

American Fishermen's Research Foundation News ©

AFRF Winter Directors Meeting: The AFRF board of directors met in LaJolla, CA on February 9, 2007. The meeting was immediately after the PFMC - HMSAS and HMSMT met to discuss "current effort" and other issues for the April 2007 PFMC meeting. The board will meet again in Astoria, Oregon on March 27th. Some issues discussed by the board were:

Archival Tagging: To date no new tags have been recovered. SWFSC would like to continue tagging and some funding still may be available. Funding is an issue. However, the main goal of SWFSC is the hiring of a dedicated analyst to process the data so reports can be published when possible. There has been a lag on this issue because of the NMFS/NOAA budget.

Thus, with the hiring of an analyst only one late season coastal charter may be feasible in 2007. This could include 120 tags instead of 60-70 like in the past. This would be coastal but there is a definite need to begin offshore tagging in 2008.

Potential ideas on 2008 tagging operations in the central North Pacific region could include a WFOA dedicated charter to place tags in the North Pacific but would take much time and require substantial funding. Placement of tags using nearshore handline vessels operating close to Hawaii, which would be cost effective but only target possible resident albacore. Use a Hawaii-based longliner to troll in the North with an observer to tag fish, which would also be costly. Support the Japanese with tags and get tags out on Japanese P&L vessels. Logistics maybe a problem with this option but all of these have merit and will be considered before 2008.

Marine Debris Project - Suzy Kohin of SWFSC produced a plan for collecting marine debris, where SWFSC would supply the net and collecting apparatus. The request was for \$75,000 for 10 vessels. It is unclear if this is in the new NMFS budget at this time and she is waiting to hear. This project could possibly be combined with tagging offshore.

Port Sampling - Only three ports were involved in sampling in 2006 and may drop to two or less because of the budget. This is a real problem that should not be happening. Thus, AFRF may be requesting more funding to do more onboard measuring. Many more albacore have been measured in the past couple seasons because of the electronic calipers for dockside applications.

Onboard Sampling - AFRF has 12 measuring troughs in the fleet but many are not being used because boats lack of participation in the albacore fishery in the past two seasons. We request that fishermen with the devices commit to do it in 2007 or turn in the troughs to get them on other vessels. In March AFRF can consider if more need to be built. AFRF will give a \$200/vessel stipend for measuring in 2007.

Electronic Logbooks - John Childers gave an update on his version of electronic logbooks and

AFRF DIRECTORS '2006- 2007'

Mike McGowan
Bumble Bee Seafoods

Kevin McClain
Chicken of the Sea

Eddie Bensen
Star Kist Seafoods

Anthony Vuoso
Tri-Marine
International

Pierre Marchand
Ilwaco Fish Company

Bill Carvalho
Wildplanet, Inc.

Larz Malony
Pacific Seafoods

Wayne Moody
WFOA

Jeremy Brown
WFOA

John LaGrange
WFOA

Stan Davis
WFOA

Lewis Hill
WFOA

Peter Ballantyne
WFOA

Mark Halvorsen
WFOA

Frank Martins
(Special Advisor)

stated some glitches remain, but eventually electronic format would save much manpower and expense in collecting data. Brook George and Nancy Painter from CatchLog gave a presentation on their electronic logbook developed by a fisherman in Australia. They will take on the paper logbooks with them and try to have Catch Log replicate it into a CatchLog -Lite version meeting legal requirements. They will have a representative at the March meeting in Astoria also.

Histamines in albacore - The FDA approach to the issue of vessel record keeping was discussed. At this time the law exempts albacore from onboard record keeping of temps etc. but FDA is pushing it anyway. FDA does not recognize an older OSU study as scientific showing there is no histamine problems in albacore. Larz Malony and Pierre Marchand volunteered at the last meeting to contact the OSU seafood lab to work on this. At this time because of restructuring at FDA and since there will be no guidebook until late 2007 at the earliest, the fish plants maybe able to get by through this season without having to collect information from boats' records at sea. However, it was generally agreed AFRF should keep trying to work with OSU to get a project to satisfy FDA on the fact that albacore troll fish do not have a problem. There was a suggestion that a one page paper be put out for distribution consisting of what has been done on this matter with links to the older OSU study.

