



International Game Fish Association

Fishing Hall of Fame & Museum

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Recommendations to the 13th Regular Session of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

The International Game Fish Association (IGFA) is a non-profit organization that represents recreational anglers throughout the world. IGFA was established in 1939, has active members in over 100 countries, is the governing body for international recreational fishing, and provides rules for ethical angling practices. Many of IGFA's members target the highly migratory species managed by WCPFC, especially marlin, sailfish and spearfish (i.e., billfish) which are primarily caught and released.

IGFA has great concern about how highly migratory species are being managed on a global level for recreational anglers. The lack of data and accurate reporting on billfish catch is of particular concern. As an organization that is committed to the conservation of game fishes, IGFA has deployed over 250 pop-up satellite archival tags in marlin around the world in the past three years, many of which have been in waters under this organization's purview. The information gained from this exercise is available to your scientific committee.

Billfish

- Although primarily a commercial bycatch species, billfish are highly sought after recreational species that are primarily caught and released. We urge the WCPFC to set a target reference rate above B_{MSY} for recreational anglers.
- The WCNPO stock of striped marlin is overfished and experiencing overfishing. Reducing fishing mortality would likely increase spawning stock biomass and may improve the chances of higher recruitment. We recommend fishing at a constant catch of 2,500 mt that would lead to potential increases in spawning biomass of 133% to 223% by 2017.
- No formal stock assessments exist for sailfish and black marlin. Better data collection is necessary for these species so that their true abundance can be accurately estimated.
- IGFA further recommends implementing a prohibition on Pacific billfish entering into international trade. Similar legislation has recently been passed, at the request of IGFA, in the United States that now bans importation of marlin, sailfish and spearfish into the continental United States.
- We also recommend all countries be required to report dead discards and use circle hooks in their longline fisheries.

Bluefin Tuna

The 2016 stock assessment indicates that Pacific Bluefin tuna have been reduced to less than 3% of their virgin biomass. Yet, management measure recommended by the Northern Committee fail to end overfishing giving the stock less than a 1% chance or recovering under this management regime. As such, these actions are insufficient to address the status of Pacific bluefin tuna and will result in the stock remaining in a severely depleted condition for at least another decade. The IGFA recommends a minimum of a one year moratorium on commercial harvest, subject to extension, until the Commission develops *meaningful* management measures that will immediately end overfishing and begin rebuilding the stock to a healthy level in reasonable amount of time. IGFA recommends implementing target and limit reference points that increases spawning stock biomass to 20% of virgin biomass in eight years and to 40% of virgin biomass by 2030.

The International Game Fish Association is a not-for-profit organization committed to the conservation of game fish and the promotion of responsible, ethical angling practices through science, education, rule making and record keeping.

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FADs

- The increasing use of FADs in tuna purse seine fisheries has become a global issue. IGFA urges the Commission to enact measures to reduce the harvest of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna FAD associated purse seine fisheries. IGFA also recommends enhanced data collection on FAD fisheries, including unique coding of individual FADs.

IUU

- Transshipment at sea facilitates IUU fishing and the IGFA recommends that the WCPFC ban all forms of transshipment at sea until it can be demonstrated that such operations are not contributing to IUU fishing.

Sharks

- IGFA recommends the Commission adopt a complete prohibition of wire traces in longline fisheries to reduce the catch of imperilled shark species

General

- Recreational angling is an established and important economic entity in developed countries and a growing one in many developing nations. As such we wish that WCPFC recognize both its relevance and that it may necessitate alternate management objectives than those used in commercial fisheries. IGFA kindly offers its consultation to WCPFC on recreational fisheries issues.
- Managing fisheries on the basis of MSY is an excessively risk-prone approach. As such, we suggest that WCPFC adopt a target objective above B_{MSY} to compensate for biological, environmental and data uncertainties. Many recreational fisheries are catch and release in nature, where anglers prefer to catch more and bigger fish than to necessarily harvest fish. In addition to its inherent uncertainty, managing stocks on the level of MSY not only reduces the abundance of fish but also their average size. Maintaining stocks at higher abundances benefits recreational anglers that release their fish and also contributes to the substantial economic value of these fisheries. We feel this is especially true with bycatch species such as marlin and sailfish that have little commercial value but great economic value to recreational anglers.