

American Fishermen's Research Foundation News ©

The American Fishermen's Research Foundation supports and research and education of the albacore and pole and line troll fishery as it has since 1971. More than six million dollars have been spent on projects and research related to this fishery. The industry by contributions 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.

Winter Board Meeting: This was held on March 4, 2009 via Tele-Conference. The board acted on a few issues such as:

Put an item on the AFRF.ORG website announcing any opportunities for research, grad students, projects etc. in which AFRF can be a partner or sponsor.

AFRF voted to give the second annual Frank Martins award to a well deserving individual at the April 1st luncheon in Astoria, OR.

AFRF to work with SWFSC on possibly Initiating an onboard biological sampling collection protocol where crew collect heads and guts with detailed location and size information for individual albacore throughout the fishery area and season for work on age and growth, otolith microchemistry, genetics and feeding habits, etc.

Take more initiative with Canadians on research and education in the albacore fishery.

The board decided to also look at another possible coastal survey fuel charter on maybe two smaller vessels this coming season, and doing more in public education for albacore health attributes. Both will be considered at the April 1, 2009 Astoria meeting.

Archival Tagging: SWFSC scientists are planning to conduct an albacore tagging charter early in the 2009 fishing season. It is expected that the trip will take place in July aboard the F/V Seadler off the Oregon/Washington coast depending upon when and where the fish show up. The team will try to deploy roughly 50 tags in the early season. Additional deployments later in the season will depend on the 2009 NMFS budget which has not yet been finalized. To date 552 archival tags have been deployed and 22 have been recovered. The data are being analyzed and reveal a broad range of vertical and horizontal movements. In general, the tagged fish moved offshore and deeper between November to May and inhabited the surface fishery areas off the US west coast during the summer and early fall. Future archival tag deployments in the central north Pacific and the western Pacific would improve understanding of juvenile albacore throughout their range.

Stomach Content Project: Sarah Glaser defended her PhD thesis on "Food web ecology of albacore tuna in the California Current System" at Scripps Institute of Oceanography on February 17. Sarah received some AFRF funding to support her research and many WFOA captains helped collect albacore stomachs for her.

Selenium: EERC has been talking to the FDA about getting the Selenium-Health Benefit Values introduced into their document describing the importance of increased fish consumption since Se-HBV's actually correlate with both safety and benefits of fish consumption while current criteria based on mercury alone provide only poor correlations with either. It would be valuable to have the Se-HBV measured on more fish from the Alaskan and Pacific Coast fisheries. This would enable a more complete discussion of the importance of this new criterion in a series of journal articles we would like to prepare for scientific (health and environment), trade and popular journals.

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EERC has submitted a project proposal to NOAA of a related project that is called the Selenium Health Initiative Program (SHIP I). It is dedicated to funding outreach efforts to talk about the Se-HBV to Federal regulatory (FDA, EPA, etc) and public health (ATSDR, CDC, USDA, Office of the Surgeon General etc;) agencies, as well as their state counterparts and the organizations of physicians, dieticians, and nutrition advisors. This work would also involve outreach through publication of articles about Se-HBV.

Dr. Nick Ralston has been trying hard for the last few months to get several projects completed. The SHIP I proposal has not been finalized, as well as the Selenium Health Initiative Partners (SHIP II.) prospectus, that they started discussing several months ago. SHIP II will be linked with SHIP I, and they would work to obtain funding from other organizations with interest in this issue (including, but not limited to the seafood industry). This would be directed towards specific aspects of the issue such as investigating Se-HBV of various types of seafood. We doubt labeling of seafoods with Se-HBV's will ever be mandated, but suspect there would be major advantages if consumers knew that the ocean fish they were eating was beneficial, and were able to assess how beneficial by looking at the Se-HBV. Nick is also working with a group on establishing an omega-3 Health Benefit Value that would be calculated similar to the Se-HBV. Being able to recognize the Omega-3 and selenium HBV's of ocean fish would enhance consumer confidence and eventually help eliminate the fuss and furor of the previous years regarding seafood safety.

On-Board Measuring: AFRF is donated \$200 to any of the vessels with measuring troughs who did at-sea measuring last season. Some vessels measured as many as 1,000 albacore tuna. This is a great benefit to the SWFSC and fills a void that is a result of having a curtailed shoreline measuring program. We encourage vessels with measuring troughs to continue this in 2009, or give your equipment to another vessel who 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>>

Peter Flournoy wrote this interpretation of **"Transition to Green"** about a 275 page document that was put out the end of November 2008. It is a very specific and complete listing of all the changes the environmentalists would like to see made by the new Obama administration during their first 100 days. It was put together and endorsed by about 30 environmental groups including: Defenders of Wildlife, Earth Justice, Environmental Defense Fund, Greenpeace, National Audubon, NRDC, Oceana, Ocean Conservancy, Pew Environment Group, Sierra Club and WWF, to name a few. The report details recommendations for about 15 different USG Departments and Agencies. Mike Hirshfield of Oceana is the contact person and responsible for the section on NOAA-NMFS. Many of these ideas and approaches make no practical sense, but you should be aware of the direction these environmental groups are taking with the administration.

