INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NINTH MEETING

La Jolla, California (USA)
14-18 May 2018

DOCUMENT SAC-09-02a

STAFF ACTIVITIES AND RESEARCH WORK PLAN

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

At its 8th meeting in May 2017, the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) made the following recommendation to the Commission**:**

> *"The SAC recommends that the scientific staff prepare a strategic science plan for the 2018-2022 period, which includes clear objectives, specific priorities, strategies, actions, responsibilities, and resources, including a tentative budget."*

In accordance with this recommendation, the staff has developed a Strategic Science Plan (SSP), which establishes research goals, activities, and priorities for the 2019-2023 period. In the plan, the staff's activities are classified into seven main areas, called *Themes*:

1. Data collection
2. Life-history studies for scientific support of management
3. Sustainable fisheries
4. Ecological impacts of fishing: assessment and mitigation
5. Interactions among the environment, ecosystem, and fisheries
6. Knowledge transfer and capacity building
7. Scientific excellence

Each *Theme* is divided into goals and objectives (*Goals*), and the work that will be carried out to achieve a particular goal or objective within the plan's five-year window is called a *Target*. Not specified in the SSP is the staff's concrete work plan, and the current and planned activities (called *Projects*) that will achieve these strategic goals; they are elaborated in this document.

The general *Themes*, and the more specific *Goals*, reflect what the staff considers to be its primary responsibilities, and form a permanent part of the five-year SSP. Whether any *Projects* are undertaken under a particular *Goal* or *Target* in any given period will depend on the staff's research priorities, the human, logistic, and financial resources available, and any specific instructions from the Commission.

The structure of this report reflects the structure of the SSP, and is different from previous years. Activities are no longer categorized by the staff's four research programs (Appendix 1), but by the seven themes in the SSP. Also, although the SSP has a five-year time frame, individual research projects are planned with two-year time frames (biennial activity research plan). Thus, the intention is that, in future years, this report will serve two purposes: 1) report on progress in the previous year; 2) present the workplan for the following two years. However, this initial report is presented in draft form for consideration by the SAC, and the projects it contains extend beyond that time frame, and do not include certain elements, like budgets. The timing and duration of projects should be regarded as indicative, since they will be subject to many factors that are sometimes difficult to predict and beyond the staff's control.

A. OUTLINE OF THE IATTC STRATEGIC SCIENCE PLAN

This section lists the *Goals* (A-Y) and *Targets* (A.1, A.2, *etc*.) corresponding to each of the SSP's seven *Themes*; for details of each individual *Project*, see the relevant section of the document.

1. DATA COLLECTION FOR SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT OF MANAGEMENT

Goal A: Database maintenance, preservation, and access

- A.1. Routine work
- A.2. Improve internal documentation
- A.3. Standardize and automate data submissions

Goal B: Conduct a review of current IATTC/AIDCP data collection programs, identify and prioritize opportunities to improve data quality and expand data types and coverage

- B.1. Evaluate and improve data collected by the purse-seine On-Board Observer Program for scientific research
- B.2. Expand on-board data collection to small purse seiners
- B.3. Evaluate and improve the port sampling data collection program
- B.4. Develop and implement a long-term life-history data collection program to support scientific research for stock assessment and management

Goal C: Facilitate the improvement of data quality, coverage, and reporting by CPC data collection programs

- C.1. Purse-seine fleet
- C.2. Longline fisheries
- C.3. At-sea transshipments
- C.4. Artisanal fisheries (coastal developing CPCs)
- C.5. Other fisheries

Goal D. Investigate the use of new technologies to improve data quality

- D.1. Evaluate the functionality of electronic data collection and reporting systems
- D.2. Evaluate the feasibility of implementing on-board electronic monitoring (EM) systems for data collection purposes

2. LIFE-HISTORY STUDIES FOR SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT OF MANAGEMENT

Goal E: Obtain life history and stock structure information for spatially-structured stock assessments for tropical tunas

E.1. Initiate a long-term age and growth data collection and research program for tropical tunas
E.2. Conduct spatiotemporal research on the reproductive biology of tropical tunas
E.3. Analyze historical tagging data to improve the assumptions about movement and stock structure in spatially-structured stock assessments of tropical tunas
E.4. Initiate a multi-year tagging program for tropical tunas
E.5. Conduct genetic studies to improve the assumptions about life history and stock structure in stock assessments of tropical tunas

Goal F: Obtain key life history information for assessment and mitigation of ecological impacts on prioritized species

F.1. Conduct life-history studies of dolphins under the AIDCP
F.2. Conduct life-history studies of shark species
F.2.a. Investigate the movements, behavior, and habitat utilization of silky sharks in the EPO
F.3. Conduct life-history studies of prioritized species

Goal G: Investigate the early life history of tunas to improve understanding of recruitment processes to improve assessments and management

G.1. Investigate the effects of density dependence and the environment on the pre-recruit survival of yellowfin tuna
G.2. Conduct comparative studies of the early life histories of yellowfin and Pacific bluefin tunas
G.3. Develop tools to forecast recruitment

3. SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

Goal H: Improve and implement stock assessments, based on the best available science

H.1. Undertake the research necessary to develop and conduct at least one benchmark stock assessment for yellowfin and bigeye tunas
H.2. Develop a spatially-structured stock assessment model for bigeye tuna as a basis for management advice, and initiate a similar model for yellowfin tunas
H.3. Develop a benchmark stock assessment for skipjack tuna (conditional on implementation of tagging program
H.4. Develop update assessment and/or stock status indicators for tropical tunas to ensure that management advice is current
H.5. Undertake the research necessary to develop and conduct data-limited assessments for prioritized species
H.6. Maintain active participation in ISC stock assessments
H.7. Develop conventional stock assessments for data-rich prioritized species and species of specific interest
H.8. Assess the status of dolphin stocks in the eastern tropical Pacific

Goal I: Test harvest strategies using Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE)

I.1. Conduct a comprehensive MSE for bigeye tuna and plan MSEs for the other tropical tuna species, including the multi-species fishery for tropical tunas
I.2. Collaborate with ISC in Pacific-wide MSEs for albacore and Pacific bluefin tunas
I.3. Initiate MSE work to evaluate indicator-based harvest strategies for prioritized species and species of specific interest

Goal J: Improve our understanding of the effects of the operational characteristics of the fishery on fishing mortality, stock assessments, and management advice

J.1. Identify and monitor changes in technology and fishing strategies to improve stock assessments and management advice

J.2. Improve our understanding of the relationship between the operational characteristics of the purse-seine fishery and fishing mortality

J.3. Study the impact of FAD operations on fishing mortality to improve FAD management advice

Goal K: Improve our understanding of the socio-economic aspects of sustainable fisheries for tropical tunas

K.1. Collaborate in socio-economic studies by other organizations

4. ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF FISHERIES: ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION

Goal L: Evaluate the ecological impacts of tuna fisheries

L.1. Develop analytical tools to identify and prioritize species at risk for data collection, research and management

L.2. Conduct ERAs of EPO fisheries to identify and prioritize species at risk

Goal M: Mitigate the ecological impacts of tuna fisheries

M.1. In collaboration with the industry, conduct scientific experiments to identify gear technology that will reduce bycatches and mortality of prioritized species

M.2. In collaboration with the industry, conduct scientific experiments to develop best practices for the release of prioritized bycatch species

M.3. Conduct spatiotemporal analyses to identify areas of high bycatch/catch ratios for potential use in spatial management

M.4. Investigate alternative tools for bycatch mitigation

M.5. In collaboration with the industry, conduct experiments to develop best practices for mitigating the impacts of fishing on habitats in the EPO

Goal N: Improve our understanding of the interactions among environmental drivers, climate, and fisheries

N.1. Conduct spatiotemporal analyses to better understand the effect of key environmental drivers on the short-term fluctuations of abundance of tunas and prioritized bycatch species

N.2. Conduct spatiotemporal analyses to better understand the effect of long-term climate drivers (regime shifts) on the abundance of tropical tunas

Goal O: Improve our understanding of the EPO ecosystem

O.1. Conduct trophodynamic studies for defining key assumptions in EPO ecosystem models

O.2. Improve analytical tools to evaluate anthropogenic and climate impacts on the EPO ecosystem

5. KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Goal P. Respond in a timely manner to external requests for information and technical support

P.1. Respond to requests by CPCs

P.2. Respond to requests from other organizations

Goal Q. Provide training opportunities for scientists and technicians of CPCs

Q.1. Host visiting scientists and students from CPCs

Q.2. Implement the IATTC capacity-building scholarship

Q.3. Facilitate training workshops

Goal R: Improve communication of scientific advice

R.1. Improve communication of the staff's scientific work to CPCs

R.2. Participate in global initiatives for the communication of science

Goal S: Facilitate participation of CPCs in the scientific process and in training events

S.1. Improve communication and coordination with the Scientific Advisory Committee and scientific and technical working groups

S.2. Facilitate participation of scientific and technical personnel from developing CPCs at IATTC scientific meetings and training events (IATTC capacity building fund)

6. SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE

Goal T. Implement external reviews of the staff's research

T.1. Facilitate external reviews of stock assessments

T.2. Facilitate external reviews of scientific studies

Goal U. Strengthen research at the Achotines Laboratory

Goal V. Recruit and retain highly-qualified personnel

Goal W. Promote training and advancement of scientific staff

Goal X. Promote the advancement of scientific research

X.1. Continue the annual CAPAM workshops

B. CURRENT AND PLANNED PROJECTS, BY THEME

1. DATA COLLECTION FOR SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT OF MANAGEMENT

Goal A: Database maintenance, preservation, and access

- A.1. Routine work
  - A.1.a. Routine activities of the Bycatch and IDCP Program
- A.2. Improve internal documentation
- A.3. Standardize and automate data submissions
  - A.3.a Conversion of all remaining Visual Basic 6 (VB6) computer programs to Visual Basic Net (VB.net).
  - A.3.b Develop databases of biological and fisheries parameters to support Ecological Risk Assessment and ecosystem models

Goal B: Conduct a review of current IATTC/AIDCP data collection programs, identify and prioritize opportunities to improve data quality and expand data types and coverage

- B.1. Evaluate and improve data collected by the purse-seine On-Board Observer Program for scientific research
- B.2. Expand on-board data collection to small purse seiners
- B.3. Evaluate and improve the port sampling data collection program
- B.4. Develop and implement a long-term life-history data collection program to support scientific research for stock assessment and management

Goal C: Facilitate the improvement of data quality, coverage, and reporting by CPC data collection programs

- C.1. Purse-seine fleet
- C.2. Longline fisheries
- C.3. At-sea transshipments
- C.4. Artisanal fisheries (coastal developing CPCs)
  - C.4.a. Improving data collection for Central American shark fisheries
- C.5. Other fisheries

