

American Fishermen's Research Foundation News ©

At the end of another season and prior the upcoming season, AFRF activities will consist of following up on ongoing projects and getting material to distribute to the members. These will include archival tagging data and reports, selenium research, and stomach content research. AFRF should have reports and updates ready for distribution by the time of the next newsletter.

AFRF Board Meeting: The board of directors had their fall meeting in San Diego on November 5, 2008. AFRF took on no new initiatives and projects at this time. Instead the board decided to try to wrap up the ongoing projects and get reports out to users groups. Reports include the Archival Tagging project ongoing for the past six seasons, the Selenium project through the University of North Dakota, and the Stomach sampling project by Sarah Glaser. AFRF is expecting formal reports on these projects so we can have information available for those interested. The board will have its winter meeting in February and Spring meeting in April during the WFOA annual meeting to discuss plans for 2009. There was much interest in districts about the coastal survey done last year by the Billie Marie II. AFRF could consider doing this type of cost-effective project again if research and data collection is the priority.

Archival Tagging: As stated in the last newsletter, AFRF only deployed 48 tags in 2008 off Washington and Oregon. SWFSC put off the second trip until July 2009 as many of the batch of tags were defective in shop tests. SWFSC is resolving these now and we expect the future tags to be in good working order. The F/V Seaadler will deploy the tags in July 2009.

Two tags were recovered this year by an Asian longliners. The first one was delivered in American Samoa after nearly two years at liberty. Preliminary data shows similar migrations we have seen in previous recoveries of the tagged albacore from the west coast to out around 160W then back into the coast in the spring.

Another tag was recovered by a Taiwanese longline vessel around 31N x 140W this fall. The fish recovered was 92cm in length and 14kg. The tag is in transit to SWFSC and there is no update information yet.

Selenium: The report on selenium attributes to diet and health has again been delayed until January 31, 2009 by EERC - University of North Dakota. We have updates or information to distribute at this time. However, the preliminary results presented in a number of forums is very interesting in selenium's role in mitigating the effects of methyl mercury in tunas and other species of consumed fish.

On-Board Measuring: AFRF is donating \$200 to any of the vessels with measuring troughs who did at-sea measuring this season. Some vessels measured as many as 1,000 albacore tuna. This is a great help to the SWFSC and fills a void that is a result of having a curtailed shoreline measuring program. Vessels that measured in the 2008 season will receive checks soon, or at least the owners will.

HMS Logbooks: These are required 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 2009. If you did not land albacore in 2008 you may/will need to call NMFS 562.980.4198 and request the logbook and permit for 2009 as they will only send them to vessels that landed over one metric ton. The logbook is mandatory for all waters and species included under the PFMC - FMP. An electronic version is now available from SWFSC, <<http://swfsc.noaa.gov/textblock.aspx?Division=FRD&ParentMenuId=139&id=1168>>

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Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Report - By Peter H. Flournoy

General

The Fifth Meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission was held from December 5th to the 12th in Busan Korea. Glenn Hurry of Australia who had been Chair for the first 5 years of the Commissions existence was replaced by Satya Nanden of Fiji who had been Chair of the MHLC negotiating process which result in the WCPFC. Elected as Vice-Chair was Sylvie LaPonte of Canada, known to WFOA members as the Head of the Canadian Delegation to the U.S. Albacore Treaty with Canada talks. The long expected confrontation between Bill Gibbons-Fly of the U.S. and Massa Miyahara of Japan for the chairmanship was averted with the presentation of the FFA of Nanden as a candidate. The election process was almost disrupted by Japans insistence that the Chair only hold his position for a single two year term, with the next chairman coming from a distant water/non FFA member State. Andrew Wright of Australia remains as the Commission Executive Director.

Naozumi Miyabe of Japan was selected by consensus to be the new Chair of the Scientific Committee. Masanori Miyahara of Japan was re-elected as Chair, and Benjamin Tabios of the Philippines was re-elected as Vice-Chair, of the Northern Committee. To some extent the U.S. was asleep at the switch by not tuning someone to replace Massa as chair of the Northern Committee.

Allocation

While the scheduled discussion of international allocations was raised, the Commission agreed that such a discussion of allocation issues should be merged with the Commission's consideration of management objectives and reference points. Therefore, discussions of allocation issues at next year's WCPFC6 will be guided by the outcomes of work on reference points and management objectives by SC 5 and TCC6. The assumption is that the Northern Committee and the International Scientific Committee will be heavily involved with regard to Northern albacore.

Scientific Committee

The Chairman of the Scientific Committee presented the following new recommendations of SC4 with regard to the key tuna species in the region:

1. Bigeye: A minimum 30% reduction in fishing mortality from the average levels for 2003–2006 was recommended with the goal of returning the fishing mortality rate to FMSY. Additional reductions will be required in fishing mortality in the future if assessments indicate that fishing mortality is greater than FMSY
2. Yellowfin: Basically the same recommendation.
3. Skipjack: The high recent catches are considered to be sustainable unless recruitment falls persistently below the long-term average.
4. South Pacific albacore: Catches should remain at current levels.
5. South Pacific swordfish: Due to the uncertainty in the assessment, no further increase in catch or effort was recommended.
6. Pacific bluefin: It was recommended that there be no further increase of the fishing mortality from the current level.
7. North Pacific striped marlin: The fishing mortality rate should be reduced from the current level (to 2003 or before).

The scientific Committee has on its program of work for next year, approved by the Commission a regional study of the stock structure and life-history characteristics of South Pacific albacore and a Pacific-wide tagging project which will include albacore.

