

- RECOMMENDATION -
ESTABLISH REBUILDING PLAN FOR BLUE MARLIN & WHITE MARLIN

TITLE: *Recommendation by ICCAT to Establish a Plan to Rebuild Blue Marlin and White Marlin Populations*
(Entered into force: **June 26, 2001**)

UNDERSTANDING that the landings reductions required by ICCAT's *Recommendation Regarding Atlantic Blue Marlin and Atlantic White Marlin*, adopted in 1997, extended in 1998, and in effect through 2000, though accomplished, are not sufficient to rebuild these stocks and that, according to the SCRS, the assessments conducted in 2000 indicate that the stock of blue marlin has been reduced to a level of 40% of that needed to produce maximum sustainable yield (MSY), that the stock of white marlin has been reduced to a level of 15% of that needed to produce MSY, although those estimates particularly for white marlin are uncertain, and that neither stock is likely to recover if the current levels of mortality continue into the future;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that the SCRS recommended, after considering the high uncertainty involved in the stock assessment, that the Commission take steps to reduce the catch of blue marlin and white marlin as much as possible;

RECALLING that the objective of the Convention is to maintain populations of tuna and tuna-like species in the Atlantic Ocean at levels that will permit the maximum sustainable catch (usually referred to as MSY) for food and other purposes;

RECOGNIZING that the great diversity of gears and fleets by which these species are caught, both as target species and as by-catch, makes it necessary to establish a general regulatory framework valid for developing and implementing domestic regulatory measures in each case, with the aim of seeking the maximum efficiency for the adequate management of these species.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION
OF ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT) RECOMMENDS THAT:

- 1 A two phase program be undertaken to rebuild blue marlin and white marlin populations to levels sufficient to support MSY. Phase 1 measures are to commence in 2001 and apply through 2002, with re-evaluation and adjustment in 2002 for the beginning of Phase 2.
- 2 All Contracting Parties, non-Contracting Parties, Entities, and Fishing Entities shall take steps aimed at reducing the uncertainty in the SCRS stock status evaluations by substantial investment into SCRS research on blue marlin and white marlin habitat requirements and further verification of the historical catch and effort data for these species from all fisheries.

Phase 1

- 3 During Phase 1, the annual amount of blue marlin that can be harvested in years 2001 and 2002 by pelagic longline and purse seine vessels and retained for landing must be no more than 50% of the 1999 landing levels. During Phase 1, for white marlin, the annual amount of white marlin that can be harvested by pelagic longline and purse seine vessels and retained for landing must be no more than 33% of the 1999 landing levels. All blue marlin and white marlin brought to pelagic longline and purse seine vessels alive shall be released in a manner that maximizes their survival. The provisions of this paragraph shall not apply to marlin that are dead when brought along the side of the vessel and that are not sold or entered into commerce.
- 4 During Phase 1
 - a All Contracting Parties, non-Contracting Parties, Entities, and Fishing Entities shall maintain daily records of live and dead releases of blue marlin and white marlin from longline and purse seine vessels, by area no greater than 5 degrees by 5 degrees;

- b To improve information for future stock assessments of blue marlin and white marlin, all Contracting Parties, non-Contracting Parties, Entities, and Fishing Entities shall establish or maintain systems to collect scientific information on total catch composition and the release of marlin through new or on-going observer programs for their industrial and recreational fleets. The purse seine and longline fleets will aim to have coverage at levels recommended by SCRS;
 - c The United States shall monitor the landings of billfish tournaments through scientific observer coverage of at least 5% that includes collection of data on marlin landings from each observed billfish tournament. The United States shall endeavor to attain 10% scientific observer coverage of billfish tournament landings by the end of 2002. The United States shall limit its landings to 250 recreationally-caught Atlantic blue marlin and white marlin combined on an annual basis for the period 2001 through 2002;
 - d All Contracting Parties, non-Contracting Parties, Entities and Fishing Entities other than the United States shall adopt domestic regulations that establish minimum sizes for landings of blue marlin and white marlin in their recreational fisheries, such as, for example, blue marlin not smaller than 251 cm LJFL and white marlin not smaller than 168 cm LJFL.
 - e All Contracting Parties, non-Contracting Parties, Entities and Fishing Entities shall require nationals to maintain records (in terms of weight or number) of landings of blue marlin and white marlin. Such countries shall collect catch and effort data on all marlins landed, and size data on at least 50% of the landings.
 - f The SCRS shall present at the 2001 Commission meeting, work plans to achieve Phase 2.
- 5 Contracting Parties, non-Contracting Parties, Entities and Fishing Entities shall encourage the initiation of research programs on technological improvements in the various fishing gears which promote the maximum reduction in mortality of these species, for example, the use of circle hooks as a means of minimizing post-release mortality of marlins;
- 6 Contracting Parties, non-Contracting Parties, Entities and Fishing Entities shall develop intensive research programs during 2001 and 2002 to reduce the uncertainties identified in the scientific assessments of both species, with special attention to the habitat requisites of both species, the historical records of catch, effort and catch per unit of effort of the various fleets.

Phase 2

- 7 The SCRS shall conduct stock assessments of Atlantic blue marlin and white marlin in 2002.
- 8 For blue marlin and white marlin, the SCRS shall, at the 2002 Commission meeting, present its evaluation of specific stock recovery scenarios that take into account the new stock assessments, any new information and any re-evaluation of the historical catch and effort time series.
- 9 Based on SCRS advice, the Commission at its 2002 meeting shall, if necessary, develop and adopt programs to rebuild the Atlantic stocks of blue marlin and white marlin to levels that would support MSY. Such rebuilding programs shall include a timetable for recovery to a scientifically derived goal consistent with the objectives of the Convention, with associated milestones and biological reference points. This objective could be reached through general plans of monitoring of effort and/or time-area closures and/or other measures practical to apply by the various Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-contracting parties, Entities, and Fishing Entities, taking the specific characteristics of their fisheries into account.