Goal D. Investigate the use of new technologies to improve data quality

- D.1. Evaluate the functionality of electronic data collection and reporting systems
- D.2. Evaluate the feasibility of implementing on-board electronic monitoring (EM) systems for data collection purposes
  - D.2.a Pilot study of electronic monitoring (EM) of the activities and catches of Class 1-5 purse-seine vessels

PROJECT A.1.a: Routine activities of the Bycatch and IDCP Program	
THEME: Data Collection **GOAL:** A. Database maintenance, preservation, and access **TARGET:** A.1. Routine tasks **EXECUTION**: Bycatch and IDCP Program	
Objectives	Continue routine Bycatch-IDCP program activities required by the Antigua Convention and the AIDCP
Background	• The AIDCP requires that all trips by Class-6 purse-seine vessels (carrying capacity > 363 t) in the EPO carry an observer aboard; the IATTC observer program covers 50% of trips. • Observer records are the primary source of data on the purse-seine fishery. • The Antigua Convention and various IATTC resolutions require that observers collect information on the tuna purse-seine fishery. • The Bycatch-IDCP program is instrumental in training observers from national programs and under agreements with other organizations.
Relevance for management	Observer data are a key element for stock assessments and recommendations by the IATTC scientific staff
Duration	Continuous
Workplan and progress report (for ongoing projects)	Continue to process new data. Seek opportunities to improve data collection and processing.
External collaborators	Coordination with national and regional observer programs is essential and required.
Deliverables	• IATTC staff processed data from 526 observed trips initiated during 2017. • Observer training, 2017: two courses, in Ecuador (for IATTC and Ecuadorian national program) and Federated States of Micronesia (with WCPFC western Pacific program). • Required AIDCP seminars for crew, vessel managers and government officials, 2017: three (two in Ecuador, one in Panama), with a total of 128 attendees. • Required alignment of dolphin safety panel in purse-seine net, 2017: four, all in Ecuador.

PROJECT A.3.a. Conversion of all remaining Visual Basic 6 (VB6) computer programs to Visual Basic Net (VB.net).	
THEME: Data Collection **GOAL:** A. Database maintenance, preservation, and access **TARGET:** A.3. Standardize and automate data submissions **EXECUTION**: Data Collection and Database Program	
Objectives	• Re-write all VB6 computer programs still in use by the IATTC and supported national observer programs in VB.net. • Work with national programs to install and test in the local environments, and train national program staff.
Background	• IATTC staff developed customized data entry and editing programs using VB. • Microsoft has terminated support for VB6, so the development environment no longer runs on current Microsoft operating systems. • The code must be re-written in a supported programming language.
Relevance for management	At some point the compiled VB6 programs will cease to work, and data required for stock management would not be available.
Duration	3 years
Work plan and status	• Late 2014: project initiated. • February 2018: conversion about 60% complete. • February-December: Continue conversion, prioritizing the most important computer programs.
External collaborators	
Deliverables	• Completion of conversion of all VB6 computer programs. • Replacement of all VB6 computer programs in IATTC and national programs with VB.net programs. • Provide technical support to national programs during transition.

PROJECT A.3.b: Develop databases of biological and fisheries parameters to support Ecological Risk Assessment and ecosystem models	
THEME: Data Collection **GOAL:** A. Database maintenance, preservation, and access **TARGET:** A.3. Standardize and automate data submissions **EXECUTION**: Data Collection and Database Program, Biology and Ecosystem Program	
Objectives	Develop a comprehensive database of best-available biological and fisheries data to provide key parameters for Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA) and ecosystem models
Background	• The Antigua Convention requires the IATTC to ensure the sustainability of target, associated, and dependent species affected by EPO tuna fisheries, and the ecosystem to which they belong. • ERA and ecosystem models, used by IATTC staff to assess the ecological impacts of tuna fisheries in the EPO, require information on biological, physiological and trophodynamic characteristics of thousands of species in the EPO ecosystem. • A database with the most up-to-date information for impacted species is required to expedite the initial parameterization, or updating, of future models.
Relevance for management	• The database will contain data needed for ERAs and ecosystem models, used to identify and prioritize data collection, mitigation, and/or management measures for vulnerable species. • The databases could be shared with scientists of CPCs.
Duration	12 months
Workplan and status	• Months 1-6: conduct literature searches for species that interact with EPO fisheries • Months 7-12: Conduct literature searches for species that interact with EPO fisheries, identify fishery-related susceptibility parameters for bycatch species, create database
External collaborators	Scientists from CPCs interested in contributing to and/or using the databases
Deliverables	Comprehensive life history and susceptibility database with fishery-specific information that can be shared with IATTC CPCs for those wishing to develop ERAs for a particular region and/or fishery.

PROJECT C.4.a: Improving data collection for Central American shark fisheries	
THEME: Data Collection **GOAL:** C. Facilitate Improve quality and expand coverage of data-collection programs **TARGET:** C.4. Artisanal Longline fleet **EXECUTION**: Stock Assessment Program	
Objectives	• Obtain an order-of-magnitude estimate of shark catch for the artisanal fleet. • Design and test sampling protocols for estimating shark species and size composition for the industrial fleet.
Background	• There is a critical need for stock assessments of sharks to better inform their management and conservation. • Unfortunately, this has not been possible in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) to date due to the lack of reliable fishery statistics from all important fisheries. • With funding in 2015-2017 from the FAO and the GEF in the framework of the Common Oceans Tuna project, IATTC staff and an external consultant produced two reports that summarize characteristics of Central American shark fisheries and complied available catch information for the region. • Also as part of the project same, IATTC staff and the external consultant identified specific data gaps and areas for improvement in data collection. • In September 2017, IATTC and the external consultant convened a "Workshop to Develop a Pilot Study for a Shark Fishery Sampling Program in Central America" to bring together sampling design experts, and scientific and technical experts from OSPESCA's GTEAM, to discuss how to address data deficiencies. • The current project, which is based on recommendations for the September 2017 workshop, was funded in 2018 under the *Sustainable Management of Tuna Fisheries and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction* (GCP/GLO/365/GFF)
Relevance for management	Improving catch data collection will help to fill the current data gaps and thus lead to better management of shark fisheries in the EPO
Duration	12 months
Work plan and status	• Collect data to create a Google Earth map of all landing sites of artisanal shark fisheries in Central America, with associated levels of fishing activity. • Using this map to guide sampling of catches at select landing sites in Central America. • Compute an order of magnitude estimate of total shark catch for the artisanal fleet from sample data and map information. • Conduct a survey of industrial vessel unloading characteristics that can be used to develop catch sampling protocols. • Develop and test several sampling designs for shark catch size and sex composition of the industrial fleet.
External collaborators	
Deliverables	• Three quarterly reports • Final report describing technical findings

PROJECT D.2.a: Pilot study of electronic monitoring (EM) of the activities and catches of Class 1-5 purse-seine vessels	
THEME: Data Collection **GOAL:** Investigate use of new technologies (pilot studies) **TARGET:** D.2 Electronic monitoring **EXECUTION**: Bycatch and IDCP Program	
Objectives	A proof-of-concept study to evaluate the types of data that can be reliably collected by electronic monitoring (EM) on Class 1-5 purse-seine vessels.
Background	• Fisheries management and assessments require complete catch and bycatch information. • Logbook data for Class 1-5 vessels provide basic catch information for target species, but no information on tuna discards and incomplete information on catches of non-target species. • EM systems may provide cost-effective and practical solutions.
Relevance for management	Better-quality and higher-resolution data on catches and discards of target and non-target species by unobserved purse-seine vessels would improve the staff's stock assessments and management advice
Duration	23 months
Work plan and status	• **2018**: January-February: Identify EM capabilities from manufacturers. • March-May: Survey of infrastructure configuration and fishing operations of small vessels. Identify candidate vessels; purchase EM equipment. • June 2018-January 2019: collect EM and observer data on small purse-seine vessels. • **2019**: February-April: process EM data. • May-August: Statistical comparisons of EM and observer data; write project report. • September-November: if proof-of-concept warranted, development of a sampling design for a pilot study using EM aboard small purse-seine vessels.
External collaborators	Collaboration of fishing industry, observers and technology companies is essential.
Deliverables	May 2018: Progress report to SAC-09 meeting.

2. LIFE-HISTORY STUDIES FOR SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT OF MANAGEMENT

Goal E: Obtain life history and stock structure information for spatially-structured stock assessments for tropical tunas

- E.1. Initiate a long-term age and growth data collection and research program for tropical tunas
  - E.1.a. Evaluate potential improvement of growth model for bigeye in the EPO based on presumed annuli counts from otoliths of large fish
- E.2. Conduct spatiotemporal research on the reproductive biology of tropical tunas
  - E.2.a: Investigate spatiotemporal variability in the age, growth, maturity, and fecundity of yellowfin tuna in the EPO
- E.3. Analyze historical tagging data to improve the assumptions about movement and stock structure in spatially-structured stock assessments of tropical tunas
  - E.3.a. Investigate geographic variation in the movements, behavior, and habitat utilization of yellowfin tuna in the EPO
- E.4. Initiate a multi-year tagging program for tropical tunas
- E.5. Conduct genetic studies to improve the assumptions about life history and stock structure in stock assessments of tropical tunas
  - E.5.a. Evaluate the Pacific-wide population structure of bigeye and skipjack tunas, using genetic analyses
  - E.5b. Investigate the spawning ecology of captive yellowfin tuna, using genetic analyses

Goal F: Obtain key life history information for assessment and mitigation of ecological impacts on prioritized species

- F.1. Conduct life-history studies of dolphins under the AIDCP
- F.2. Conduct life-history studies of shark species
  - F.2.a. Investigate the movements, behavior, and habitat utilization of silky sharks in the EPO
- F.3. Conduct life-history studies of prioritized species

Goal G: Investigate the early life history of tunas to improve understanding of recruitment processes to improve assessments and management

- G.1. Investigate the effects of density dependence and the environment on the pre-recruit survival of yellowfin tuna
  - G.1.a. Studies of pre-recruit survival and growth of yellowfin tuna, including expanding studies of early-juvenile life stages
- G.2. Conduct comparative studies of the early life histories of yellowfin and Pacific bluefin tunas
  - G.2.a. Develop comparative models of pre-recruit survival and reproductive patterns of Pacific tunas
- G.3. Develop tools to forecast recruitment
  - G.3.a. Develop a larval growth index to forecast yellowfin recruitment