Northern Committee

The Report of the Fourth Regular Session of the Northern Committee was given by the Chairman of the Northern Committee, Masanori Miyahara, summarizing the outcomes of the 8th meeting of the ISC and the status of northern stocks. The management recommendation for north Pacific albacore is that F (fishing mortality) should not be increased. Massa noted that an interim management objective for northern albacore was formulated which states that spawning stock biomass should be maintained above the level represented by the average of the lowest 10 years in the 40-year data history of the stock. The Northern Committee plans to consider the need for management action in 2009 and conduct a new stock assessment in 2010.

After the presentation of the report the Cook Islands expressed concern that the interim management objective for albacore is not sufficiently precautionary. Clarification was requested as to how this objective relates to levels of unfished biomass. Representatives of the NC and the ISC responded that the interim management objective is simply designed to prevent the stock from falling below its lowest documented levels. Work to develop fisheries management reference points is ongoing and will inform future evaluation of stock status.

Transshipment

The Marshall Islands, chair of the interim working group, summarized the progress on a draft conservation and management measure (CMM) on transshipment (WCPFC5-2008/DP-02 (Rev 2)). The objective of the measure is to allow transshipment on the high seas in cases where it would be impractical to conduct operations without transshipment. Under the proposed measure, CCMs would make such determinations using guidelines developed by the Secretariat and approved by the Commission, and these determinations would be reviewed by the Commission. Provisions for observer coverage, accounting for more stringent national laws, prohibition of transshipment at sea by purse seine vessels unless exempted by the measures, and reporting requirements for transshipment of WCPO fish outside of the Convention Area are also included in the draft measure.

During an initial discussion, some of the countries, primarily the Asian countries, posed initial questions on the measure including WCPFC competency to require documentation of transshipment outside the Convention Area; the differing responsibilities of flag and chartering States; provisions for longline transshipment; the application of the measure only to those areas between 20°N and 20°S; and the relationship between this measure and Port State Controls. The European Union referred to transshipment procedures in other RFMOs, such as ICCAT and IOTC, and cited the need for consistency.

Other countries such as Australia and New Zealand expressed a preference for a total ban on high seas transshipments, citing the potential complexity of implementing and enforcing the proposed measure. It was noted that ICCAT recently adopted a total ban on at sea transshipment of bluefin tuna for both longliners and purse seiners.

The draft measure was further discussed in small working group led by the Marshall Islands. However, after several sessions, this SWG remained unable to achieve consensus on aspects of the proposal which placed any restrictions on currently allowable transshipment activities. As a result, the agreed provisions of the measure were considered an insufficient basis for a new CMM.

Acknowledging that a CMM on transshipment had been one of the top priorities for this meeting, WCPFC5 requested the Marshall Islands to continue to lead development of a draft CMM, based on the progress achieved at WCPFC5 (WCPFC5-2008/DP02(Rev. 3), Attachment T) with the objective of discussing a new draft as a priority issue at TCC5.

Illegal High Seas Drift Nets:

The US introduced a draft CMM prohibiting the use of large scale driftnets on the high seas in the WCPFC Convention Area (WCPFC5-2008/IP-07). It was noted that such gear is subject to a global moratorium on the high seas and may undermine the Commission's CMMs. In response to a comment on the draft, it was agreed to remove the phrase "within areas under their national jurisdiction" so as to allow for a potentially broader application of more stringent measures by CCMs, such as under the Wellington Convention which has application in the far southern part of the Pacific. One measure, important as a goal to WFOA/AFRF was achieved when the The Commission encouraged the next meeting of the Northern Committee to begin establishing a cooperative framework with the North Pacific Anadromous Fisheries Commission (NPAFC) and initiate, as soon as possible, a process to exchange information on North Pacific large-scale driftnet fishing activities between NPAFC and WCPFC members. The Commission also adopted WCPFC5-2008/IP07 (Rev. 1) proposed by the United States as a new conservation and management measure prohibiting the use of large scale driftnets on the high seas of the Convention Area. The saffect of this measure *inter alia*, is to permit the U.S. Coast Guard to board vessels on the high seas in the Convention Area if it is suspected that a high seas illegal drift net is being used. Such fisheries are believed to be having an adverse impact on the north Pacific albacore troll fishery.

Scedule of Meetings:

1. IWG-ROP scheduled for 16-20 March in Guam, USA (possibly in conjunction with the Ad Hoc Task Group Data;
2. SC5 scheduled for 10-21 August in Port Vila, Vanuatu;
3. NC5 scheduled for 15-17 September in Tokyo, Japan;
4. TCC5 scheduled for 1-6 October in Pohnpei, FSM; and
5. WCPFC6 scheduled for 6-11 December in Papeete, French Polynesia

Cooperation With IATTC:

The WCPFC changed its approach and permitted El Salvador, Ecuador, Senegal, and Mexico as cooperating non-members with certain restrictions. This should make cooperation between the two organizations easier to increase.

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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 at the end of this newsletter. **WFOA members are required by WFOA By-laws to adhere to this.**

SECTION 2.10 OBLIGATIONS TO AMERICAN FISHERMEN'S RESEARCH FOUNDATION. Members are encouraged to deliver their catch only to buyers and/or processors who have an existing contract, or its equivalent, with the Western Fishboat Owners Association (WFOA) and an existing contract, or its equivalent, with the American Fishermen's Research Foundation (AFRF). Members who deliver to buyers and/or processors who do not have such contracts are responsible for, and legally liable to WFOA, for the AFRF assessments on any troll or bait caught albacore landed. Members who process their own albacore for sale shall pay AFRF fees. Members who receive no compensation for albacore landed shall not be liable for AFRF fees. WFOA shall publish at the beginning of the North Pacific season and the South Pacific season, and update periodically, a list of buyers and/or processors with existing WFOA and AFRF contracts.

AFRF Contracted Buyers: Arrowac Fisheries, 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, 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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