

American Fishermen's Research Foundation News ©

The American Fishermen's Research Foundation has supported research and education of the albacore and pole and troll fishery since 1971. More than six million dollars have been spent on projects and research related to this fishery. The industry by contribution pays most of the funds beyond dock price of albacore. AFRF supports the entire albacore fishery with its' efforts, not just individuals and association members.

AFRF Fall Board Meeting: The AFRF board of directors held its' fall directors meeting by teleconference on December 17th. The next scheduled meeting will again be via teleconference late January or early February. The Spring meeting will be in Rocklin, CA on March 31, 2010 at 3:00 PM at the Springhill Marriott Hotel.

Good News for the New Year: Vidar Wespestad, PhD

As many of you know I am a member of the Pacific Fishery Management Council Scientific and Statistical Committee. As such I will be attending a series of meetings to formulate procedures of incorporating "scientific uncertainty" into determinations of annual catch limits and "management measures" to prevent exceeding recommended annual catch limits. For most of the fisheries of the West Coast there have been annual catch limits and management measures in place for decades; however, in other regions where the historic science advice said effort restrictions were all you need to manage are now having to develop quota management. The unfortunate aspect of this is that a lot of practical management methodology has been swept out the door to make a national one size fits all system that is predicated on theory and assumptions that don't always operate as predicted in nature.

At the current time efforts are primarily focused on groundfish and coast pelagic, with some examination of approaches in salmon and HMS species. It is going to be an interesting and challenging time to try and mesh the realities of fisheries with theoretical projections of how the system ought to work! If all the NMFS proposed procedures are imposed then there is little doubt that there will be downward progression of catch over time to accommodate the mandated "precautionary measures". A good example may be sardine. Sardine used to be managed under a guideline harvest that had a range of harvests dependent on a number of factors that could be adjusted in season. Today a single point estimate of harvest has to be developed. SSC policy has been to provide risk neutral advice; but, now the single estimate must be further reduced for other factors including "unknown scientific uncertainty"!

The good news is albacore will likely be exempted from US annual catch limits since it is under international management. The same forces that push the US fishery agenda are active in international tuna management so there is a need to be watchful for proposals to develop harvest policies based on general biological theory that will lead toward the same predetermination that overfishing is inevitable without narrow catch limits. The important point in the field of catch management is that fisheries that have a strong founding in observational data are sustainable and healthy fisheries, as opposed to those where management advice is derived from a computer models. As we move into the 2010 albacore assessment cycle I'm sure that the North Pacific Albacore working group will be pragmatic and avoid theoretical assumptions about the sustainability of albacore.

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Pacific Fisheries Management Council: November 2009 - Costa Mesa, CA

White Paper: Written by Dr. Mike Laurs and Dr. Joe Powers for NMFS to give a background of the albacore fishery and lay out a range of effort/catch controls that could be used in the event effort controls were needed. It appears the PFMC in general with the exception of the WA Dept of Fish and Game, NMFS and the U.S. Department of State did not see a urgent need with pursuing effort limitations on albacore troll and baitboat pending the outcome of the 2011 international stock assessment.

The White Paper was criticized by the SSC for use of the word "overfished" when speaking of the Magnuson Act and the WCPFC-NC, when the definition was quite different (a much higher threshold the way the Northern Committee of the WCPFC defined it as the average of the lowest 10 years)

The SSC also criticized Table 6 and said it had the same problems that the SSC had criticized in the SWFSC report in 2007 -- it suggested that a more appropriate analysis would be one which partitioned the fishery mortality for U.S. fisheries (US partial F) out of the overall international fishery mortality.

California F & G gave a very strong statement that California didn't think there was a need to do anything with the White Paper but put it on a shelf. Washington F&G made a motion to pursue the white paper with more information despite WFOA/AFRF testimony asking for a future projection to look ahead at economic and market factors 10 years in the future. Washington State also argued trying to include in any assessment of the impact of illegal fishing.

Recommendations to the WCPFC: The Council made the following recommendations to the U.S. delegation to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC):

To seek changes in the Marshall Islands Draft Conservation and Management Measure on Regulation of Transshipment so that observers are only required on the carrier vessel and not on the fishing vessel.