PROJECT E.1.a: Evaluate potential improvement of growth model for bigeye in the EPO based on presumed annuli counts from otoliths of large fish	
THEME: Life-history studies for scientific support of management **GOAL:** E. Life history, behavior, and stock structure of tropical tunas **TARGET:** E.1. Age and growth of tropical tunas **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Program	
Objectives	Evaluate the potential improvement in accuracy of the growth model for bigeye in the EPO resulting from including more age-at-size data for large fish
Background	• Growth model for bigeye is based on validated counts of daily otolith increments, corroborated by extensive tagging data, but age-at-size data for larger fish (150-200 cm) are lacking • High-confidence tagging data for bigeye >150 cm are limited • The National Research Institute for Far Seas Fisheries (NRIFSF) of Japan's collections of otoliths from large bigeye captured in the EPO are now available for evaluating age estimates from counts of presumed annuli
Relevance for management	Improving the accuracy of the bigeye growth model, particularly for larger fish, would help resolve some of the uncertainty regarding the status of the stock, and improve the framework on which management advice is based
Duration	XX months; initiated November 2017
Work plan and status	• Fish Ageing Services (FAS) in Australia counted annuli on 140 pairs of bigeye otoliths from up to 20 fish within each 10 cm length interval between 110 and 200 cm and estimated the ages of the fish • FAS age estimates for 110-150 cm fish will be compared to published age-at-size data • Growth rates for 150-180 cm fish based on EPO tagging data will be compared with growth rates based on the FAS age estimates. • Age estimates from otoliths of 150-200 cm fish will be combined with the existing data set and used in an integrative growth model.
External collaborators	NRIFSF, Japan
Deliverables	• Presentation for SPC-OFP bigeye pre-assessment workshop, 2018 • Potential update of bigeye growth model for use in stock assessments

PROJECT E.2.a: Investigate spatiotemporal variability in the age, growth, maturity, and fecundity of yellowfin tuna in the EPO	
THEME: Life-history studies for scientific support of management **GOAL:** E. Life history, behavior, and stock structure of tropical tunas **TARGET:** E.2. Reproductive biology of tropical tunas **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Program	
Objectives	Estimate age, growth, maturity, and fecundity of yellowfin from four distinct areas of the eastern Pacific for use in spatially-structured stock assessment models
Background	• Current estimates of age, growth, maturity, and fecundity of yellowfin are based on otolith and ovarian tissue samples collected over 30 years ago. • During 2009-2016 observers collected otolith and ovarian tissues samples at sea throughout the EPO • Tagging and morphometrics data indicate there are multiple stocks of yellowfin in the EPO, probably with different life history characteristics • Heavily-exploited fish stocks often show trends towards earlier maturation
Relevance for management	Spatially-structured stock assessments based on geographically-explicit life history parameters will provide a more accurate basis for the staff's management advice
Duration	4 years; initiated in 2017
Work plan and status	• 2017-2019: Preparation and reading of otolith samples for age estimates • 2018-2019: Preparation and reading of ovarian tissues for fecundity estimates • 2019-2020: Analyses of age and growth and reproductive biology data, and preparation of manuscripts
External collaborators	
Deliverables	• Presentation for SAC-10 • Updated, geographically-explicit life-history parameters for use in spatially-structured stock assessments

PROJECT E.3.a: Investigate geographic variation in the movements, behavior, and habitat utilization of yellowfin tuna in the EPO	
THEME: Life-history studies for scientific support of management **GOAL:** E. Life history, behavior, and stock structure of tropical tunas **TARGET:** E.3. Analyze historical tagging data to improve spatially-structured tropical tuna assessments **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Program	
Objectives	Evaluate geographic variation in movements, behavior, and habitat utilization of yellowfin tuna via analyses of existing archival tag data sets from several discrete areas of the EPO
Background	• Yellowfin exhibit restricted movements; tagged fish are normally recovered within about 1000 nm of point of release • Future stock assessments of yellowfin should be spatially structured, because there are probably at least three stocks in the EPO • Understanding movements, dispersion, and mixing between stocks, as well as behavior and habitat utilization, is essential for understanding population dynamics, estimating exploitation rates within stocks, and preventing localized depletions
Relevance for management	Spatially-structured stock assessments based on geographically-explicit life history parameters will provide a more accurate basis for the staff's management advicen
Duration	2020
Work plan and status	• Several existing archival tag data sets from discrete areas of the EPO will be analyzed and compared to describe geographic variation in movements, behavior, and habitat utilization • Historical conventional tag data sets for yellowfin from the EPO will also be included in the evaluations of movements and dispersion
External collaborators	
Deliverables	• Presentation for SAC-11 • Manuscript for publication in a scientific journal

PROJECT E.5.a: Evaluate the Pacific-wide population structure of bigeye and skipjack tunas, using genetic analyses	
THEME: Life-history studies for scientific support of management **GOAL:** E. Life history, behavior, and stock structure of tropical tunas **TARGET:** E.5. Genetic studies on stock structure **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Program	
Objectives	Determine whether bigeye and skipjack tuna from discrete areas of the Pacific Ocean show significant genetic heterogeneity
Background	• Genetic studies can be used to evaluate and validate the results of tagging experiments • Modern genetic analyses can be used to assess genetic heterogeneity between tropical tuna stocks • Data from tagging experiments and genetic studies can inform spatially-structured stock assessments
Relevance for management	Spatially-structured stock assessments based on geographically-explicit life history parameters will provide a more accurate basis for the staff's management advice
Duration	2 years (2017-2018)
Work plan and status	• 2017: Tissue samples from the Pacific and other oceans processed at CSIRO using genotyping and sequencing techniques • 2018: Analyses of genetic data at CSIRO with software specifically designed for uncovering and evaluating genetic heterogeneity in population structure • 2018: Manuscript in preparation on assessment of skipjack population structure from samples from Indian Ocean, western and eastern Pacific. • 2018: Manuscript in preparation on assessment of bigeye population structure from samples from western, central, and eastern Pacific
External collaborators	CSIRO, Hobart, Australia
Deliverables	• Relevant information on population structure of bigeye and skipjack tunas in the Pacific for informing future stock assessments • Manuscripts for publication in scientific journals

PROJECT E.5.b: Investigate the spawning ecology of captive yellowfin tuna, using genetic analyses	
THEME: Life-history studies for scientific support of management **GOAL:** E. Life history, behavior, and stock structure of tropical tunas **TARGET:** E.5. Genetic studies on stock structure **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Program	
Objectives	Assess the spawning ecology of captive yellowfin tuna at the Achotines Laboratory, by estimating the number of females that contribute to single spawning events, and their spawning periodicity and frequency
Background	• Determining spawning patterns and maternal lines of inheritance using genetic techniques contributes to understanding of the stock structure of tropical tunas • Captive spawning populations are useful for identifying genetic markers for female spawning patterns and matching parental markers to those found in progeny • During 2011-2014, spawning female yellowfin at the Achotines Laboratory were sampled to develop mitochondrial DNA markers, and these markers are being analyzed in the eggs and larvae to estimate spawning periodicity and frequency of females
Relevance for management	Better understanding of reproductive processes contributes to understanding of recruitment and population structure of yellowfin, essential for stock assessment
Duration	12 months (June 2018-June 2019)
Work plan and status	• June-December 2018: Complete laboratory analysis of genetic markers from spawning adults, eggs and larvae sampled in 2014 • January-June 2019: Preparation of final study results and submission of manuscript
External collaborators	Kindai University, Japan
Deliverables	• Presentations for SAC-09 and SAC-10 (May 2018 and 2019) • Publication of results in a scientific journal

PROJECT F.2.a: Investigate the movements, behavior, and habitat utilization of silky sharks in the EPO	
THEME: Life-history studies for scientific support of management **GOAL:** F. Life-history studies for species at risk **TARGET:** F.2. Life history of sharks **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Program	
Objectives	Evaluate movements, behavior, and habitat utilization of silky sharks in the equatorial and tropical EPO from in-depth analyses of existing data obtained from archival tags
Background	• Understanding population structure and movements is essential for stock assessments, particularly for sharks • The information available about movements, behavior, and habitat utilization of silky sharks in the EPO is limited • Understanding behavior and habitat utilization is important for effective conservation measures and for ecological risk assessment analyses
Relevance for management	Improve management advice on silky sharks based on spatially-structured stock assessments; habitat utilization information is useful for mitigation and spatial management
Duration	12 months (2020)
Work plan and status	The archival tag data for silky sharks collected for previous projects will be analyzed in depth and compared for describing geographic variation in movements, behavior and habitat utilization in a manuscript to be submitted to a scientific journal
External collaborators	INAPESCA, Mexico
Deliverables	• Presentation for SAC-11, May 2020 • Manuscript for publication in a scientific journal

PROJECT G.1.a: Studies of pre-recruit survival and growth of yellowfin tuna, including expanding studies of early-juvenile life stages	
THEME: Life-history studies for scientific support of management **GOAL:** G. Investigate early life-history of tunas **TARGET:** G.1. Investigation of the factors affecting pre-recruit survival of yellowfin **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Group	
Objectives	Investigate the effects of key biological and physical factors on the survival and growth of pre-recruit life stages of yellowfin, with a new emphasis on studies of early-juvenile life stages
Background	• Research on the early life history of yellowfin is designed to develop a more complete understanding of pre-recruit mortality and the influence of key environmental and biological factors on mortality • Ongoing research has examined the effects of physical (turbulence, light, water temperature, dissolved oxygen) and biological (food concentration) factors on growth and survival of larval stages of yellowfin • Recent rearing success now allows experimental studies of the growth and survival dynamics of early-juvenile yellowfin (1-6 months of age), a life stage rarely studied worldwide
Relevance for management	The ability to estimate the effects of key biological and physical factors on survival and growth of pre-recruit (0-6 months) life stages of yellowfin provides potentially key information on recruitment processes in yellowfin
Duration	3 years
Work plan and status	January 2018-December 2020: Continued experimental studies of pre-recruit life stages at the Achotines Laboratory and University of Miami, with a focus on early-juvenile life stages
External collaborators	University of Miami
Deliverables	• Presentations for SAC-09, SAC-10 and SAC-11 • Publication of results in one or more scientific journals

PROJECT G.2.a: Develop comparative models of pre-recruit survival and reproductive patterns of Pacific tunas	
THEME: Life-history studies for scientific support of management **GOAL:** G. Investigate early life-history of tunas **TARGET:** G.2. Comparative studies of early life histories of yellowfin and Pacific bluefin **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Group	
Objectives	Investigate important comparative aspects of the reproductive biology, genetics and early life histories of yellowfin and Pacific bluefin tuna
Background	• Pre-recruit life stages of tunas are potentially key to understanding variations in abundance and reproductive patterns of tuna populations • • Ongoing since 2011, this project has investigated the comparative growth, nutrition and survival of larval yellowfin and Pacific bluefin tuna • Experimental results are being used to comparatively model mortality processes occurring during the pre-recruit life stages of both species
Relevance for management	Comparative models of pre-recruit mortality processes are promising for assessing recruitment patterns of both species
Duration	18 months
Work plan and status	• June 2018-June 2019: Complete experimental studies of comparative larval growth and finalize data analyses • June-December 2019: Complete manuscript and submit to scientific journal
External collaborators	Kindai University, Fisheries Laboratory
Deliverables	• Presentations for SAC-09 and SAC-10 • Publication of results in a scientific journal

