FIRST JOINT IATTC AND WCPFC-NC INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP MEETING ON THE PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA MANAGEMENT (JWGI-01)

Monterey, California (Hybrid)
5-7 February, 2025

CHAIRS' SUMMARY OF THE FIRST JOINT IATTC-NC INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP MEETING ON PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA MANAGEMENT

IATTC-NC-JWGI01-2025/00

AGENDA ITEM 1 OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The 1st intersessional meeting of the Joint IATTC and WCPFC-NC Working Group Meeting on the Management of Pacific Bluefin Tuna (JWGI01) was held on 5 – 7 February 2025. The meeting was opened by co-chairs Mr. Masanori Miyahara (Japan, WCPFC Northern Committee Chair) and Mr. Josh Madeira (USA, IATTC). The meeting was co-hosted by the United States and the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Mr. Madeira welcomed participants and acknowledged the efforts of the International Scientific Committee (ISC), the WCPFC and IATTC Secretariat staff, and meeting organizers. A moment of silence was observed in memory of Mr. Chuck Farwell, a long-time colleague and advocate for Pacific Bluefin Tuna (PBF) conservation.

2. A list of participants to the JWGI01 is included in **Annex A.**

AGENDA ITEM 2 ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND MEETING PROCEDURES

3. The agenda was adopted with modification and later revised (see **Annex B**), and Ms. Amanda Munro (USA) was confirmed as the rapporteur. Co-chair Madeira stipulated that the meeting would be conducted under standard protocols, with discussions limited to participants and no media coverage allowed. Co-Chair Madeira outlined objectives for the meeting, including providing guidance and recommendations to the ISC to advance the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE). WCPFC co-Chair Mr. Miyahara noted the need to reduce the number of Harvest Control Rules (HCRs) run as a key discussion point for JWG participants.

AGENDA ITEM 3 MANAGEMENT STRATEGY EVALUATION

3.1 Introduction to Management Strategy Evaluation

4. Dr. Juan Valero (IATTC) presented an in-depth overview of harvest strategies and MSE principles (A3.1.1). Shana Miller (USA) followed with a presentation on how MSEs have been conducted in other Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs) (A3.1.2).

5. Dr. Shuya Nakatsuka, Chair of ISC PBF Working Group (PBFWG), and IATTC made comments on Miller's presentation regarding the responsiveness of RFMOs to management procedures (MPs), and differences in terms used to describe the MSE process. For example, some utilize the term "harvest strategy" versus "management procedure." IATTC cautioned against utilizing terms like "sustainable" and "unsustainable" when describing target reference points (TRPs).

6. Japan noted that maximum sustainable yield (MSY) is not defined for PBF yet, but is likely to be around 20%SSBF=0, and that the group may be able to apply an MSY-based MP when stock is over 20% SSBF=0.

3.2 History of Pacific bluefin tuna MSE

7. The JWG co-chairs provided a presentation on the history of the PBF MSE (A3.2). There were no questions or comments.

3.3 Development of Pacific bluefin tuna MSE

8. The ISC PBFWG Chair presented an update on the PBF stock assessment and MSE development (A3.3.1).

9. Korea asked about i) whether the current candidate management objectives could be reviewed and changed if necessary in this meeting and ii) the relationship between the review timing of WCPFC CMM 2024-01 which is 2026 and the suggested timeline for the development/application of the PBF MSE. In response to the first question, the ISC responded that these management options are candidates and could be changed if agreed by Members but if the JWG decided to change them, it may not be feasible to complete evaluation by the July meeting, depending on the possible impact. Co-chair Miyahara emphasized that the ISC has a high workload. As for the second question, Co-chair Miyahara explained that the timing of the application of the MSE would depend on completion of the development of the MSE and future discussions by JWG.

10. Dr. Huihua Lee (ISC PBFWG) presented a detailed breakdown of different uncertainties affecting the MSE process, including observation errors, model parameter variability, and environmental factors (A3.3.2). Participants asked questions regarding the operating models (OMs) and the meaning of the "base case" scenario. The ISC emphasized that the OMs presented represent a range of possible scenarios, but all twenty OMs would be analyzed in the MSE and weighted equally. In this meeting, the ISC only presented the base case (OM1) scenario and least productive scenario (OM3).

11. Japan asked if some of the OMs could be merged to reduce workload, which was discussed by the ISC PBFWG and IATTC. The ISC PBFWG offered to discuss the issue amongst themselves and report back.

12. Assumptions regarding the catchability of the Chinese Taipei longline fleet, the robustness of the underlying model, and natural mortality were also discussed.