Seek WCPFC support for the International Scientific Committee Albacore Working Group proposal for a Biological Sampling Plan for North Pacific albacore to refine the vital rates for North Pacific albacore, improve the quality of stock assessments, and proceed to secure necessary funding.

Support continued research on albacore stocks and a three-year assessment cycle, noting that albacore is the most important HMS species to west coast fisheries.

The HMS-MT recommended, as did the HMS-AS, that the 2002-2004 time period chosen by the Northern Committee of the WCPFC in September 2009 was too short and would distort the findings setting in all likelihood too low a reference point. A longer 10 year time period was recommended. First the Council could not figure out why the 10 year time period recommended in 2007 by the PFMC MT and AS was not the position the U.S. Delegation took. NMFS convinced the Council that the "horse was out of the barn and BOTH the WCPFC (through the northern committee) and the IATTC preferred the 2002-2004 time period. However, at the last IATTC meeting, the IATTC staff preferred 2002-2004 but was overruled and a working group set up to look at the issue.

Fishery Management Plan Amendment 2: Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures: The Council provided the following guidance to the HMSMT:

Revise the list of alternatives for applying the international exception by dropping alternative 3 in the HMSMT Report (apply the international exception only to tunas and billfish). The alternatives would then include applying the international exception to all HMS FMP management unit species (MUS), or applying it to all MUS except for shortfin mako and common thresher shark.

Pursue closer coordination with the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WPFMC) to gather more information on the need and appropriateness of designating a primary FMP for the HMS FMP

MUS that are also part of the WPFMC's Pelagics FMP. In particular, further investigation of swordfish and striped marlin is warranted, with a view of designating the HMS FMP as the primary FMP for these stocks.

Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission - December 2009 - Papeete Tahiti

WCPFC Requirements to Fish Albacore in the South Pacific: To fish in the South Western and Central Pacific high seas areas a vessel must have a High Seas Compliance Act permit from NMFS to fish on the high seas. It is not clear whether a vessel not landing its catch on the west coast would need a PFMC FMP-HMS permit, or if landing in Hawaii, Guam, the Northern Marianas, or American Samoa, a WPFMC Pelagic Fisheries permit. Since most if not all WFOA member vessels are likely to already have a PFMC-FMP-HMS permit this should not be a problem. On the other hand the Pacific Area Regional Office of NMFS and the WPFMC have a limited entry fishery (filled) for long line albacore in the EEZ around American Samoa. Therefore, if landing in any of the areas under the WPFMC's "jurisdiction", it would be wise to check with the PIRO people first.

At the moment the only WCPFC requirement is to have your vessel entered on the WCPFC Record of fishing vessels. This cannot be done directly but must be done by going through PIRO in Honolulu. You can check to see if your vessel is listed by going to: <http://intra.wcpfc.int/Lists/Vessels/Stats.aspx>. It appears that PIRO has registered all the albacore troll vessels which have High Seas Compliance Act permits, but it is advisable to check.

At the moment there are no requirements to carry observers under the Region Observer Program. Given the prior negotiating history, to put albacore trollers under the observer program would probably take at least a year. Nevertheless, PIRO staff have indicated that they would initially like to put observers on some albacore troll vessels. WFOA will oppose this, but keep members informed.

Finally, it is clear that an albacore troll vessel would have to be equipped with VMS. The most prudent course of action would be to have a VMS unit on board that is compatible with the WCPFC system, and that unit might have to be inspected by an agent of the USG NMFS, probably in American Samoa, although it is possible such inspection and certification could be done in Hawaii.

While not in the strict sense a requirement, vessels should be prepared to be boarded by enforcement vessels from other countries in the region in addition to USCG visits. There is a rather specific protocol for this type of boarding, which interested persons can obtain from WFOA.