PROJECT G.3.a: Develop a larval growth index to forecast yellowfin recruitment	
THEME: Life-history studies for scientific support of management **GOAL:** G. Investigate early life-history of tunas **TARGET:** G.3. Tools to forecast recruitment **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Group	
Objectives	To develop a larval or early-juvenile growth index for yellowfin tuna in the Panama Bight which might prove useful as an index of recruitment strength of yellowfin in the EPO
Background	• Growth rate variability in the larval and juvenile stages of pelagic marine fishes is substantial, and has strong potential to influence mortality patterns during pre-recruit life stages • Previous research by the Early Life History group has identified some local correspondence in the Panama Bight between high growth rates/density-dependence in growth of yellowfin larvae and recruitment estimates for yellowfin • Quarterly or seasonal nightlight surveys of early-juveniles in the Panama Bight are recommended at the Achotines Laboratory, with aging analysis conducted for growth rate estimation and comparison to quarterly recruitment estimates for yellowfin
Relevance for management	The development of a larval or early-juvenile growth index is promising as a forecasting tool for assessing yellowfin recruitment patterns
Duration	2.5 years
Work plan and status	• June 2018-December 2020: Conduct quarterly or seasonal nightlight surveys of yellowfin at the Achotines Laboratory • January 2019-June 2020: Conduct otolith aging analysis on field-caught fish • Analyze and compare growth data and recruitment estimates for yellowfin, and complete manuscript and submit to scientific journal
External collaborators	
Deliverables	• Presentations for SAC-09, SAC-10 and SAC-11 • Publication of results in a scientific journal

3. SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

Goal H: Improve and implement stock assessments, based on the best available science

- H.1. Undertake the research necessary to develop and conduct at least one benchmark stock assessment for yellowfin and bigeye tunas
  - H.1.a. Improve the bigeye tuna stock assessment
  - H.1.b. Improve the yellowfin tuna stock assessment
- H.2. Develop a spatially-structured stock assessment model for bigeye tuna as a basis for management advice, and initiate a similar model for yellowfin tunas
- H.3. Develop a benchmark stock assessment for skipjack tuna (conditional on implementation of tagging program
- H.4. Develop update assessment and/or stock status indicators for tropical tunas to ensure that management advice is current
  - H.4.a. Conduct routine stock assessments of tropical tunas
- H.5. Undertake the research necessary to develop and conduct data-limited assessments for prioritized species
  - H.5.a. Revise trend estimation methods for purse-seine silky shark indices for the EPO
- H.6. Maintain active participation in ISC stock assessments
  - H.6.a. Participate in assessments of shared species by the International Scientific Committee (ISC)
- H.7. Develop conventional stock assessments for data-rich prioritized species and species of specific interest
  - H.7.a. South Pacific swordfish assessment
- H.8. Assess the status of dolphin stocks in the eastern tropical Pacific
  - H.8.a. Design of survey for dolphins in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean (ETP)

Goal I: Test harvest strategies using Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE)

- I.1. Conduct a comprehensive MSE for bigeye tuna and plan MSEs for the other tropical tuna species, including the multi-species fishery for tropical tunas
  - I.1.a. Conduct a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for tropical tunas in the EPO
- I.2. Collaborate with ISC in Pacific-wide MSEs for albacore and Pacific bluefin tunas
- I.3. Initiate MSE work to evaluate indicator-based harvest strategies for prioritized species and species of specific interest
  - I.3.a. Evaluate potential reference points for dorado in the EPO

Goal J: Improve our understanding of the effects of the operational characteristics of the fishery on fishing mortality, stock assessments, and management advice

- J.1. Identify and monitor changes in technology and fishing strategies to improve stock assessments and management advice
- J.2. Improve our understanding of the relationship between the operational characteristics of the purse-seine fishery and fishing mortality
  - J.2.a. Quantify the relationship between vessel operational characteristics and fishing mortality
- J.3. Study the impact of FAD operations on fishing mortality to improve FAD management advice

Goal K: Improve our understanding of the socio-economic aspects of sustainable fisheries for tropical tunas

- K.1. Collaborate in socio-economic studies by other organizations
  - K.1.a. POSEIDON Project

PROJECT H.1.a: Improve the bigeye tuna stock assessment	
THEME: Sustainable fisheries **GOAL:** H. Research and development of stock assessment models and their assumptions **TARGET:** H.1. Improve routine tropical tuna assessments **EXECUTION**: Stock Assessment Program	
Objectives	Improve the bigeye tuna stock assessment
Background	• The assessment of bigeye is conducted every year, using Stock Synthesis • The apparent regime shift in recruitment when the floating-object fishery expanded in the 1990s indicates that the assessment model is misspecified • Recent advances in stock assessment modelling allow several important improvements of the assessment model, with regard to a spatial stock assessment model, growth curves, time-varying selectivity, recruitment assumptions, data weighting, and diagnostics
Relevance for management	• The stock assessment is used to provide management advice • The duration of recommended seasonal closures is based on the multipliers of fishing effort (*F*) estimated in the bigeye and yellowfin assessments • Improvements in the bigeye assessment will make the staff's management advice more accurate and precise
Duration	2018-2020
Work plan and status	• 2018: Create a spatial model, integrate the new growth curve into the assessment, and implement time-varying selectivity • 2019: Explore different recruitment assumptions, apply data weighting, conduct diagnostic tests • 2020: Re-evaluate the model assumptions
External collaborators	Work conducted under the MSE project will contribute to this project
Deliverables	Reports for SAC-10 and SAC-11 in 2019 and 2020

PROJECT H.1.b: Improve the yellowfin tuna stock assessment	
THEME: Sustainable fisheries **GOAL:** H. Research and development of stock assessment models and their assumptions **TARGET:** H.1. Improve routine tropical tuna assessments **EXECUTION**: Stock Assessment Program	
Objectives	Improve the yellowfin tuna stock assessment by exploring the use of an age-structured length-based catch-at-age statistical model with a monthly time step
Background	• The assessment of yellowfin is conducted every year • The current assessment model is an integrated model with a quarterly time step • Comparisons of yellowfin abundance estimates using different methods showed that monthly depletion models using only CPUE-based indices of relative abundance, catch-curve analyses, and the integrated stock assessment model produce similar results • A depletion-type integrated model has been successfully applied to assess the dorado stock in the EPO
Relevance for management	• The stock assessment is used to provide management advice • The duration of recommended seasonal closures is based on the multipliers of fishing effort (*F*) estimated in the bigeye and yellowfin assessments • Improvements in the yellowfin assessment will make the staff's management advice more accurate and precise
Duration	2018-2020
Work plan and status	• 2018: revise the catch estimation routines in R, estimate the catch in a monthly time step, create the monthly population dynamics model, compare the results with the current model • 2019: Apply data weighting, explore different assumptions (*e.g*. time-varying selectivity for floating-object fisheries), conduct diagnostic tests • 2020: Re-evaluate the model assumptions and include new data
External collaborators	
Deliverables	• Report(s) to SAC in 2019 • Report to SAC in 2020

PROJECT H.4.a: Conduct routine stock assessments of tropical tunas	
THEME: Sustainable fisheries **GOAL:** H. Undertake stock assessments **TARGET:** H.4. IATTC tropical tuna assessments **EXECUTION**: Stock Assessment Program	
Objectives	Update the assessments of bigeye, yellowfin, and skipjack tunas
Background	• Assessments of bigeye, yellowfin, and skipjack are conducted every year • Bigeye and yellowfin assessments use the Stock Synthesis modeling platform • Skipjack assessment is based on stock status indicators • Assessments are updated annually, using the most recent data • Major improvements to the assessments (methods and assumptions) are implemented periodically
Relevance for management	• The staff's management advice for tunas is based on its stock assessments • The duration of the seasonal closures recommended by the staff for bigeye and yellowfin are based on the *F* multipliers estimated in the assessments
Duration	Every year (March-May)
Work plan and status	• 15 March: data for previous year available; assessments initiated • Three weeks before SAC meeting: Assessment reports posted on IATTC website • Mid-May: Present assessments at SAC meeting
External collaborators	
Deliverables	Stock assessment reports for the SAC and the IATTC; presentations at SAC and IATTC meetings

PROJECT H.5.a: Revise trend estimation methods for purse-seine silky shark indices for the EPO	
THEME: Sustainable fisheries **GOAL:** H. Research and development of stock assessment models and their assumptions **TARGET:** H.5. Improve stock assessments for data-limited species **EXECUTION**: Stock Assessment Program	
Objectives	Develop new methods to estimate trends in relative abundance of silky sharks from purse-seine observer data that are less influenced by inter-annual variability in oceanographic conditions.
Background	• Fluctuations in the index of relative abundance for juvenile silky sharks correlate with inter-annual variability in oceanographic conditions in the offshore area of the northern EPO. • Recent fluctuations in the index are not biologically realistic, compromising the reliability of the index as a stock status indicator. • The index based on purse-seine observer data is the only index available for management because of data deficiencies in other fisheries. • New methods are necessary to estimate more reliable trends in relative abundance for the silky shark using purse-seine observer data.
Relevance for management	Improving the reliability of the purse-seine index will improve management advice for the silky shark in the EPO.
Duration	9 months
Work plan and status	• Months 1-6: develop new methods for catch-per-set standardization. • Months 7-9: apply new methods to estimate a revised index.
External collaborators	
Deliverables	Presentation for SAC-10, May 2019

PROJECT H.6.a: Participate in assessments of shared species by the International Scientific Committee (ISC)	
THEME: Sustainable fisheries **GOAL:** H. Undertake stock assessments **TARGET:** H.6. ISC stock assessments **EXECUTION**: Stock Assessment Program	
Objectives	• Staff participation in development and improvement of assessments for North Pacific-wide species of interest to the IATTC, especially Pacific bluefin and albacore tunas, but also billfishes and sharks • Understand the assessment results, and communicate them to the Commission
Background	• The ISC and its various working groups assess stocks in the north Pacific that are covered by both the IATTC and WCPFC • The IATTC staff provides data and advice for the assessments • Assessments are periodic, and the stocks differ each year.
Relevance for management	The IATTC uses the results of the ISC assessments to provide management advice
Duration	Ongoing; ISC meets annually, usually in July
Workplan and status	2018 ISC schedule: April: Working groups on sharks, billfishes May: Working groups on albacore, MSE July: Plenary; also working groups on albacore, Pacific bluefin, billfishes, sharks, statistics
External collaborators	ISC
Deliverables	Report to SAC meetings