There are 3 top issues listed for each agency. For NOAA-NMFS they are:

1. NOAA should use a "whole ocean" approach to coordinate all NOAA and other federal and state agency programs for protecting, maintaining and restoring the health of the marine ecosystem, which becomes even more critical when trying to manage the effects of climate change on the ocean's health.
2. Climate change and fisheries impacts are two of the most significant threats to ocean health. NOAA must address impacts of climate change and ocean acidification and utilize the ESA and MMPA to ensure the survival and recovery of marine wildlife.

3. NOAA should focus on preventing overfishing, rebuilding overfished stocks and force NMFS to comply with NEPA in all fisheries decisions and NMFS must address IUU fishing to crack down on global overexploitation of ocean resources.

ISSUE 1

NMFS must move from single species management to ecosystem management. Forage fish, or fish that other fish eat, should have different management regimes than abundant mid-food chain fish, which in turn should be managed differently than long lived, slow growing predators at the top of the food chain.

Since Marine Protected Areas are proven to protect and restore productivity of marine life, establishing a domestic and international system of marine protected areas is critical in the face of the cumulative impacts of fishing, pollution, coastal development, climate change and ocean acidification.

Among the Administrative Policy recommendations is that the Obama administration should seek a new treaty regime under the Law of the Sea Convention which would establish MPAs, and, inter alia, require prior environmental impact assessment for human activities which might adversely affect high seas areas.

Among the Legislative Policy recommendations, the new administration should support the Oceans 21 or similar legislation as well as the reauthorization of the Marine Sanctuaries Act. Fisheries management in sanctuaries should be done by sanctuary managers, not NMFS. There should also be established a network of Ocean Heritage Areas that would comprise a significant portion of the EEZ, and include a range of allowable uses (?) from no take zones to areas where some uses, such as recreational fishing could take place.

Among the Budgetary Policy recommendations, NMFS should be given increased funding to do NEPA evaluations under the MMPA and the ESA; NOAA should get additional funding for providing "oversight on all climate change mitigation activities, including development of renewable energy in the ocean"; the National Marine Sanctuary program should be given more money (\$80 million, up from \$57 million); and \$4 million should be dedicated to the Marine Protected Area Center.

ISSUE 2

Because ocean acidification and climate change are putting stress on "imperiled" species federal fisheries management decisions should consider the impacts of both of these phenomenon. The report states that in addition to climate change, "commercial fisheries continue to propel the decline of ocean wildlife."

The focus here is on sea turtles and sharks -- setting annual catch limits is insufficient -- there must be bycatch caps established as well.

Among the Administrative Policy recommendations marine stresses must be reduced, which includes reducing pressure associated with fishing techniques and levels.

Among the Legislative Policy recommendations is to pass climate change legislation which would include dedicated funding to support the adaptation of wildlife to the new conditions.

ISSUE 3

This issue is restated as "establishing healthy national and international fisheries" and the new administration is exhorted to set national and international catch limits "sufficiently below the overfishing threshold to account for science and management uncertainty. There is a real push to have NMFS "work

to protect the high seas . . . which comprises 45% of the planet's surface."

Among the Administrative Policy recommendations is to revise the Magnuson Act's Standard 1 to require that there be implemented mandatory scientifically derived "buffers" between annual catch limits and overfishing limits, and that models used to set annual catch limits have a 90% probability of preventing overfishing. Other recommendations are the previously mentioned setting of annual bycatch limits for all commercial fisheries and a new recommendation to increase observer coverage. In the area of international fisheries measures the USG should support a ban of high seas transshipping to flag of convenience vessels (this is actually a slight softening of Greenpeace's previous position to ban all high seas transshipping), as well as pursue increased penalties for IUU fishing substantial enough to act as an effective deterrent.

Among the Legislative Policy recommendations there is only one, and that is to support any legislation that addresses this threat to international fisheries.

Among the Budgetary Policy recommendations there are several items that commercial fishermen could get behind. Unfortunately, the first broad recommendation to increase the NMFS budget (which has not even been adjusted for inflation over the last 7 years, much less increased) focuses not on improving US fisheries but on marine mammals, sea turtles, and ocean habitat. It is recommended that funding for stock assessments be increased by \$18 million to the level of \$50 million (a drop in the bucket considering it is claimed that NMFS manages 530 fish stocks taken in 300 different fisheries). The next recommendation is to increase the \$53.3 million for enforcement, with particular emphasis on IUU fishing, although enforcing the new annual catch limits under the Magnuson Amendments is also a focus. Funding for observer coverage should be increased because observers are deployed "in only 42 of the nation's 300 fisheries." Of course there is no discussion if there is a reason or known need to put observers in any of the other fisheries. Finally research in reducing bycatch should be increased.

While the above recommendations could be easily dismissed as merely an ENGO's wish list, it makes more sense to view it as the issues which commercial fishermen will have to face. For the albacore fleet probably the most relevant threats to a healthy and economical fishery will be the push for observer coverage on all fisheries (needed or not), and the push to increase regulation as well as establish MPAs on the high seas beyond the EEZs

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: 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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