June 2000 to address the question of the methods for the collection of data for the fishery on fish-aggregating devices, and to recommend measures to improve the timeliness and accuracy of statistics needed to determine bigeye catches and landings, such that the reliability of calculations of catches and projections of catches into the future can be enhanced

4. Convene the scientific working group established by the Resolution of the 64th Meeting prior to the Meeting of the IATTC in June 2000 so that the conclusions and recommendations of the working group can be considered at that meeting.