

American Fishermen's Research Foundation News ©

Tuna Conference: The 61st annual Tuna Conference was held at the University of California, Los Angeles Conference Center at Lake Arrowhead during May 17-20, 2010. AFRF again donated \$500 to this event that brings many from the scientific community together to discuss scientific issues as related to tuna species. AFRF appreciates that opportunity to contribute and be part of this event.

2010 Albacore Sampling: The Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) is looking for a few vessels to collect some whole albacore for otolith and other sampling during the 2010 season. Since SWFSC needs only 300 fish for the total sample it would not be a burden on individual fishermen if it was spread out amongst a few vessels. If you are interested let AFRF/WFOA know.

Sampling Procedures 2010:

Species: Albacore and Bluefin Tuna

Need: Whole tuna: 1) small fish (<55 cm fork length), 2) complete size range of fish

Sampling: Port samplers or processors collect samples

Compensation: Market rate per pound (plus extra \$5) up to \$35 per fish

Overall Goals: A total of 300 albacore and bluefin tuna (150 each species) by the end of the 2010 fishing season. We would like samples throughout the fishing season, 50 per month (June-October).

Collection Procedures:

- Please request fishermen to keep any fish <55 cm fork length and not to throw these fish overboard.
- Randomly select up to 10 fish per trip per boat over a wide size range, please select 3-4 small (<60 cm), medium (60-75 cm), and large (>75 cm) fish samples.
- Record date, time, GPS location caught or fishing area, fish species (ALB or BLF), fish length (cm fork length), and weight (lbs.) on data sheet provided.
- Record vessel name, fishermen contact information (address, phone #), and any notes or details specific to each fish or fishing trip.
- Assign sample number to each fish and affix label with specimen number on caudal fin using zip tie corresponding to information recorded above. Freeze fish.
- Deliver fish to port processor and save until pick-up.

At the end of the season a NOAA biologist (Owyn Snodgrass, David Wells) will collect the fish and associated data sheets and distribute payment to fishermen. Feel free to contact Owyn or David anytime with any questions about sampling and payment. Owyn (858) 342-6372, David (858) 546-5619.

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AFRF Tagging Charters: One or two archival tagging cruises may happen in 2010 and 2011 depending on funding. Any vessel interested in this should contact AFRF or WFOA and request an application. Any charter would not happen until late in the season. Vessel compensation would be about \$35,000 per trip.

PACIFIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL JUNE MEETING: The HMS Advisory Subpanel met on Friday and Saturday, June 11th and 12th. The Council considered HMS matters on Sunday the 13th.

One of the primary agenda items was to formulate Council advice to the U.S. Delegations going to the September 6-10, Northern Committee meeting of the WCPFC in Japan and the Annual Meeting of the IATTC to be held September 27-October 1 in Guatemala. The HMS-AS did not receive any timely guidance from the State or Commerce Departments prior to the meeting, however, it came up with a number of recommendations. Among them were re-evaluating and pursuing a shifting 10 year band of effort if there was a discussion of defining "current effort" at the Northern Committee meeting, rather than the 2002-2004 period which the Northern Committee had settled on last year. The HMS-AS also suggested that the U.S. Delegation be more aggressive in efforts to include U.S. issues on the agenda (particularly albacore and bluefin tuna) and that the U.S. offer to host the next WCPFC-NC meeting. There have been increasing reports of net marked albacore during the 2009 season so the HMS-AS also suggested that NMFS take a more aggressive enforcement approach to end IUU fishing in the North Pacific. Finally, it was suggested that the Council defer any discussion of biological reference points for albacore until the 2011 stock assessment is completed, utilizing the international process through the International Scientific Council's Albacore Working Group.

With regard to the IATTC meeting, the HMS-AS suggested that the Council take whatever action it could to encourage the holding of a working group meeting among those countries interested in the North Pacific Albacore fishery in the Eastern Pacific Ocean to consider the definition of "current effort". At the last Annual IATTC meeting this was suggested and agreed to by the U.S., Canada, and Japan, however, the HMS-AS was unaware of any definite steps having been taken for the working group meeting.

The Council took note of these specific requests but did not include them in their formal motion. Rather they focused on the recommendations of the HMS-MT, which the HMS-AS had not seen before it was reported to the Council. Briefly stated, it was recommended that bigeye and yellowfin recommendations should await the updated stock assessment this year; the U.S. propose (again) that the IATTC move to TACs in the purse seine fishery rather than continue with a limit on cubic well space; that the US push for a more effective Bluefin resolution in the Northern Committee with particular focus on the catch of juvenile and under fish; the U.S. participate in the IATTC bluefin meeting at the IATTC suggested by Japan; and have U.S. delegations to both the IATTC and the WCPFC-NC advocate for more comprehensive data reporting and collection.

Another issue raised at the HMS-AS meeting was the overly burdensome WCPFC regulations on VMS as they affected the albacore fleet. The Council made a recommendation to NMFS that these regulations be re-examined in order to resolve issues such as the VMS having to remain on outside the WCPFC area and the 15 minute intervals for interrogating the VMS unit which is overly expensive for the fishermen and unnecessary.

