

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

RECALLING that in 2000, ICCAT established a two-phase plan to rebuild blue marlin and white marlin populations (2000 *Recommendation by ICCAT to Establish a Plan to Rebuild Blue Marlin and White Marlin Populations*, hereinafter referred as the 2000 Recommendation). Phase one established measures to commence in 2001 and apply through 2002, and phase two required the Commission to adopt at the 2002 meeting, if necessary, a program to rebuild white marlin and blue marlin to levels that would support maximum sustainable yield (MSY). The Plan also required the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) to conduct stock assessments of Atlantic blue marlin and white marlin in 2002.

FURTHER RECALLING that in 2001, ICCAT amended the 2000 Recommendation, which extended the management measures through 2002, postponed the blue marlin assessment to 2003, and replaced the phrase “the 1999 landing levels” with “landing levels for either 1996 or 1999, whichever is greater” (2001 *Recommendation by ICCAT to Amend the Plan to Rebuild the Blue Marlin and White Marlin Populations*, hereinafter referred to as the 2001 Recommendation);

NOTING that the current (2002) SCRS advice is that Recommendations from previous years have some potential for stabilizing the stock biomass near current levels; however, lower catch levels might provide greater potential for increasing stock biomass;

RECOGNIZING the highly migratory nature of blue marlin and white marlin, which results in differences in the abundance of these fish in time and space;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the 2000 and 2001 Recommendations included general plans for the monitoring of effort and/or time-area closures and/or other measures practical to apply by the various Contracting Parties, Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities to reach Convention objectives.

GIVEN that there are significant uncertainties associated with the 2002 white marlin stock assessment due to lack of data,

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

1. Phase 1 of the plan outlined in the 2000 *Recommendation by ICCAT to Establish a Plan to Rebuild Blue Marlin and White Marlin Populations* (the 2000 Recommendation as amended by the 2001 Recommendation) be amended such that Phase 1 shall continue through the year 2005 with the specific modifications stated below:

Paragraph 3 is amended to read: “Through 2005, 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.”

Paragraph 4c is amended by replacing the phrase “for the period 2001 through 2002” with “through the year 2005.”

2. 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

3. The Commission shall consider at its 2003 meeting a program to improve catch data for blue marlin and white marlin, taking into account the outcomes of the data workshop scheduled to be held in 2003. This program may include a statistical document program where appropriate and feasible.
4. In 2005, the SCRS shall conduct stock assessments for blue marlin and white marlin, and examine and report on management alternatives to implement the general plans described in the Preamble.
5. Operative paragraph 2 (referring to Phase 2 of the Plan) in the 2001 *Recommendation by ICCAT to Amend the Plan to Rebuild Blue Marlin and White Marlin Populations* be amended as follows:

Paragraph 7 is amended to read: "The SCRS shall conduct stock assessments of Atlantic blue marlin and white marlin in 2005, with a data preparatory meeting one year in advance;"

Paragraph 8 is amended to read: "For blue marlin and white marlin, the SCRS shall, at the 2005 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."

Paragraph 9 is amended to read: "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."