

Migratory Species Committee Report
June 5, 2019
Dr. Greg Stunz – Chair

The agenda and minutes of the February 2017 meeting were approved.

Summary Presentation of HMS Proposed Actions (Tab M, Nos. 4 a-f)

Dr. Jennifer Cudney gave a summary presentation of four proposed management actions being considered for several highly migratory species. The Committee expressed interest in seeing the final three-year report on the Individual Bluefin Quota (IBQ) program and Dr. Cudney indicated that she would make that report available to the Committee. The Committee inquired about the success of the IBQ program. Dr. Cudney indicated that the program had reduced incidental interactions of bluefin tuna up to 80% in the pelagic longline fishery.

The Committee asked how the Highly Migratory Species Division (HMS) proposed to quantify the effectiveness of closed areas for managing HMS species. Dr. Cudney indicated that existing fishery-dependent monitoring would be conducted for these provisional area openings to fishing and that a final report would be published after three years of study to inform future HMS management of those areas. The Committee reiterated the importance of the Council to provide input on HMS management decisions as several species managed by the Council interact with HMS fisheries. Additionally, the collection of data on highly mobile predator species, such as sharks, can be used to inform future ecosystem management.

Draft BAYS Species Working Group Recommendation Letter (Tab M, No. 5)

The Committee reviewed a letter drafted by the Bigeye, Albacore, Yellowfin, and Skipjack (BAYS) Tuna Species Working Group which outlined a number conservation and management recommendations. BAYS is interested in receiving input and support of the recommendations from the Atlantic and Gulf regional Councils before the finalized letter is sent to NOAA. Ms. Anna Beckwith, representing the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, expressed interest in working with Gulf Council members to add language to the letter to clarify the fifth suggested recommendation regarding conservation of Skipjack tuna. Ms. Guyas indicated she would be available to work with Ms. Beckwith on the draft. Ms. Beckwith also indicated that the working group would be reviewing Council input to the letter in October 2019.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.