On another HMS matter, the Council agreed to apply the National Standard 1 Guidelines to all management unit species including albacore. This eliminates the need for the Council to set an annual catch limit, although it will still have to set an MSY and OY for albacore (which currently appear in the

HMS-FMP. On the 17th the Council is to consider setting up an ad hoc committee to review HMS issues after the meeting of the Albacore Working Group since the Council would not meet again until after the WCPFC-NC meeting. The Ad hoc committee will probably consist of 3 Council members and 2 persons each from the HMS-AS and the HMS-MT.

ALBACORE WORKING GROUP (ALBWG) INTERCESSIONAL WORKSHOP:

The Albacore Working Group (ALBWG) Intercessional Workshop will be held in Victoria BC July 12-13, 2010 prior to the Annual International Science Committee (ISC) meeting. Dr. Vidar Weststad will be participating in the Working Group on behalf of AFRF.

The meeting will be following up on a April meeting of the ALBWG and designed to finalize data for the next stock assessment that will take place at meetings in October and next March. The goals of the workshop are to: complete review of spatial/temporal fishery boundaries for grouping fisheries; update fishery statistics; examine CPUE indices for indicators of spawning biomass; and to finalize advice to ISC on potential albacore management reference points.

The meeting should complete data preparation for the next stock assessment determination of stock status and management advice to the ISC.

Stock status: The upcoming stock assessment is a very important assessment. The current assessment is several years old, and that assessment found that stocks were near MSY levels and future abundance was dependent on future recruitment and fishing levels. Fishing levels appear to have been relatively stable to decreasing. The high fuel costs have lead fleets to concentrate closer to shore in both the eastern and western Pacific thus changing the historic catch distributions. It appears that recruitment to the surface pole and line fisheries has been average to above average, but there is scant evidence that these fish have recruited to the longline fishery in recent years. This is the reason that examination of the CPUE of longline fisheries is important. If there is no indication that CPUE is stable or increased in the longline fishery it may be an indication that stocks are being fished at too high a level. If longline CPUE show a downward trend then there may be a need to reduce catch to allow the spawning stock to increase.

In regard to the status of albacore and potential conservation action the issue of establishing biological reference points become very important. These management parameters will be used to determine if albacore is being overfished. The working group has developed a consensus that focus should be on lower limit reference points to prevent recruitment overfishing. At the current time the WG is examining several proposed minimum biomass estimates to prevent overfishing. These include allowing the stock to drop no lower than 10% of the estimated spawning stock biomass (SSB), 25% or the average ten low harvest levels (ATHL).

The Albacore Working Group has been actively engaged in developing a framework of recommendations to the International Science Committee that advises WCPFC and IATTC. To complete the analysis for ISC and RFMO review the ALBWG has requested input from managers to establish the appropriate biological reference points on stock management strategy, and the level of risk that managers are willing to accept. For instance, the Pacific Fishery Management Council strives for a risk neutral level of harvest based on specific harvest rates, but other parties to establishing harvest policy and control rules may wish to establish rules that have a higher or lower risk level.

The working group will be presenting options to the ISC for their evaluation and consideration. If the

ALBWG receives the requested inputs from managers the various options should be available for discussion at the Northern Committee this September; if no input is received from management bodies then establishment of control rules may be delayed until next year.

The ALBWG will also be discussing biological research and the status of research directed toward improving the knowledge of albacore life history.

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.

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.

Comment: The American Fishermen's Research Foundation (AFRF) has supported research and education of the albacore and pole and troll fishery since 1971. It was founded by fishermen with foresight to see the issues we are now facing such as maintaining access to the ocean for all U.S. albacore fishermen. 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.

Although AFRF has taken on 100's of projects in nearly 40 years, AFRF still remains little understood by many fishermen. AFRF is managed by the board listed on the sidebar above and they are elected by the WFOA board, and processor segment. Directors are not paid except for travel to meetings and a \$40 per diem at meetings. AFRF contracts with consultants like Dr. Wespestad to represent AFRF and the industry. AFRF also spends considerable resources in having representatives at management forums both federally and internationally.

Unfortunately, despite almost total participation by west coast U.S. albacore buyers and processors some have chosen not to contribute in any way. Some fishermen see AFRF as \$20 out of their pocket, which it is not, and or a way for WFOA to finance its own agenda instead of seeing the larger picture. AFRF, on a number of occasions invited skeptics to board meetings for input. Some have participated but have generally not offered any effort or time beyond that to make AFRF better for the entire industry. AFRF has also offered seats on the board to skeptics but they would rather not participate.

AFRF is not perfect, but has been the only research group invented by the fishing industry to help save it from bogus data and information from others who have agendas based on fiction rather than fact. If no one stands up for fishermen with good science and information, and the industry is in factions over small issues in the larger picture we will not last long.

AFRF Contracted Buyers: 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, 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 Foods Inc

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