

The Pew Charitable Trusts'
Opening statement to ICCAT Panel 2

November 2025

The Pew Charitable Trusts welcomes this opportunity to comment on the important matters being considered by Panel 2 at the 29th Regular Meeting of the ICCAT Commission. Over the last few years, Panel 2 has made great progress in its management of Atlantic bluefin tuna. This year, while there are many items on the agenda, it is of highest importance that ICCAT set the total allowable catch (TACs) for bluefin tuna using a management procedure (MP) to ensure its sustainable, science-based management.

Pew was among the many groups to congratulate ICCAT on the monumental achievement of adopting an MP for Atlantic bluefin tuna in 2022. The recovery of this iconic species has demonstrated ICCAT's place as a successful multi-lateral organization. The MP is still relatively new and is designed to provide long-term management. This year marks the end of only the first management cycle, and Panel 2 is scheduled to use the MP to set the TACs for the next three-year management cycle, beginning with the 2026 fishing year.

Acknowledging that SCRS had no consensus on whether to recommend the current MP (i.e., BR) or a new MP (i.e., BR*) - based on close-kin mark recapture results of the West - we urge members to select one of these two MP options to determine the eastern and western TACs for the next management cycle. To maintain effective management, TAC should include all mortality (commercial, recreational, and dead discards). Using any method other than an MP to determine the TACs for BFT would undermine stakeholders and scientists who worked hard to complete the MSE. Arbitrarily setting TACs that stray from an MP could also have a concerning domino effect for other ICCAT species managed with MPs; MPs are meant to be long-term management approaches that are followed.

Panel 2 is at a crossroads, with a number of proposals on the table. We urge members to uphold the management standards for this species, including MP-based TAC-setting, to support market stability, and ensure that bluefin tuna populations remain at healthy levels in the future.