



International Game Fish Association

Fishing Hall of Fame & Museum

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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 162 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 IATTC, 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 last 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.

The following are IGFA's recommendations for the 92nd Meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission:

Billfish

- Currently the IATTC cannot determine the status of the sailfish stock in the EPO with respect to specific management parameters, such as maximum sustained yield (MSY), because the parameter estimates used in making these determinations cannot be derived from the model results. As such, IGFA urges the commission to collect the necessary biological and catch data so that this species may be properly assessed.
- The most recent assessment (2013) for blue marlin indicated that the stock is neither overfished or experiencing overfishing. However, catches over the last five years have increased to the point that they may be exceeding MSY. As such, the IGFA urges the commission to reduce the harvest of blue marlin so that the stock does not become overfished and/or be subject to overfishing.
- Striped marlin catch and effort has increased significantly in the EPO since 2008 causing uncertainty in estimating total and spawning biomass. Until new data are able to determine the true status of striped marlin, IGFA recommends that catch not be increased.
- IGFA further recommends implementing a prohibition on 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.
- IGFA recommends all countries be required to report dead discards and use circle hooks in their longline fisheries.

Tuna

- The 2016 Pacific bluefin tuna assessment reported that the population is at just 2.6 percent of its historic size and overall fishing mortality is still at least 20 percent higher than sustainable levels. Consequently, overfishing that has diminished the stock by 97.4% continues despite clear evidence that the population is more depleted than previously thought. The International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean show that, under current

conditions, the catch limits now in place have a less than 1 percent chance of returning the population to healthy levels over the next 20 years. As such, the IGFA urges the Commission to:

- Agree to implement a Pacific-wide, long-term recovery plan that will return the Pacific bluefin population to 20 percent of its unfished biomass (B₀) by 2030 with a 75 percent or greater probability. Agree on a clear timeline and process for:
 - Approving management objectives and target and limit reference points for Pacific bluefin no later than 2018.
 - Approving candidate harvest control rules and performing a management strategy evaluation no later than 2018.
 - Ensure that the recovery plan and management measures are effective, complementary, and applied consistently on both sides of the Pacific, as required in Article XXIV of the IATTC's Antigua Convention.

Sharks

- IGFA recommends that IATTC prohibit the removal of shark fins at sea to improve the enforcement of the shark finning ban.
- IGFA recommends banning wire traces on all longlines.

FADs

- Currently, the IATTC has no limits on numbers of FAD deployments or sets, and the number of sets in 2015 was the highest on record. More bigeye are caught in the purse seine fishery than by longline vessels targeting the species. Nearly all (99 percent) of the bigeye caught in the purse seine fishery are caught using FADs. The acceleration in their use complicates analysis of data on the purse seine effort in fishery assessments. No reliable index of relative abundance for skipjack in the eastern Pacific exists, which hampers research on and management of the species. Because of the increasing number of FADs used in the region and their negative impact on the bigeye population, the IGFA calls on the Commission to:
 - Enforce FAD marking requirements to improve stock assessments, determine the extent of FAD use, and inform research on the potential impact of FADs on ocean ecosystems.
 - Develop management options that limit FAD sets to levels that avoid overfishing of juvenile bigeye tuna.
 - Review compliance with FAD measures annually and require action to address instances of noncompliance.

IUU

- IGFA recommends that IATTC strengthen the controls against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

General

- Recreational angling is an established and important economic entity in developed countries and a growing one in many developing nations. As such, IGFA wishes that IATTC recognize both its relevance and that it may necessitate alternate management objectives than those used in commercial fisheries. As it is the world's peak body regarding recreational fisheries, IGFA kindly offers its consultation to IATTC on recreational fisheries issues.
- Managing fisheries on the basis of MSY is an excessively risk-prone approach. As such, IGFA suggests that IATTC adopt a target biomass 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. Managing stocks on the level of MSY not only reduces the abundance of fish but also their average size. Maintaining stocks at higher abundances (i.e., optimum yield) also benefits recreational anglers that release their fish and also contributes to the substantial economic value of these fisheries. IGFA feels this is especially true with bycatch species such as marlin and sailfish that have little commercial value but great economic value to recreational anglers.