PROJECT H.7.a: South Pacific swordfish assessment	
THEME: Sustainable fisheries **GOAL:** H. Undertake stock assessments **TARGET:** H.7. Other assessments **EXECUTION**: Stock Assessment Program	
Objectives	Conduct an assessment for South Pacific swordfish
Background	• The South Pacific swordfish stock has not been assessed since 2011. • The longline fishery has recently increased targeting of swordfish • An updated assessment is needed to provide management advice
Relevance for management	The stock assessment is needed to provide management advice
Duration	2019
Workplan and status	• Obtain data • Conduct assessment • Report to SAC-11 in 2020
External collaborators	
Deliverables	Report to SAC-11 in 2020

PROJECT H.8.a: Design a survey for dolphins in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean (ETP)	
THEME: Sustainable Fisheries **GOAL:** H. Improve and implement stock assessments, based on the best available science **TARGET:** H.8. Assess status of dolphin stocks in the eastern tropical Pacific **EXECUTION**: Stock Assessment Program	
Objectives	Design, in consultation with the IATTC staff and other relevant scientists, a ship-based line-transect survey for ETP dolphin species, including development of a comprehensive budget for implementation of the survey and analysis of survey results.
Background and statement of the problem	• Population dynamics modelling has been the preferred approach for evaluating the stock status of ETP dolphins, and those models have relied on estimates of abundance from fishery-independent surveys that were conducted by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). • As a result of a hiatus in the NMFS surveys since 2006, there are currently no reliable indicators with which to monitor the status of ETP dolphin populations. • This lack of information poses obvious problems for management. For example, the Antigua Convention of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) requires that the status of all species potentially impacted by the tuna fisheries in the eastern Pacific Ocean be monitored. • In addition, abundance estimates are needed to ensure that incidental dolphin mortalities are both sustainable and insignificant because the stock mortality limits are based on estimates of abundance. • These needs provide impetus for a new ship-based line-transect survey to obtain new estimates of absolute abundance so that population trends can be updated.
Relevance for management	Improve the management of dolphin stocks in the ETP.
Duration	8 months
Workplan progress report (for ongoing projects)	• January - May: draft a report with survey design and budget. • June-August: obtain an external review of draft the draft report and revise as necessary.
External collaborators	University of St Andrews, Scotland
Deliverables	• Presentation for SAC9 (May 2018) • Report and presentation for IATTC Annual Meeting in August 2018

PROJECT I.1.a: Conduct a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for tropical tunas in the EPO	
THEME: Sustainable fisheries **GOAL:** I. Test harvest strategies using management strategy evaluation (MSE) **TARGET:** I.1. MSE for tropical tunas in the EPO **EXECUTION**: Stock Assessment Program	
Objectives	Test the current harvest control rule (HCR) with respect to the adopted limit (LRP) and target (TRP) reference points for bigeye tuna and alternatives under different sources of uncertainty
Background	• Preliminary testing of informal HCR was performed for bigeye, but neither recently-adopted HCR nor alternative management measures associated with stock status relative to the adopted or alternative TRP and LRP have been evaluated yet. • In-depth analyses of the adopted TRP, LRP and HCRs and alternatives needed to guide the Commission in adopting a permanent HCR and its components.
Relevance for management	• Project results expected to inform the Commission about the appropriateness of the current TRPs, LRPs and HCR compared to alternatives, and to help guide the adoption of a permanent HCR and its components. • The tools developed will useful for future MSE research that could include yellowfin and an evaluation of yellowfin and BET combined, to better simulate the current HCR.
Duration	12 months, starting January 2018
Work plan and status	• Month 1. Convert BET model to the latest Stock synthesis (SS) version (3.3), to take advantage of major updates allowing better modelling of population processes. COMPLETED • Months 1 to 3. Further develop IATTC staff work on a spatially-structured model for consideration as BET operating model. PARTIALY COMPLETED • Months 2 to 5. Resolve BET model misspecifications before using it as an operating model. Resolve recruitment shift likely due to the expansion of the FAD fishery. This might be corrected using a spatial model. COMPLETED • Months 3 to 6. Explore a systematic way to evaluate the parameter and model structure uncertainty by putting probabilities on alternative models conditioned to data. PENDING COMPLETION OF PREVIOUS TASKS • Months 6 to 12. Test alternative harvest strategies, actions at LRP and TRP. Use simplified or full assessment model, depending on re-evaluation of performance after fixing BET model. PENDING COMPLETION OF PREVIOUS TASKS
External collaborators	Work to be carried out by external contractor
Deliverables	The project will produce an evaluation of candidate reference points and harvest control rules, expanding on the existing Stock Synthesis simulation model for BET, and reports, to be presented to SAC 09/10.

PROJECT I.3.a: Evaluate potential reference points for dorado in the EPO	
THEME: Sustainable fisheries **GOAL:** I. Test harvest strategies using management strategy evaluation (MSE) **TARGET:** I.3. Evaluation of harvest strategies for data-limited species based on stock status indicators **EXECUTION**: Stock Assessment Program	
Objectives	• Build upon the previous collaborative work and continue to develop Dorado stock assessment methodologies • Expand the MSE for dorado by evaluating alternative reference points and harvest control rules.
Background	• Some State Members of the IATTC are interested in obtaining MSC certification for their Dorado fisheries, and have requested guidance in developing of Reference Points (RPs) and Harvest Control Rules (HCRs). • Other Members are seeking guidance regarding data collection, research efforts, and management options
Relevance for management	The results of the project, such as alternative estimates of stock status (*e.g.* assessments, depletion estimator), reference points, and harvest control rules, could be used by the Commission, or by individual Members, in developing, adopting, and subsequently modifying as necessary, a harvest strategy for dorado.
Duration	6 months, starting January 2019
Work plan and status	• Alternative RPs and HCRs will be evaluated, and their respective advantages and disadvantages will be discussed, to assist Members considering the implementation of reference points and harvest control rules for dorado. • The performance of alternative assessment methods, HCRs and RPs will be evaluated by simulation methods, using Stock Synthesis. Candidates for the different components of a management strategy (data, assessment method, HCR, RPs) and the performance measures to judge such strategies will be identified. • Options will include minimum size limits, precautionary lower CPUE levels that would trigger management actions. Alternative RPs will be developed with yield-per-recruit considerations, as well as alternative expected reductions of recruitment without fishing (R0) and unfished biomass (B0).
External collaborators	Work to be carried out by external contractor
Deliverables	• List of candidate RPs and HCRs to be tested using a management strategy evaluation (MSE) framework; • Simulation study to evaluate candidate HCRs and RPs; • Written report summarizing the results; and presentation at SAC 2019.

PROJECT J.2.a: Quantify the relationship between vessel operational characteristics and fishing mortality	
THEME: Sustainable fisheries **GOAL:** J. Relationship between purse-seine fishing strategies and fishing mortality **TARGET:** J.2. Relationship between vessel operational characteristics and fishing mortality **EXECUTION**: Stock Assessment Program	
Objectives	• Evaluate the reliability of the data obtained on identification of FADs. • Investigate methods to determine purse-seine set type from various sources of data (i.e. Observers, vessel logbooks, canneries, etc.). • Evaluate the relationship between catch and number of FAD deployments. • Investigate more precise measures of fishing capacity that take into consideration days fished, set type, and vessel characteristics. • Investigate the relationship between fishing mortality and fleet capacity. • Evaluate alternative management measures such as closed areas, individual vessel limits, and gear restrictions.
Background	• The constantly increasing capacity of the purse-seine fleet in the EPO requires more stringent management measures. • Several management measures have been investigated as an alternative to increasing the seasonal closure. • However, the measure of fishing capacity used to determine the days of closure is somewhat simplistic, and a more precise measure of capacity, and the relationship between capacity and fishing mortality, need to be investigated. • Also, the relationship between the number of FADs deployed and catches needs to be better understood. • Although the staff has conducted some initial analyses, further studies need to be carried out to provide alternative management measures.
Relevance for management	The results of the project will enable the staff to refine current measures and develop alternative recommendations for managing tropical tunas in the EPO, and provide the Commission with additional tools when developing management measures.
Duration	24 months
Work plan and status	• 2018 – Initial analyses of the data that will lead to new insights • 2019 – Further analyses to improve the staff's management advice • 2020 – Apply the lessons learnt from the project and provide recommendations on both alternative management measures and additional data collection.
External collaborators	
Deliverables	• Multiple reports for the meetings of the SAC and the Commission, including recommendations on tuna conservation and possibly on improvements to data collection. • Software will be created that can be used to update the analyses with new data and/or alternative assumptions and new methods.

PROJECT K.1.a: POSEIDON project	
THEME: Sustainable fisheries **GOAL:** K. Improve our understanding the socio-economic aspects of sustainable tropical tuna fisheries **TARGET:** K.1. Collaborate in socio-economic studies by other organizations **EXECUTION**: Stock Assessment Program	
Objectives	Build and evaluate an agent-based, adaptive fishing fleet model as an analytic tool to support management
Background	• POSEIDON is a coupled human-ecological model that combines an agent-based, adaptive fishing fleet model with existing fishery models or simple biological data, to simulate vessel behavior and fishery outcomes based on policies, market influences, and environmental factors. • POSEIDON provides a powerful platform for policy evaluation and decision support, with a strong focus on the spatial and human dimensions of fisheries management. • POSEIDON was originally developed by a multidisciplinary team from the University of Oxford, Ocean Conservancy, George Mason University, the University of California, Santa Barbara, and Arizona State University, as part of an effort to advance innovation in fisheries management. • The model has been calibrated and validated to the U.S. West Coast groundfish fishery. It is now being adapted to explore MSC certification for Indonesia's deep-water snapper fishery (in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, Indonesia).
Relevance for management	The model will be used to explore timely research questions, including FAD management, understanding the spatial dynamics of the fishery, as well as some of the social and economic issues which effect management.
Duration	18 months (end year 2020)
Work plan and status	• A post-doctoral researcher will be based at the IATTC's office in La Jolla, and will be charged with 1) scoping model application and designing a use cases that are supportive of IATTC policy evaluation processes, 2) understanding and accessing relevant datasets from IATTC, and 3) conducting statistical analyses of data to support model development. • This researcher will work closely with the modeling team based at the University of Oxford and Ocean Conservancy to drive model design, calibration and validation of the tool and its outputs, as well as evaluation of model results.
External collaborators	University of Oxford, Ocean Conservancy
Deliverables	• A computer algorithm with which to run simulations to explore management options. • A project report and possibly publications in peer-reviewed journals.

4. ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF FISHERIES: ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION

Goal L: Evaluate the ecological impacts of tuna fisheries

- L.1. Develop analytical tools to identify and prioritize species at risk for data collection, research and management
  - L.1.a. Develop habitat models for bycatch species caught in the EPO to support ecological risk assessments (ERAs)
  - L.1.b. Develop a flexible spatially-explicit ERA approach for quantifying the cumulative impact of tuna fisheries on data-limited bycatch species in the EPO
- L.2. Conduct ERAs of EPO fisheries to identify and prioritize species at risk
  - L.2.a. Develop and update Productivity-Susceptibility Analyses (PSAs) of tuna fisheries in the EPO

Goal M: Mitigate the ecological impacts of tuna fisheries

- M.1. In collaboration with the industry, conduct scientific experiments to identify gear technology that will reduce bycatches and mortality of prioritized species
  - M.1.a. Evaluate the effect of the depth of non-entangling FADs on catches of tunas and bycatches of other species in the purse-seine fishery
- M.2. In collaboration with the industry, conduct scientific experiments to develop best practices for the release of prioritized bycatch species
  - M.2.a. Evaluate the post-release survival of silky sharks captured by longline fishing vessels in the equatorial EPO, using best handling practices
  - M.2.b. Evaluate best handling practices for maximizing post-release survival of silky sharks in longline fisheries, and identification of silky shark pupping areas for bycatch mitigation
- M.3. Conduct spatiotemporal analyses to identify areas of high bycatch/catch ratios for potential use in spatial management
- M.4. Investigate alternative tools for bycatch mitigation
- M.5. In collaboration with the industry, conduct experiments to develop best practices for mitigating the impacts of fishing on habitats in the EPO
  - M.5.a. Develop and test non-entangling and biodegradable FADs

PROJECT L.1.a: Develop habitat models for bycatch species caught in the EPO to support ecological risk assessments (ERAs)	
THEME: Ecological impacts of fisheries: assessment and mitigation **GOAL:** L. Evaluating ecological impacts **TARGET:** L.1. Develop analytical tools to identify and prioritize species at risk for data collection, research and management **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Program	
Objectives	• To use presence-only catch data to develop habitat models for all bycatch species caught in EPO tuna fisheries to facilitate mapping of their geographic range. • To make distribution maps available in a format suitable for use as base maps for ecological risk assessment models (PSA, EASI-Fish)
Background	• Many bycatch species caught in EPO tuna fisheries lack sufficient biological and catch data to undertake traditional stock assessment to determine their vulnerability to fishing. • Data-limited Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA) methods are now increasingly used to determine the most vulnerable species to fishing, which have a strong reliance on estimating impacts using the overlap of fishing effort with a species' distribution.
Relevance for management	Developing habitat models for bycatch species will improve the fishing mortality estimates using ERAs, from which their status can be determined and guide managers.
Duration	12 months
Work plan and status	• Jun-Dec 18: model development using data-rich species • Jan-Feb 19: apply habitat model to bycatch species • Mar-April 19: Finalize habitat maps for bycatch species • May 19: present final model and assessment results at SAC-10.
External collaborators	CPCs
Deliverables	• Presentations at SAC-10 • Procedure, if successful, to be used annually within ERA models to assess the vulnerability of bycatch species in the EPO.

PROJECT L.1.b: Develop a flexible spatially-explicit ERA approach for quantifying the cumulative impact of tuna fisheries on data-limited bycatch species in the EPO	
THEME: Ecological impacts of fisheries: assessment and mitigation **GOAL:** L. Evaluating ecological impacts **TARGET:** L.1. Develop analytical tools to identify and prioritize species at risk for data collection, research and management **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Program	
Objectives	• To develop a spatially-explicit model for quantifying the cumulative impact of multiple fisheries on data-limited bycatch species in the EPO • To use the model to prioritize potentially vulnerable species for further research and/or management • To design the model in a user-friendly format to maximize uptake and utilization by IATTC CPCs
Background	• IATTC is committed, through the Antigua Convention, to ensure the long-term sustainability of all target and associated species impacted by EPO tuna fisheries. • Many associated (i.e. bycatch) species lack detailed biological and fisheries data for stock assessment, so data-limited approaches required to identify and assess the most vulnerable species. • Productivity-Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) has been widely used, but it cannot provide a quantitative measure of risk, nor can it assess cumulative impacts of multiple fisheries.
Relevance for management	The new model will more reliably identify potentially vulnerable bycatch species and assess their status under current fishing effort regimes to better guide managers
Duration	48 months
Work plan and status	• Jan-Apr 18: complete the development of a preliminary model • May 18: present preliminary model and results at SAC-09. • Jun-Dec 18: continue model development with feedback from CPCs • Jan-Feb 19: Finalize model and user-friendly module • Mar-May 19: Finalize assessment of cumulative impacts of EPO tuna fisheries for all bycatch species to identify most vulnerable species. • May 19: present final model and assessment results at SAC-10.
External collaborators	CPCs
Deliverables	• Presentations at SAC-09 and SAC-10 • Scientific journal publication • Procedure, if successful, to be used annually to assess the vulnerability of bycatch species in the EPO.

PROJECT L.2.a: Develop and update Productivity-Susceptibility Analyses (PSAs) of tuna fisheries in the EPO	
THEME: Ecological impacts of fisheries: assessment and mitigation **GOAL:** L. Evaluating ecological impacts **TARGET:** L.2. Conduct ERAs of EPO fisheries to identify and prioritize species at risk **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Program	
Objectives	• To improve the currently used PSA methodology by reducing the number of redundant biological attributes without compromising PSA results. • Apply the new PSA methodology to existing assessments of the purse seine fishery (class 6 vessels) and the industrial longline fishery. • To prepare manuscripts for publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal for (1) improved PSA methodology, and (2) purse seine and longline fishery PSA results.
Background	IATTC's PSAs have not yet been published in a peer-reviewed journal therefore access of this information to the broader scientific community is limited to IATTC's website. Publication of IATTC's approaches to ecosystem-based research is one step towards demonstrating IATTC's commitment to ecosystem-based fisheries management.
Relevance for management	• Results in the PSA papers may be used to prioritize data collection, mitigation, and/or management measures for species identified as vulnerable by the method. • Improving the methodology by reducing the number of biological parameters will optimize reliability of results from the PSA method, while decreasing the data requirements to further expedite this rapid assessment approach for data-limited fisheries.
Duration	8 months
Work plan and status	• Jan-Jun 18: prepare a manuscript for the existing PSA for the large purse-seine fishery and submit to co-authors for review • Aug 18: submit PSA manuscript on the large purse-seine fishery for publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal • Jan-May 18: Submit PSA-methods manuscript for publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal
External collaborators	
Deliverables	Manuscripts demonstrating IATTC's approaches to ecosystem-related research for data-limited species

PROJECT M.1.a: Evaluate the effect of the depth of non-entangling FADs on catches of tunas and bycatches of other species in the purse-seine fishery	
THEME: Ecological impacts of fisheries: assessment and mitigation **GOAL:** M. Mitigating ecological impacts **TARGET:** M.1. Investigate gear technology to reduce bycatch and bycatch mortality **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Program	
Objectives	Evaluate the performance of shallow non-entangling versus normal depth FADs in the EPO purse-seine fishery, with an emphasis on the tuna and non-tuna species catch composition; seeking a practical solution to reduce fishing mortality on small undesirable sizes of bigeye tuna
Background	• The purse-seine fishing mortality on small undesirable sizes of bigeye tuna, caught in sets on tuna aggregations associated with FADs, should be reduced to increase the maximum sustainable yield from the bigeye tuna fisheries in the EPO • Bigeye tuna associated with FADs in the EPO exhibit deeper depth distributions than skipjack or yellowfin tunas • The presence of bigeye in the EPO purse seine catch was reported to be more likely with deeper floating objects
Relevance for management	A potential solution for reducing fishing mortality on small undesirable sizes of bigeye and/or reducing fishing mortality on bycatch species associated with FADs, including sharks and turtles
Duration	2015-2018
Work plan and status	• 2015-2017: ISSF arranged for experiments to be undertaken at-sea in collaboration with NIRSA, a large seafood company located in Posorja, Ecuador, with a fleet of 11 purse seine tuna vessels. • The first experiment began in June-July 2015 with deployments of 50 shallow and 50 normal depth FADs and concluded on 31 October 2016. The second experiment began in March-May 2017 with deployments of 100 shallow and 100 normal depth FADs and concluded on 31 December 2017. • 2018: The catch data collected by observers aboard NIRSA vessels from sets on the experimental FADs from the two experiments is being examined to confirm FAD types • 2018: A statistical evaluation of the performance of the shallow non-entangling versus normal depth FADs, including the tuna and non-tuna species catch compositions will be conducted
External collaborators	ISSF, NIRSA
Deliverables	• Relevant information on performance of shallow non-entangling FADs versus normal FADs based on field experiments • Manuscript for peer review and publication in a scientific journal

PROJECT M.2.a: Evaluate the post-release survival of silky sharks captured by longline fishing vessels in the equatorial EPO, using best handling practices	
THEME: Ecological impacts of fisheries: assessment and mitigation **GOAL:** M. Mitigating ecological impacts **TARGET:** M.2. Develop best practices for release of bycatch species **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Program	
Objectives	Estimate the post-release survival of silky sharks captured by longline vessels in the equatorial EPO with Wildlife Computers Mini-PATs, utilizing a best handling practice
Background	• Apparent severe decline in the population of silky sharks in the EPO, based on trends in standardized catch-per-unit-of-effort indices • Domestic longline fleets from Latin America conduct multi-species fisheries including retaining silky sharks
Relevance for management	Resolution C-16-06 on conservation measures for silky sharks stipulates to improve handling practices for live sharks to maximize post-release survival
Duration	2016-2018
Work plan and status	• 2016-2017: 40 total silky sharks were tagged and released with MiniPATs, and the resulting data obtained through ARGOS satellites has been analysed to estimate a post-release survival rate, evaluate any potential entanglement in FADs, and evaluate movements and dispersion • 2017: A final report for this project was submitted and accepted by the EU (funding source) • 2018: A manuscript is in progress and expected to be completed and submitted to a scientific journal
External collaborators	INCOPESCA, Costa Rica; WWF, Ecuador; University of Hawaii
Deliverables	• Silky shark post-release survival rate following capture by longline vessels, utilizing a best handling practice • Presentation of preliminary results at SAC8 • Manuscript for peer review and publication in a scientific journal

