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BRIEF UPDATE OF BLUEFIN MSE PROCESS

The SCRS gives the bluefin tuna MSE process top priority for 2021 and 2022. Based on the proposed workplan of the SCRS and subsequently revised 2021 Commission calendar, the current MSE process is on schedule to provide TAC advice for 2023 at the 2022 Commission meeting. Details of this schedule are available in the revised (December 2020) *Road map for the development of Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) and Harvest Control Rules (HCR)*. The Commission has also requested the SCRS conduct an updated western bluefin tuna assessment. Given the time allotted in the ICCAT calendar, this should not affect the progress of the MSE. Further, ongoing revisions of many indices in early 2021 in advance of the western assessment will also strengthen a number of important indicators used in the MSE.

Overall, the operating models cover a broad range of possibilities and contingency scenarios designed to achieve robust management. Unlike the current two stock assessment approach where the west and east areas are considered independent, the MSE explicitly accounts for the inherent movement and mixing dynamics of the eastern and western origin stocks. Under the current understanding of the biology, the eastern and the western stocks are linked whereby substantial movement and differential stock sizes (biomass approximately 10 to 1, east to west) creates substantial mixing, particularly in the west area. Consequently, what occurs in one stock may affect the other. For example, maintaining stock status for the western stock may require adjusting the east area TAC.

2021 Key Milestones:

- To adopt a reference grid of operating models
- To implement a plausibility weighting scheme for the grid
- Initiate an independent peer review of the MSE code
- To refine a set of index and model-based candidate management procedures under development from six individual developer teams
- The operating models will also be 'reconditioned' - a process which will bring them up to a terminal year of 2018 and will incorporate the most recent index improvements which will occur as part of the bluefin tuna workplan
- Choice of a limited number CMPs to be approved by the SCRS and presented to the Commission (Panel 2)
- Dialogue Meeting with Panel 2 in the 2021 Commission meeting. The primary purpose of these initial CMPs will be to illustrate the process, elucidate the inherent management tradeoffs, gauge the acceptability of CMPs and be provided with recommendations for their further refinement

2022 Key Milestones:

- During 2022, further dialogue with Panel 2 will be critical to refining these initial CMPs to best achieve acceptability across the various tradeoffs
- Develop guidance on developing exceptional circumstances provisions (to be finalized by the end of 2023) and associated management responses
- SCRS continues to refine (improve) CMPs
- Presentation of CMPs (no more than 3) to Commission at the 2022 Annual meeting for potential adoption of one of these for 2023 TAC advice