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**EXPLANATORY NOTE FOR PA2-605/2016**

Last year the Commission adopted Recommendation 15-04, which established management objectives for northern albacore and designated it as the “pilot stock” for development of harvest control rules (HCR) for ICCAT stocks. The SCRS has begun testing candidate HCRs for northern albacore through a management strategy evaluation (MSE) in order to determine how well various candidate HCRs would meet the Commission’s management objectives. The 2016 stock assessment determined that the stock is no longer overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The SCRS advised that the current TAC would maintain the long-term objectives as established in Rec. 15-04 (i.e., a 60% probability of maintaining the stock in the green zone of the Kobe plot, while maximizing long-term yield).

Consistent with scientific advice, this proposal would maintain the TAC at its current level for 2017. The SCRS plans to continue testing candidate HCRs for northern albacore in 2017, which should enable the Commission to select an HCR as early as next year. The performance indicators developed at the July 2016 Panel 2 intersessional meeting are included in an Annex to this proposal to support this work. Once the HCR is in place, the stock would be managed based on the HCR and appropriate management controls such as the TAC would be determined using the HCR. If the SCRS has not had sufficient time to fully test the candidate HCRs for the Commission’s consideration at the 2017 Annual meeting, then the current TAC of 28,000 t would remain in place one additional year to allow them to complete this work.

In summary, the proposed TAC would remain at 28,000 t for 2017, consistent with SCRS advice, existing quota allocations would be maintained, and progress toward the adoption of HCRs for this stock is reflected. The measure would be reviewed in 2017 or 2018, in light of the results of HCR/MSE work by the SCRS. Establishing a clear process and timeline for the development of HCRs for northern albacore is essential, since this stock will serve as a model for similar work related to other stocks as outlined in Recommendation 15-07.