PROJECT M.2.b: Evaluate best handling practices for maximizing post-release survival of silky sharks in longline fisheries, and identification of silky shark pupping areas for bycatch mitigation	
THEME: Ecological impacts of fisheries: assessment and mitigation **GOAL:** M. Mitigating ecological impacts **TARGET:** M.2. Develop best practices for release of bycatch species **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Program	
Objectives	Estimate post-release survival of silky sharks captured by Mexican longline vessels in the eastern tropical Pacific, utilizing a best handling practice, and define boundaries encompassing the probable distribution silky shark pupping areas in the EPO
Background	• Apparent severe decline in the population of silky sharks in the EPO, based on trends in standardized catch-per-unit-of-effort indices • Domestic longline fleets from Latin America conduct multi-species fisheries including retaining silky sharks • Defining the probable distribution of silky shark pupping areas would be useful for better understanding population structure and for consideration of conservation measures including spatiotemporal closures
Relevance for management	Resolution C-16-06 on conservation measures for silky sharks stipulates to improve handling practices for live sharks to maximize post-release survival, and identification of pupping areas of the silky shark
Duration	2018-2020
Work plan and status	• 2018-2019: 69 silky sharks will be tagged and released from Mexican longline vessels with MiniPATs, using a best handling practice. • 2019-2020: The subsequent data obtained from ARGOS satellites will be analysed for post-release survival and movements during 2019 and 2020. • 2019-2020: Exploratory analyses of silky shark size at capture data, compiled from various fisheries in the EPO, will be conducted to determine the areas and times where silky shark pupping most likely occurs
External collaborators	INAPESCA, Mexico
Deliverables	• Silky shark post-release survival rate following capture by Mexican longline vessels, utilizing a best handling practice • Defining probable distribution of silky shark pupping areas

PROJECT M.5.a: Develop and test non-entangling and biodegradable FADs	
THEME: Ecological impacts of fisheries: assessment and mitigation **GOAL:** M. Mitigating ecological impacts **TARGET:** M.5. Develop best practices to mitigate anthropogenic impacts on EPO habitats **EXECUTION**: Bycatch and IDCP Program	
Objectives	Construction of non-entangling FADs from biodegradable materials, not only to decrease mortality of non-target species by net-webbing entanglement, but also minimize contributions to ocean debris and pollution by commercial tuna fishing.
Background	• Non-target species are also found in association with FADs, and in some instances, may become entangled in the FADs and perish. • Some FAD components that are lost at sea or not retrieved, particularly those including plastics or other materials that are not readily degradable may last many years in the environment as pollutants, and threatening vulnerable ecosystems. • There is an increasing interest in identifying non-entangling and biodegradable components that could be used in FAD construction, while still providing similar function in terms of tuna aggregation.
Relevance for management	• Ecological impacts on vulnerable ecosystems may be considered an important factor for FAD fishery management purposes. • Results may be used by the Commission members in the development of best fishing practices and management measures
Duration	29 months
Work plan and status	• August 2015 – April 2017: Purchase of FAD and mooring materials. FAD deployment at test site. FAD monitoring. • April – December 2017: Ongoing research on alternative non-entangling and biodegradable materials to extend the durability of the FADs. • January: Project report
External collaborators	
Deliverables	• May 2016. Ad hoc working group on FADs. La Jolla – CA • May 2017. 68th Tuna Conference. Lake Arrowhead – CA • October 2017. ECOFAD meeting. Manta – Ecuador • March 2018. Project final Report

5. INTERACTIONS AMONG THE ENVIRONMENT, THE ECOSYSTEM, AND FISHERIES

Goal N: Improve our understanding of the interactions among environmental drivers, climate, and fisheries

- N.1. Conduct spatiotemporal analyses to better understand the effect of key environmental drivers on the short-term fluctuations of abundance of tunas and prioritized bycatch species
  - N.1.a. Analyze EPO bycatch data to assess the influence of environmental drivers on catches and vulnerability
  - N.1.b. Investigate the effects of wind-induced microturbulence on yellowfin larval survival
- N.2. Conduct spatiotemporal analyses to better understand the effect of long-term climate drivers (regime shifts) on the abundance of tropical tunas
  - N.2.a. Develop models of the effects of climate change on pre-recruit life stages of tropical tunas

Goal O: Improve our understanding of the EPO ecosystem

- O.1. Conduct trophodynamic studies for defining key assumptions in EPO ecosystem models
- O.2. Improve analytical tools to evaluate anthropogenic and climate impacts on the EPO ecosystem
  - O.2.a. Develop and implement analytical tools for understanding the trophic ecology of apex predators

PROJECT N.1.a: Analyze EPO bycatch data to assess the influence of environmental drivers on catches and vulnerability	
THEME: Interactions among the environment, the ecosystem, and fisheries **GOAL:** N. Understanding the interactions among environmental drivers, climate, and fisheries **TARGET:** N.1. Understanding the effects of short-term environmental fluctuations **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Program	
Objectives	To better understand environmental drivers that might be responsible for increasing the vulnerability of non-target species to being caught in EPO fisheries, and devise management measures that may reduce their vulnerability to capture (*e.g.* space-time closures).
Background	• Each year the IATTC reports catch estimates for non-target species in its Fishery Status Report. • Nominal catches of bycatch species may not fully explain the magnitude of inter-annual variability in fishing effort, since environmental factors may drive key processes such as recruitment. • To improve our understanding of processes affecting catches in the EPO purse-seine fishery, we assess ecosystem components including catches of vulnerable shark species in relation to variability in oceanographic conditions and life history characteristics.
Relevance for management	Catch prediction models to better manage data-poor species
Duration	12 months
Work plan and status	• Jan-Apr 18: exploratory analyses of IATTC observer catch data and oceanographic conditions over the past two decades • Apr-May 18: present results at the international PICES conference, "Understanding Changes in Transitional Areas of the Pacific" and the 69th Tuna Conference • Jun-Jul 18: Prepare a manuscript for publication in a scientific journal
External collaborators	
Deliverables	• Reporting of bycatch estimates in the Ecosystem Considerations report • Manuscript that contributes to IATTC's ecosystem approach through evaluation of potential environmental drivers influencing catches in the EPO purse-seine fishery and relationships between environment and life history characteristics

PROJECT N.1.b: Investigate the effects of wind-induced microturbulence on yellowfin larval survival	
THEME: Interactions among the environment, the ecosystem. and fisheries **GOAL:** N. Understanding the interactions among environmental drivers, climate, and fisheries **TARGET:** N.1. Understanding the effects of short-term environmental fluctuations **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Program	
Objectives	Estimate the optimal microturbulence and wind speed for the survival of yellowfin larvae and examine any association between yellowfin recruitment and historical wind speeds in the EPO
Background	• Studies have shown that feeding success and survival of marine fish larvae can be influenced by the levels of wind-induced microturbulence in the larval feeding environment • Multiple experiments were conducted over 4 years to examine microturbulence effects on yellowfin larval survival, and optimal turbulence estimates for larval survival were converted to optimal wind speeds • Estimated optimal wind speeds for larval survival have been examined for correlations with yellowfin recruitment during 1987-2007
Relevance for management	The wind speed-recruitment analysis is promising for assessing yellowfin recruitment patterns in relation to larval survival
Duration	18 months
Work plan and status	• June-December 2018: Refine analyses of survival and feeding data and finalize wind speed-recruitment analysis • January-December 2019: Complete manuscript and submit to scientific journal
External collaborators	University of Tokyo
Deliverables	• Presentations for SAC-09 and SAC-10 • Publication of results in a scientific journal

PROJECT N.2.a. Develop models of the effects of climate change on pre-recruit life stages of tropical tunas	
THEME: Interactions among the environment, the ecosystem. and fisheries **GOAL:** N. Improving our understanding of the EPO ecosystem **TARGET:** N.2. Understanding the effects of long-term climate drivers **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Program	
Objectives	• Investigate experimentally the effects of important climate change factors on early life stages of tropical tunas, and incorporate those results into models that can predict climate change effects on the distribution and abundance of tropical tunas
Background	• Tuna populations are key components of pelagic ecosystems, but the effects of climate change on tuna biomass, distributions and recruitment are almost unknown • The Achotines Laboratory provides an essential experimental center for investigations of the effects of climate change factors on pre-recruit life stages of tropical tunas • A study of the effects of ocean acidification on yellowfin egg and larval stages was conducted at the Achotines Laboratory in 2011 and the results published in two papers in 2015 and 2016 with an additional two papers in preparation • The effects of additional climate change factors, such as ocean warming and anoxia, can be studied at the Achotines Laboratory and incorporated into models of multifactor effects on pre-recruit life stages
Relevance for management	Potential impacts of climate change on early life stages are an important consideration in future assessments of tunas in the EPO, and experimental results can allow models to be parameterised to include climate change effects on pre-recruit survival and spawning and nursery habitat
Duration	3 years
Work plan and status	• January 2018-June 2019: Completion of analyses and manuscripts describing ocean acidification effects on larval otolith morphology and genetic expression of resistant traits in yellowfin • January 2019-December 2020: Development of experimental investigations to study the effects of ocean warming and anoxia on pre-recruit life stages of yellowfin
External collaborators	ABARES and AFMA, Australia; Macquarie University, Australia
Deliverables	• Presentations for SAC-09, SAC-10 and SAC-11 • Publication of results in several scientific journals

PROJECT O.2.a: Develop and implement analytical tools for understanding the trophic ecology of apex predators	
THEME: Interactions among the environment, the ecosystem. and fisheries **GOAL:** O. Improve understanding of the EPO ecosystem **TARGET:** O.2. Improve analytical tools to evaluate anthropogenic and climate impacts on the EPO ecosystem **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystem Program	
Objectives	• To further develop and validate statistical tools for the analysis of complex datasets in trophic studies of apex predators. • To enhance external collaborations and professional development through the analysis of Atlantic bluefin tuna diets in relation to biological and environmental variables.
Background	• IATTC staff have developed an innovative approach for analyzing complex diet data using classification trees. The approach has been used for regional diet studies of yellowfin tuna in the EPO and for a broad-scale global comparison of yellowfin, bigeye and albacore diets. • To facilitate more widespread adoption of the method, it requires validation of regional studies in other ocean basins, given the importance of spatio-temporal differences in available prey taxa. • Collaboration with other scientists studying the trophic ecology of apex predators can assist with validating the approach, while also enhancing collaborative relationships.
Relevance for management	• Optimizing statistical tools to analyse trophic data is crucial for understanding the trophodynamics of apex predators in the EPO and whether predator-prey relationships may be impacted by fishing. • Diet analyses are fundamental for the identification of ecological functional groups, which are required in the development of ecosystem models to understand the potential ecological impacts of fishing. • Integrating environmental factors into analyses of regional studies provides managers with information on effects of climate change on variation in forage communities to verify observed global patterns.
Duration	9 months
Work plan and status	• Jun 2018: data analyses • Aug – Nov 2018: Discuss preliminary outputs with collaborators and implement necessary collaborator inputs into method development • Nov 2018-Mar 2019: Manuscript preparation
External collaborators	Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries; numerous other universities and government agencies
Deliverables	Manuscript summarizing the revised approach, using an Atlantic-wide analysis of bluefin trophic ecology as a case study.

6. KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Goal P. Respond in a timely manner to external requests for information and technical support

- P.1. Respond to requests by CPCs
  - P.1.a. Fulfil requests for development of database and data-processing applications for entities outside the IATTC
  - P.1.b. Respond to requests for scientific analyses (Stock Assessment Program)
- P.2. Respond to requests from other organizations

Goal Q. Provide training opportunities for scientists and technicians of CPCs

- Q.1. Host visiting scientists and students from CPCs
  - Q.1.a. Achotines Laboratory support of Yale University's Environmental Leadership Training Initiative (ELTI) in Panama
- Q.2. Implement the IATTC capacity-building scholarship
- Q.3. Facilitate training workshops

Goal R: Improve communication of scientific advice

- R.1. Improve communication of the staff's scientific work to CPCs
  - R.1.a. Workshop on training, communication and evaluation of management strategies for tuna fisheries in the EPO
- R.2. Participate in global initiatives for the communication of science

Goal S: Facilitate participation of CPCs in the scientific process and in training events

- S.1. Improve communication and coordination with the Scientific Advisory Committee and scientific and technical working groups
- S.2. Facilitate participation of scientific and technical personnel from developing CPCs at IATTC scientific meetings and training events (IATTC capacity building fund)

PROJECT P.1.a: Fulfil requests for development of database and data processing applications for entities outside the IATTC	
THEME: Knowledge transfer and capacity building **GOAL:** P. Responding to requests from CPCs and other organizations **TARGET:** P.1. Respond to requests by CPCs **EXECUTION**: Data Collection and Database Program	
Objectives	Provide support to CPCs through the development of data collection forms and the most appropriate computer application to allow the collection, entry, editing and analysis of locally-collected datasets.
Background	• IATTC staff receives requests to develop data entry and editing solutions for data collected by outside organizations. • IATTC staff possesses years of experience in these tasks, which is not otherwise available to outside organizations. • Through a policy of Capacity Building the IATTC collaborates with outside organizations to develop the requested applications.
Relevance for management	Through collaboration with data collectors, IATTC may be granted access to new sources of fisheries management data.
Duration	Ongoing
Work plan and status	• Currently developing an Access database to process FAD information collected through Resolution C-16-01. • Request for additional form to be incorporated into the OSPESCA artesanal longline database. • Evaluate ability to accept participation in additional requests as they occur.
External collaborators	
Deliverables	• Completion of requested computer applications. • Provide technical support and training of the new applications.

PROJECT P.1.b: Respond to requests for scientific analyses	
THEME: Knowledge transfer and capacity building **GOAL:** P. Responding to requests from CPCs and other organizations **TARGET:** P.1. Respond to requests by CPCs **EXECUTION**: Stock Assessment Program	
Objectives	Respond to requests by CPCs and other entities in a timely manner
Background	• The necessary information to make important management decisions is often situation dependent and evolves as discussions progress. • CPCs and other entities regularly make requests for analyses and other work that is not already contained in the Staff Work-Plan • The type of requests varies widely.
Relevance for management	Many requests by CPCs are directly used to inform management decisions
Duration	
Work plan and status	The workplan cannot be anticipated
External collaborators	Varies
Deliverables	Varies. Can include reports and/or presentations to SAC and the IATTC meetings.

PROJECT Q.1.a: Achotines Laboratory support of Yale University's Environmental Leadership Training Initiative (ELTI) in Panama	
THEME: Knowledge transfer and capacity building **GOAL:** Q. Training **TARGET:** Q.1. Host visiting scientists and students from CPCs **EXECUTION**: Biology and Ecosystems Program	
Objectives	To support the ELTI objectives of facilitating cooperation, training and research on the conservation, rehabilitation and restoration of forest lands and watersheds in Panama, and to conserve coastal and marine living resources and ecosystems
Background	• The Yale-ELTI Program has been holding training workshops at the Achotines Laboratory for several years and has created a teaching trail in the Achotines Forest which is a key component of their training workshops • To demonstrate good stewardship of the Achotines Forest and surrounding watershed, the Achotines Laboratory has expanded its support of the ELTI Program and will serve as the host center for the ELTI Program and training workshops • The ELTI training workshops have no footprint on the tuna research facilities at the Achotines Laboratory, and are restricted to the Laboratory conference center and the Achotines Forest
Relevance for management	The Achotines Laboratory support of the ELTI Program in Panama provides an important contribution to regional watershed restoration and conservation of coastal ecosystems in Panama
Duration	3 years
Work plan and status	April 2018-March 2021: Four training courses will be held each year at the Achotines Laboratory, with ELTI affiliates coordinating periodic updates and annual technical reports of activities
External collaborators	Yale University, ELTI Program
Deliverables	• Presentations for SAC-09, SAC-10 and SAC-11 • Annual technical reports prepared by ELTI affiliates

PROJECT R.1.a: Workshop on training, communication and evaluation of management strategies for tuna fisheries in the EPO	
THEME: Knowledge transfer and capacity building **GOAL**: R. Improve communication of scientific advice **TARGET**: R.1. Improve communication of the staff's scientific work to CPCs **EXECUTION**: Stock Assessment Program	
Objectives	Provide training and enhance communication between scientists and managers on management objectives, harvest strategies and management strategy evaluation (MSE).
Background	• Several tuna RFMOs are strengthening communications among scientists, managers and other stakeholders throughout similar workshops, including an initial one for the EPO in Panama (2015). • The IATTC Performance Review and Strategic Science Plan recommend improving knowledge sharing, human-institutional capacity building and communication of scientific advice.
Relevance for management	• Key elements of IATTC's management strategy, such as its harvest control rule and reference points, along with alternatives, are being evaluated via MSE. • Improving participation and communication among all stakeholders is important throughout the development, evaluation and implementation of a management strategy
Duration	• Planning and organization: 1-2 weeks • Workshop: 2 days (last quarter of 2018)
Work plan and status	• Form organizing committee to develop Workshop agenda. • Develop/tailor workshop materials (preferably in Spanish) to EPO tuna-management needs. • Likely topics: Objectives, tactics and strategies, Kobe plots, harvest control rules, reference points. MSE components, development and implementation. • Logistics: Confirm presenters, host country (Ecuador has expressed interest), travel, venue, accommodations, invite Commissioners (mainly from coastal states). • Conduct workshop with a format of both presentations and hands-on sessions with MSE "toy" models to illustrate main points, issues, trade-offs, and foster dialogue among Workshop participants.
External collaborators	WWF; Ocean Outcomes; ISSF
Deliverables	Workshop report and associated materials.

7. SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE

Goal T. Implement external reviews of the staff's research

T.1. Facilitate external reviews of stock assessments

T.2. Facilitate external reviews of scientific studies

Goal U. Strengthen research at the Achotines Laboratory

Goal V. Recruit and retain highly-qualified personnel

Goal W. Promote training and advancement of scientific staff

Goal X. Promote the advancement of scientific research

X.1. Continue the annual CAPAM workshops

X.1.a. Workshop to advance spatial stock assessments of bigeye tuna in the Pacific Ocean

PROJECT X.1.a: Workshop to advance spatial stock assessments of bigeye tuna in the Pacific Ocean	
THEME: Scientific excellence **GOAL:** X. Promote the advancement of scientific research **TARGET:** X.1. Continue the annual CAPAM workshops **EXECUTION**: Stock Assessment Program	
Objectives	• Bring together researchers to present and discuss the development and application of spatial stock assessments • Improve the bigeye tuna stock assessment
Background	• Properly accounting for the spatio-temporal distribution of both fishing effort and fish abundance has been one of the largest sources of uncertainty ignored in most stock assessments • Substantial progress has been made in both the statistical methodology and the practical implementation (e.g. software) of spatial stock assessment models • Tagging data show substantial directional movement of bigeye tuna in the EPO. • The current stock assessment model for bigeye lacks spatial structure, and does not explicitly take local depletion into account, thus resulting in apparent regime shifts in the estimated recruitment.
Relevance for management	• Knowledge gained from the workshop will be uses to improve the bigeye tuna stock assessment • Improvements in the bigeye assessment will improve management advice
Duration	October 2018
Work plan and status	• April 2018 – invite keynote speakers • August 2018 – prepare background material • October 2018 – Conduct workshop • November 2018 – Write workshop report • May 2019 – report to SAC
External collaborators	
Deliverables	Workshop report

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

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Appendix 1.

The work of the IATTC staff is divided into four programs: Stock Assessment; Biology and Ecosystem; Data Collection and Database; Bycatch and International Dolphin Conservation Program (IDCP).

The principal responsibilities of these programs are as follows:

Stock Assessment

- Determine whether tuna stocks in the eastern Pacific Ocean are fully fished or overfished, and whether increases in fishing capacity and/or fishing effort would threaten their conservation;
- Evaluate measures to prevent or eliminate overfishing and excess fishing capacity and to ensure that fishing effort is compatible with the sustainable use of the fish stocks covered by the IATTC Convention;
- Evaluate measures to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fish stocks covered by the IATTC Convention and to maintain or restore the harvested species at levels of abundance that will produce the maximum sustainable yield.
- In collaboration with Scripps Institution of Oceanography and the US National Marine Fisheries Service, the IATTC founded the Center for the Advancement of Population Assessment Methodology (http://www.capamresearch.org/) to conduct research on fisheries stock assessment.

Biology and Ecosystem

- Carry out scientific research on the abundance, biology and biometry of fish stocks covered by the IATTC Convention and of associated or dependent species, and the effects of natural factors and human activities;
- In coordination with the bycatch program, develop conservation and management measures for species belonging to the same ecosystem that are affected by fishing for, or dependent on or associated with, the fish stocks covered by the IATTC Convention, in order to maintain or restore such species above sustainable levels.

Data Collection and Database

- Develop standards for the collection, verification, exchange, and reporting of data on the fisheries covered by the IATTC Convention;
- Establish a comprehensive program for data collection and monitoring;
- In coordination with the IDCP, manage the on-board scientific observer program, the data collected by observers, and the activities of the field offices;

Bycatch and IDCP

- Develop measures to avoid, reduce and minimize waste, discards, catch by lost or discarded fishing gear, catch of non-target species, and impacts on associated or dependent species, in particular endangered species;
- Develop measures to avoid, reduce and minimize the incidental mortality of dolphins associated with the tuna fishery.