

Improving the Accuracy of Length and Weight Information for the Angling Category Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Fishery

The Cornell Cooperative Extension Marine Program has joined in a cooperative effort with NMFS, and the states of Maryland, North Carolina and New Jersey to collect catch, and biological data on Atlantic bluefin tuna. This project is intended to compliment and strengthen existing efforts and improve stock assessments and domestic management for this species.

The focus of the project will be to collect length, girth and weight data of school, and large school/small medium size bluefin tuna less than 73" throughout the season and over the range of the Angling and Charter/Headboat category fishery. Length-weight conversion factors by areas and season will be developed and compared with existing conversion factors.

The Large Pelagic Intercept Survey (LPIS) collects only length data on bluefin tuna landed by recreational anglers from Maine through Virginia, whereas weight data are not routinely collected. Length data are used to estimate weights of individual fish. Length-weight keys reflecting regional and seasonal variation in this relationship have been developed by NMFS and reviewed by ICCAT. The length-frequency data from the LPIS is used to estimate the catch, in numbers of fish by month, for each length increment (in cm, straight fork length). Weights are assigned to each of these catches following the length-weight keys, and then totaled to get the estimate of landings in pounds by recreational size class and month.

NMFS bluefin tuna length-weight conversion keys were originally developed using samples taken from a purse seine fishery that once operated from Virginia to Maine during summer and fall months. From these samples, separate keys were developed by month for length-weight conversions of fish in recreational size classes landed from Virginia through Maine. Since these conversion keys are based on limited data collected many years ago there is an identified need to update these keys with more current and comprehensive data. The need to collect up to date bluefin tuna weight at length data both seasonally and throughout the range of the fishery has been recognized by the ICCAT Advisory Committee, the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Committee, the ACCSP Advisory Committee, and bluefin tuna fishermen.

With the cooperation of the recreational tuna anglers much needed data can be collected and can lead to better management and an increased understanding of the bluefin tuna stock. The Cornell Cooperative Extension Marine Program seeks the support of the recreational fishing industry in assisting in the collection of this much needed bluefin tuna information. Marine Program staff will be attending local tuna tournaments and are willing to coordinate dockside sampling activity with cooperating recreational fishermen at all docks and marinas across Long Island.

All cooperating fishermen please fill out attached informational survey. For further information, please contact Tara Froehlich, Cornell Cooperative Extension, 631-727-7850 ext. 317 or Jeanette Klopchin ext.223.

OR simply call us on our work cell phone (631)-603-4613 if you plan on landing BFT anywhere along Long Island. Call us the night/day before you go fish and let us know approximately what time and exact location you will be landing and we will be there waiting to quickly take the information we need. Your cooperation is more than appreciated.

**Cornell Cooperative Extension Marine Program
Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Sampling Project**

Informational Survey for Cooperating Fishermen

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Vessel Name _____

Dock or Marina Landed _____

Tuna Tournaments that you participate in

Months you typically fish for Bluefin Tuna

**Please return survey to
Tara Froehlich
CCE Marine Program
423 Griffing Avenue
Riverhead, NY 11901**