



# International Game Fish Association

300 Gulf Stream Way, Dania Beach, Florida, 33004 U.S.A.

Phone: (954) 927-2628 • Fax: (954) 924-4299 • Museum Fax (954) 924-4220

## Recommendations to the 14<sup>th</sup> 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 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 300 pop-up satellite archival tags in marlin around the world in the past six 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. Spawning stock biomass is estimated to be only 39% of  $SSB_{MSY}$ . Reducing fishing mortality would likely increase spawning stock biomass and may improve the chances of higher recruitment. As such, IGFA recommends fishing at a constant catch of 2,500 mt to allow the stock to rebuild.
- 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. Last August, the Northern Committee developed a rebuilding plan with a goal of restoring the population to at least 20% of virgin biomass by 2034 and also committed to developing reference points and harvest control rules. The IGFA commends this first step towards implementing a full harvest strategy and recommends that the WCPFC:

- Adopt the recommended rebuilding plan and conservation and management measures for Pacific bluefin tuna.
- Note that both Japan and Korea have exceeded their catch limits over the last two years and urge these countries to implement domestic measures to prevent future overages.
- Include Pacific bluefin tuna on the WCPFC's annual meeting agenda to monitor rebuilding plan progress.

*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, record keeping and recognition of outstanding accomplishments in the field of angling.*

Email: [HQ@igfa.org](mailto:HQ@igfa.org) • Website: [www.igfa.org](http://www.igfa.org)

### **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 further recommends:

- Developing a FAD identification scheme as recommended by the Scientific Committee and the Technical and Compliance Committee.
- Establish a cap on the number of FADs.
- Enforce the use of non-tangling FADs to reduce shark and turtle entanglement.

### **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.

### **Recreational Fishing**

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.