13. The ISC PBFWG convened to discuss the possibility of reducing the OM, and as they could not evaluate how the reduction of OMs would impact the results or their ability to complete the MSE, the ISC PBFWG preferred not to reduce the number of OMs.

14. Dr. Desiree Tommasi (ISC PBFWG) presented an overview of the PBF MSE (A3.3.3).

15. Substantial discussion took place regarding the estimation model (EM) and how it interfaces with the OMs and total allowable catch (TAC). The ISC clarified that actual TACs that would be

applied by each candidate HCR in 2026 if they were to be adopted are not available yet but will be available at the July meeting.

16. Korea stated that the EPO:WCPO fishery impact ratio could be better addressed in the context of allocation discussion rather than in the framework of MSE and emphasized that there should be consistency between the two RFMOs on how small and large fish are managed, i.e. separately or collectively, if the element of fishery impact ratio is going to be included in the MSE.

AGENDA ITEM 4 PRELIMINARY PBF MSE RESULTS

4.1 Scope of preliminary MSE results

17. Dr. Tommasi (ISC PBFWG) gave a second presentation on the preliminary MSE results (A4.1), and the ISC PBFWG Chair provided additional context for some of the figures that were presented.

18. Participants provided feedback on the figures - specifically requesting consistency on the color schemes in the performance summary table, the ability to visualize all HCRs with both impact ratios together in one figure, and whether the ISC could show figures with a line representing the current TAC as a reference to illustrate current catch limits in the CMM against the projected yields for the different HCRs. The ISC provided an example of a figure including a line representing the current TAC from the latest CMM, and Dr. Tommasi provided an updated presentation to include these figures (A4.1 rev1).

19. Discussion followed on how TAC would be calculated with the EM, and why in all HCRs the WCPO large fish TAC increases while WCPO small fish TAC decreases.

4.2 Review results

20. ISC PBFWG Chair presented a summary of the MSE results (A4.2). The IATTC reminded the group that performance indicators have been adopted but target and limit reference points have not. Discussion followed on the definition of the reference points prior to the evaluation of HCRs and how limit reference points (LRPs) are defined based on historical PBF data. Participants discussed the stability performance indicator and the 25% restriction on changes in TAC.

AGENDA ITEM 5 JWG GUIDANCE AND REQUESTS FOR ISC ON THE PBF MSE

21. The Co-chairs reminded the JWG that the objective of the meeting was to provide guidance and recommendations to the ISC in order to advance the MSE in 2025. After some initial comments, the discussion focused on reducing the number of HCRs to address the ISC workload. The group discussed the possibility of removing some of the HCRs that performed similarly. Participants noted that some of the HCRs were clustered together on the figures showing tradeoffs between Yield and Safety, and indicated it may be possible to pick one or two HCRs from each cluster to retain. In this way, a full range of HCRs could be evaluated.

22. Some parties expressed concern about HCRs with a Threshold Reference Point (ThRP) of 25%SSB because stakeholders may not be willing to accept HCRs that would result in an immediate

short-term reduction in catch. FFA Secretariat expressed a preference to retain HCR 5 as it was the only HCR with a LRP of 20%SSB.

23. Several observer organizations expressed concerns that the operating models do not consider a wide enough range of uncertainty and that the tested natural mortality, steepness, and longevity parameters may not be robust to future environmental conditions. As a result of these concerns, the organizations recommended the JWG focus on adopting an HCR with more conservative control points. ISC responded that current OM reference set is constructed based on the 2024 stock assessment, taking into account the uncertainties based on PBF data and reviews of existing research.

24. A small group of JWG members met to discuss narrowing the list of HCRs. The group reduced the list of HCRs from twelve to eight. An extensive discussion followed in which participants recommended removing, adding, and modifying those eight HCRs. CCMs expressed a variety of competing preferences for: a 20%SSB LRP, HCRs with high yields, and the importance of maintaining a variety of HCRs representative of each of the four clusters. Several delegations along with the ISC and IATTC provided a number of technical amendments to ensure the clarity of the HCRs.

25. In relation to one of the HCRs which has "CMM limits" as Fmin, Korea sought a clarification on what it exactly meant, stating that it would not be able to support the inclusion of the particular HCR in the list if "CMM limits" was meant to set the TAC at a level same as the sum of the catch limits of the relevant Members by allocating the same amount of catch limit to each Member as set out in the CMM. Korea further mentioned that the figures and numbers in the HCR should be linked to the total, and not the allocations. Japan clarified that the "CMM limits" in the table meant the total level of catch limits in CMM 2021-02 and Resolution C-21-05 for MSE analysis.