From SWFSC - The 61st Tuna Conference: This is being planned for May 17-20, 2010, at the Lake Arrowhead Conference Center in California. The conference topic will be "It's Not About the Catch, but the Bycatch." Fisheries for tuna and other highly migratory species are often constrained by the incidental take of vulnerable non-target species. Even fisheries that target productive, healthy stocks can face restrictions if interactions with protected species occur. In order to manage fisheries so that yield of target species is optimized and bycatch interactions are minimized, a multi-disciplinary, ecosystem approach is required. At the multi-species level, a better understanding of the pelagic ecosystem, species interactions, and how the environment affects species distribution is needed. For individual species, research into data-poor assessment methodologies, fine-scale habitat use patterns, and gear modifications to reduce bycatch will all contribute to inform management and help to promote healthy, sustainable fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species. The 2010 Tuna Conference will address some of these issues and papers addressing these challenges are encouraged. As always, we welcome presentations on tuna and 'tuna-like' species that may not be directly related to the topic theme.

This year an ADMB Award and three student scholarships will be awarded. All conference information including announcements, registration forms, student scholarship applications, and abstract guidelines may also be viewed at: www.tunaconference.org.

On-Board Measuring: AFRF is donating \$200 to any of the vessels with measuring troughs who will do at-sea measuring this season. This is a great benefit to the SWFSC and fills a void that is a result of having a curtailed shoreline measuring program. Any vessel that has completed this for 2009 and sent the information into SWFSC should let AFRF know in order to collect \$200.

HMS Logbooks: If you fished and landed albacore you are required to send these in, and need each page signed prior to sending them in at the end of each trip. Failure to send in a logbook may result in not receiving an HMS permit application in the future. The logbook is mandatory for all waters and species included under the PFMC - FMP.

Voluntary Fund for Northern Committee to Fund ISC projects - AFRF counsel Peter Flournoy passed along information that a new fund is getting off the ground and needs someone to start funding it. Though AFRF would be good to get ahead of the curve and contribute. The AFRF board decided to contribute \$1,000 plus write letter expressing our 2009 contribution of about \$4,000 in sampling of albacore and processing these samples as an in-kind contribution. This was to be noted to be specifically for NP albacore.

Access to Management Input: - From Nils Stolpe: And in who's really controlling the management process, a first step is easily available to you. All it will take is a mouse click on the URL below and two or three minutes of your time. <<http://fs16.formsite.com/FixMagnusonNow/form793561462/>>

Coastal Survey / AFRF Dart Tags: AFRF tagged 200 albacore off Washington and Oregon this season and collected samples of albacore on-board the F/V Hans Halvor. These are orange and are on the top part of the fish. Anyone recovering one of these should record the area of catch, date of catch, weight and length, and return it to AFRF, P.O. Box 992723, Redding, CA 96099 with your name and address.

Other:

JOSEPH, JAMES 1930 to 2009 Dr. James Joseph , Director of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) from 1969 to 1999, died suddenly on December 16, 2009. He was born in Los Angeles in 1930, the youngest of Paul and Julia Joseph's 13 children. After graduating from high school, he entered Humboldt State University in Arcata, California, where he obtained a B.S. degree in 1956 and an M.S. degree in 1958. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the James Joseph Scholarship Endowment at Humboldt State University, Gift Processing Center, 1 Harpst Street, Arcata, CA 95521-8299.

AFRF Fees: We want to remind WFOA members that with a mix of new markets this season, AFRF fees still are required to be paid at the rate of \$20/st by the vessel unloading at any Non-AFRF buyer. All AFRF buyers are listed below. AFRF contracted buyers have until December 31, 2009 to pay on the 2009 summer season. We thank all of you for your efforts.

AFRF Contracted Buyers: Bluewater Fisheries, Bornstein Seafoods Inc., Bumble Bee Seafoods, Chicken of the Sea International, Driscoll's Wharf, Interocean Fisheries, Island Trollers Inc., Jessie's Ilwaco Fish Company, JK Fisheries, Ilwaco Landing LLC, Mary-Lu Seafoods, New Day Fisheries, Pacific Seafood Group, Papa George Gourmet Albacore, Pelican Packers Inc., Seafood Producers Co-op, Shamrock Fisheries, Star Kist Seafoods, Starvin Marvin Seafoods, Trident Seafoods, Tri-Marine International, Whole Foods Select Fish, Wild Planet Inc

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