

## 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.

**Coastal Survey:** This was completed by the F/V Hans Halvor during 15 days in July 2009. He reported daily conditions and catches, measured fish for Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC), tagged 200 albacore with dart tags for AFRF, and took sample fish in for stomach content and otolith studies. Daily condition reports were posted at <[www.wfoa-tuna.org/fishreports](http://www.wfoa-tuna.org/fishreports)>.

**Archival Tagging:** SWFSC scientists will be tagging aboard the F/V Seeadler off the Oregon/Washington coast in the week of September. To date 552 archival tags have been deployed and 22 have been recovered. SWFSC is analyzing the data and reveals a broad range of vertical and horizontal movements. Overall, the tagged fish moved offshore and deeper between November and May and inhabit the surface fishery areas off the US west coast during the summer and early fall.

**Recoveries at times are mistaken for parasites and vice versa.** They protrude from the posterior of the albacore and generally will have a dart tag on the anterior. If you have any reason to believe you have caught one of these fish just freeze or ice it and bring it into port. Contact your buyer, AFRF, or SWFSC. Pictures of tags and parasites can be seen on the links of the fish-report web-page at: <<http://wfoa-tuna.org/fishreports/>>

**NOTE: Tag Reward Increase:** The AFRF board voted to raise the reward on returned tags, as long as the fish is delivered whole to SWFSC to \$1,000. The past reward of \$500 will remain if only the tag or segment of the fish is returned.

**AFRF Dart tags:** 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. Tags will be entered in a drawing at the end of the season for a yet to be determined prize.

**On-Board Measuring:** AFRF is donating \$200 to any of the vessels with measuring troughs who will do at-sea measuring this season. In 2008 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. AFRF still has one such device available if anyone would like to do the work.

**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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Albacore Working Group: upcoming Stock Assessment and meeting in 2010-11: By - Vidar Weststad: The Albacore Working Group (AlbaWG) recently met in Taiwan to elect a new chair and to review the status of preparation for the next stock assessment. John Holmes of the Pacific Biological Station was elected as the new Chair of the AlbaWG replacing Ray Conser of the SWFSC who stepped down as Chairman earlier this year. Also, the AlbaWG worked scheduling the next assessment, discussing biological reference points and reviewing data. Originally, the stock was to be reassessed in 2010 and a new harvest recommendation prepared for the North Pacific albacore stock. The last stock assessment was completed in December 2006, which used fishery data through 2005. Analysis of recent years CPUE data is difficult due to the large changes in catch distribution brought about by high fuel costs and market conditions. The changes are particularly important in the Japanese longline nominal CPUE that is used for monitoring changes in the albacore spawning biomass. There are year-classes that have appeared to be abundant in surface fisheries, but have yet to appear in the longline fisheries.

Until a new assessment is completed the official finding of the albacore WG is that albacore abundance may have peaked in 2005 and is now declining until another abundant year class enters the fishery. On the plus side it looks like fishing effort may have stabilized and possibly even declined in the most recent years. Basically, there are some conflicting signals in the data and a new stock assessment will be necessary to fully understand the implications of the new data available since the last stock assessment.

A stock assessment was scheduled to be completed next year, but Japan asked for a delay because of staffing problems and not being able to simultaneously assessing bluefin tuna and albacore. So, the current schedule calls for four meetings between March 2010 and March 2011 to prepare and update the stock assessment and to work on related projects such as biological reference points.

1. Regular meeting: 16-23 March 2010 in Shimizu, Japan, to complete fishery definitions and identify indices of SSB
2. Update meeting: 13-14 July 2010 (with ISC10) in Canada, to update fisheries statistics and stock status information
3. Data preparation meeting: 16-29 October 2010 (exact dates depending on the IATTC Science Workshop schedule)
4. Stock assessment workshop: 22-29 March 2011, location to be determined.

In addition to the stock assessment the ALBWG is charged with establishing biological reference points (BRP) for albacore. The ALBAWG was provided with guidance Northern Committee (NC4) on reference points for North Pacific albacore in the form of an interim management objective to maintain the North Pacific albacore spawning stock biomass (SSB) above the average level of its ten historically lowest points (ATHL) with a probability greater than 50%. Based upon the updated analysis, the estimated reference point value for FSSB-ATHL using a 25-yr projection period is 0.75 yr<sup>-1</sup> which is similar to the value of current F (F2002-2004 = 0.75 yr<sup>-1</sup>) estimated in the 2006 stock assessment. Further work is needed to refine BPR estimates and further guidance is required from the Northern Committee to clarify interpretation of reference points as either limit or a target reference points.

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: 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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