26. The final modified list of HCRs was agreed - see Annex C (track-changes from the 2023 candidate HCRs) and Annex D (clean).

27. The JWG Co-chairs asked if the JWG had any requests for modifications to the display of the results for the MSE. Reflecting on comments from members and observers from presentations in Agenda 3, the Co-chairs noted the following requests to the ISC to be completed with the final MSE results:

    a. Please provide a written summary report of the MSE results, similar to the final report from the NP albacore MSE. ISC reconfirmed that a MSE report will be provided.
    b. Noting that the preliminary results highlighted the tradeoffs between safety and yield, the JWG requests that the ISC provide information on other tradeoffs among other management objectives.
    c. Please display 2024 and 2025 catch limits in the CMMs against the projected yields for the different HCRs
    d. It was noted that it would be helpful to see the results of both impact ratios for each given HCR rather than all HCRs at 80:20 and one result with the adjusted (70:30) ratio.
    e. In order to closely examine the robustness of the candidate HCRs to low recruitment scenarios without undue additional model runs and merging of results with other runs, request the low recruitment scenario to be examined in detail as part of the robustness tests and presented in the evaluation.

28. The JWG Co-chairs noted a general consensus that the JWG approved of the development and progress of the PBF MSE thus far and support the ISC maintaining its progress so that the MSE can be completed in 2025, in accordance with the current schedule.

29. In conclusion, the JWG co-chairs emphasized that both the IATTC and WCPFC expect the JWG to finalize the MSE in 2025. Co-chair Miyahara stated that if the JWG fails to finalize the MSE this year, revision of the long-term harvest strategy will be delayed and the group will face strong criticism from both Commissions. However, if the JWG is successful we will be able to implement the harvest strategy in time for the next stock assessment.

30. IATTC clarified that the IATTC Resolution C-24-02 states, "The Commission shall review and consider revising the management measures established in this Resolution based on the best available information, including the harvest strategy based on the management strategy evaluation expected to be completed in 2025, the latest assessment, recruitment information, projections or other relevant information, as well as outcomes of the Joint IATTC-WCPFC NC Working Group on Pacific bluefin tuna."

31. It was noted, on the other hand, that paragraph 20 of the WCPFC CMM 2024-01 states, "…On the basis of a new stock assessment conducted by ISC, the harvest strategy based on the management strategy evaluation expected to be completed in 2025, fair and equitable balance of fishing opportunities between the WCPO and the EPO as well as among Members, and other pertinent information such as the impact of climate change, as appropriate, this CMM shall be reviewed and may be amended as appropriate in 2026."

AGENDA ITEM 6 OTHER BUSINESS

32. The Co-chairs reviewed the current workplan for the ISC PBFWG and noted that further revisions to the workplan would be considered at the next JWG meeting in July.

33. Considering the completion of the MSE is the priority, the JWG requests ISC to provide the JWG meeting in July with potential conversion factors for the TAC (i) between WCPO small and WCPO large and (ii) between WCPO small/large and EPO. The conversion factors should be calculated in a manner that maintains overall fishing intensity unchanged. The estimation of these conversion factors does not prejudice future discussions.

34. Co-chair Miyahara proposed an online intersessional meeting of the JWG to discuss final MSE results prior to the next meeting in July to facilitate the discussion and enhance understanding by stakeholders. JWG agreed to hold an online intersessional meeting for the ISC to present on the final MSE results on June 27 (Japan time) / June 26 (Pacific time). Further meeting details will be announced.

35. Japan announced they will host the next JWG meeting in July at Toyama prefecture, Japan. JWG will be held on 9-12 July to be followed by the WCPFC Northern Committee on 14-15 both at the conference center located in Toyama City.

