

06-09

BIL

**RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN THE
PLAN TO REBUILD BLUE MARLIN AND WHITE MARLIN POPULATIONS**

RECALLING the 2000 Recommendation from ICCAT to rebuild Atlantic Blue Marlin and Atlantic White Marlin,

FURTHER RECALLING that the objective of the Convention is to maintain populations at levels that will support maximum sustainable catch (usually referred to as MSY),

CONSIDERING that the 2006 Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) stock assessment recommends that the management measures currently in effect be continued, and that billfish mortality from artisanal fleets be regulated to control or reduce the fishing mortality generated by these fisheries;

FINALLY NOTING that the next stock assessment for marlins will be conducted in 2010,

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

Rebuilding Program

1. A two phase program shall be continued 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 2010, with re-evaluation and adjustment in 2010 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. Through 2010, the annual amount of blue marlin that can be harvested and retained for landing by pelagic longline and purse seine vessels must be no more than 50% of the 1996 or 1999 landing levels, whichever is greater. 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 1996 or 1999 landing levels, whichever is greater. 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, Contracting Parties, Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities are encouraged to conduct research on blue marlin and white marlin, as recommended by the SCRS, including, but not limited to: habitat requirements of white marlin, studies on post-release survival rates of released fish, further verification of historical fishery data and validation; life history characteristics of marlin, and development of models for abundance estimation and stock assessment. The Commission continues to be concerned about commercial exploitation as a result of the utilization of white marlin and blue marlin, and encourages Contracting Parties, Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities to take actions as practicable to address this concern.
5. 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 disposition of released and discarded marlin by area and season through new or on-going observer programs for their industrial and recreational fleets. In that regard, the purse seine and longline fleets will aim to place observers on at least 5% by fishing vessels.

- 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 maintain 10% scientific observer coverage of billfish tournament landings. The United States shall limit its landings to 250 recreationally-caught Atlantic blue marlin and white marlin combined on an annual basis through the year 2010.
 - 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 be required to maintain records (in terms of weight or number) of landings of blue marlin and white marlin. Such countries, entities or fishing entities 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 2010 Commission meeting, work plans to achieve Phase 2.
6. 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;

Phase 2

7. The SCRS shall conduct stock assessments of Atlantic blue marlin and white marlin in 2010, with a data preparatory meeting one year in advance.
8. For blue marlin and white marlin, the SCRS shall, at the 2010 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. Following the next assessments, the Commission shall, if necessary based on SCRS advice, develop and adopt programs to rebuild the Atlantic stocks of blue marlin and white marlin to levels that would support MSY. The 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 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 or Fishing Entities, taking the specific characteristics of their fisheries into account.

Catch limits and quotas

10. All Contracting Parties and non-contracting parties, entities or fishing entities shall promote the voluntary release of live blue marlin and white marlin.
11. Contracting Parties, non-Contracting Parties, Entities and Fishing Entities with artisanal marlin fisheries shall submit to SCRS in 2007 documentation of the character and extent of such fisheries and shall implement beginning in 2007, if feasible but not later than 2008, domestic measures to cap artisanal marlin catches at 2006 levels.

Scientific research and data reporting requirements

12. CPCs shall advise ICCAT annually of measures in place or to be taken that reduce landings of marlins or fishing effort in the commercial and recreational fisheries that interact with blue marlin and white marlin.

13. The Commission shall maintain a program to improve catch data for blue marlin and white marlin.
14. Contracting Parties, non-Contracting Parties, Entities and Fishing Entities shall monitor and report effort (including number of fishing vessels) and catches (landings and discards) of billfish by their artisanal marlin fishing fleets.

Resolutions relating to billfish

15. The SCRS is requested to further improve research and study of these species, with particular attention to their growth and age;
16. The SCRS is requested to review and update historical catch and effort data for commercial and recreational fisheries for these species in the Convention area;
17. A scientific program is hereby continued under the ICCAT Enhanced Billfish Program, under which Contracting Parties will promote the voluntary release by their commercial and recreational fishermen of blue marlin, white marlin, sailfish, and spearfish taken alive in the Convention area and, where practicable, the tagging of these species under the program;
18. All Contracting Parties fishing for billfishes should make an effort to participate in the ICCAT scientific program for these species, and report annually to the SCRS results of the program referred to in paragraph 17 above;
19. ICCAT will, particularly with the cooperation of those Contracting Parties with interests in the billfish fisheries, continue a reward program for the tag and release of billfishes, and for the return of tags recovered from recaptured billfishes.
20. As recommended by the Third ICCAT Billfish Workshop (1996), Contracting Parties should promote the use of monofilament leaders (on hook gangions) to avoid hindering the live release of billfishes;
21. The SCRS should continue to improve catch statistics and information about post-release mortality of fish released live from commercial as well as recreational fisheries, in order to develop a recovery program for billfish;
22. This Recommendation consolidates and replaces the following Recommendations and Resolutions as they relate to billfish:

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| [Rec. 97-09] | <i>Recommendation by ICCAT Regarding Atlantic Blue Marlin and Atlantic White Marlin</i> |
| [Rec. 00-13] | <i>Recommendation by ICCAT to Establish a Plan to Rebuild Blue Marlin and White Marlin Populations</i> |
| [Rec. 02-13] | <i>Recommendation by ICCAT to Amend the Plan to Rebuild Blue Marlin and White Marlin Populations</i> |
| [Rec. 04-09] | <i>Supplemental Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Rebuilding Plan for Blue Marlin and White Marlin</i> |
| [Res. 95-12] | <i>Resolution by ICCAT for the Enhancement of Research Programs for Billfishes</i> |
| [Res. 96-09] | <i>Resolution by ICCAT Regarding the Release of Live Billfish Caught by Longline</i> |