AGENDA ITEM 7 ADOPTION OF REPORT

36. The meeting report was adopted.

AGENDA ITEM 8 CLOSE OF MEETING

37. The meeting closed at 11:25am on February 7, 2025.

ANNEXES

Annex A – List of participants

Annex B – Agenda

Annex C – JWGI01 guidance to the ISC (Track-Changes)

Annex D – JWGI01 guidance to the ISC (Clean)

Annex A

FIRST JOINT IATTC AND WCPFC-NC INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP MEETING ON THE PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA MANAGEMENT (JWGI-01)

Monterey, California (Hybrid)
5-7 February, 2025

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Annex B

FIRST JOINT IATTC AND WCPFC-NC INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP MEETING ON THE PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA MANAGEMENT (JWGI-01)

Monterey, California (Hybrid)
5-7 February, 2025

AGENDA

1. **Opening of the meeting**

2. **Adoption of Agenda and Meeting Procedures**

3. **Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE)**
   - 3.1 Introduction to Management Strategy Evaluation
   - 3.2 History of Pacific bluefin tuna MSE
   - 3.3 Development of Pacific bluefin MSE

4. **Preliminary PBF MSE results**
   - 4.1 Scope of preliminary MSE results
   - 4.2 Review results

5. **JWG Guidance and requests for ISC on the PBF MSE**

6. **Other business**

7. **Adoption of Report**

8. **Close of meeting**

Annex C

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JWGI01 guidance to the ISC (Track-Changes)

HCR Number	F_{target}	SSB Control Point 1 (ThRP)	SSB Control Point 2 (LRP)	Number of SSB control points	F_{min}
1	FSPR30%	$20\%SSB_{F=0}$	$15\%SSB_{F=0}$	2	$10\%F_{target}$
2	FSPR30%	$25\%SSB_{F=0}$	$15\%SSB_{F=0}$	2	$10\%F_{target}$
~~3~~	~~FSPR40%~~	~~$20\%SSB_{F=0}$~~	~~$15\%SSB_{F=0}$~~	~~2~~	~~$10\%F_{target}$~~
4	~~FSPR40%~~	~~$25\%SSB_{F=0}$~~	~~$15\%SSB_{F=0}$~~	~~2~~	~~$10\%F_{target}$~~
5	FSPR40%	$25\%SSB_{F=0}$	$20\%SSB_{F=0}$	2	$10\%F_{target}$
6	FSPR30%	$20\%SSB_{F=0}$	$10\%SSB_{F=0}$	2	FSPR70%
~~7~~	~~FSPR25%~~	~~$20\%SSB_{F=0}$~~	~~$10\%SSB_{F=0}$~~	~~2~~	~~FSPR50%~~
8#	FSPR~~30%~~25%	$20\%SSB_{F=0}$	~~Median SSB 1952-2014~~NA	~~2~~1	CMM limits*
9#	FSPR20%	$20\%SSB_{F=0}$	NA	1	NA
10#	FSPR25%	$15\%SSB_{F=0}$	NA	1	NA
~~11~~	~~FSPR30%~~	~~$15\%SSB_{F=0}$~~	~~$7.7\%SSB_{F=0}$~~	~~2~~	~~$5\%F_{target}$~~
12	FSPR30%	$20\%SSB_{F=0}$	$7.7\%SSB_{F=0}$	2	$5\%F_{target}$

* When SSB falls below ThRP, CMM2021-02 and C-21-05 limits should be applied.

Note that while HCRs 8, 9, and 10 do not use LRPs as control points, an LRP of median SSB 1952-2014 (~6.3%SSB0) has been specified by the JWG to compute performance metrics.

Annex D

FIRST JOINT IATTC AND WCPFC-NC INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP MEETING ON THE PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA MANAGEMENT (JWGI-01)

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JWGI01 guidance to the ISC (Clean)

HCR Number	F_{target}	SSB Control Point 1 (ThRP)	SSB Control Point 2 (LRP)	Number of SSB control points	F_{min}
1	FSPR30%	$20\%SSB_{F=0}$	$15\%SSB_{F=0}$	2	$10\%F_{target}$
2	FSPR30%	$25\%SSB_{F=0}$	$15\%SSB_{F=0}$	2	$10\%F_{target}$
3	FSPR40%	$25\%SSB_{F=0}$	$20\%SSB_{F=0}$	2	$10\%F_{target}$
4	FSPR30%	$20\%SSB_{F=0}$	$10\%SSB_{F=0}$	2	FSPR70%
5#	FSPR25%	$20\%SSB_{F=0}$	NA	1	CMM limits*
6#	FSPR20%	$20\%SSB_{F=0}$	NA	1	NA
7#	FSPR25%	$15\%SSB_{F=0}$	NA	1	NA
8	FSPR30%	$20\%SSB_{F=0}$	$7.7\%SSB_{F=0}$	2	$5\%F_{target}$

* When SSB falls below ThRP, CMM2021-02 and C-21-05 limits should be applied.
# Note that while HCRs 5, 6, and 7 do not use LRPs as control points, an LRP of median SSB 1952-2014 (~6.3%SSB0) has been specified by the JWG to compute performance metrics.