Selenium /Mercury - Dr. Nick Ralston gave a presentation on the mercury/selenium connection in seafood and how ocean fish in general have high selenium levels compared to fresh water fish. These high levels of selenium bind mercury in seafood rendering it harmless. He reviewed much research that is ongoing and that has been done as far back as 30 years ago that has not surfaced until now. The bottom line from him is that despite mercury being present in seafood have selenium rich sources also within has shown in lab studies in rats that selenium is a mitigating factor. He is requesting funding for another study upcoming that will cost about \$150,000 and 2/3 of it will be matching funds. He feels once the funding is committed they will be able to perform and publish results with one year. They have also been doing Se research for John Kaneko in Hawaii on 15 marketable species of fish in Hawaii and finding great Se/Hg ratios in most species except maybe the Mako Shark.

The board felt this was a good project to support but since not all the board was present it was determined that Dr Ralstons project be sent to Wayne Heikkila for distribution to the board for review and approval of allocating up to \$50,000 in support of this project for 2007. Also, to reduce the cost to AFRF we could contact other fishing groups for support financially such as the Halibut Association of Alaska, NFI, CFSI, ATA, WFOA etc...**Deadline for commitment of funds would be no later than March 1, 2007.**

Such a project would be of great benefit to many other fisheries besides tunas as the list of good ratios includes 17 species of fish out of the top 25 food products consumed.

MANAGEMENT ISSUES:

Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission: The IATTC met for a week in La Jolla from February 5th through the 9th, with the first two days a full Commission meeting on conservation measures, the second two days on financial matters and the third two days on by-catch issues. While good progress was reported on by-catch issues such as turtles and seabirds, the reports concerning trying to get an agreed formula for the various nations dues and to put the Commission on a firmer financial basis were quite discouraging. The IATTC faces serious

problems because of a failure of several member nations to pay their assessments for the last two years. Despite fairly dire warnings by the IATTC's scientific staff with regard to the health of the yellowfin and bigeye stocks little progress was made in coming up with conservation measures which all countries could agree upon. The U.S. proposed closing a large area of the Pacific near the equator to all fishing for any of the tunas, including skipjack and albacore. On the last day Ecuador announced this would not be acceptable. The annual meeting will be held in Cancun Mexico in June. The utility in attending the annual meeting will depend upon as yet incomplete stock assessments and presently unknown actions by the PFMC or the WPFMC.

Regional Fisheries Management Organizations Meeting in Kobe, Japan: The five major RFMOs which manage tunas in the world's oceans met during the week of January 22nd in the first attempt to coordinate the activities of these organizations in their management of highly migratory species. It was reported that some progress was made in trying to avoid overlapping Commission and scientific committee meetings; setting up an evaluation system to measure the RFMOs's performance; and continuing cooperation in fighting IUU fishing.

Magnuson-Stevens Act 2006 Amendments: At the moment, the last minute passage of these amendments and the re-authorization of the M-S Act, which included implementing legislation for the Western and Central Pacific Fishing Commission, in the waning hours of the last Congress have left the executive branch with their hands too full to come up with immediate interpretations of some of its provisions, particularly in the area of international fisheries. The influence of Senators Stevens and Inouye can be seen throughout the legislation given the special programs and provisions for Alaskans, Hawaiians, and the Pacific Territories. One potential problem for albacore fishermen is the increasing possibility that NMFS will declare North Pacific albacore to be in a state where overfishing is occurring, and that under the Magnuson Act provisions the Councils will be required to pass unilateral management measures which would only effect the U.S. fleet and not their international competitors. While not accepting the exact language offered by WFOA and AFRF to resolve this problem, the Congress did hear our concerns and provided that:

In managing any fisheries under an international fisheries agreement to which the United States is a party, the appropriate Council . . . shall take into account the traditional participation the int fishery, relative to other nations, by fishermen of the United States on fishing vessels of the United States.

The Section goes on to say:

If a relevant fisheries organization does not have a process for developing a formal plan to rebuild a depleted stock, an overfished stock, or a stock that is approaching a condition of being overfished, the provisions of this Act in this regard shall be communicated to and promoted by the United States in the international or regional fisheries organization. (16 U.S.C. 1812)

As a further clarification another section of the amended Act adds a section to that part of the Magnuson Act which talks about overfishing which reads:

The provisions of this subsection shall apply in lieu of subsection (e) to a fishery that the Secretary determines is overfished or is approaching a condition of being overfished due to excessive international fishing pressure, and for which there are no management measures to end overfishing under an international agreement to which the United States is a party. For such

fisheries —

(1) *The Secretary, in cooperation with the Secretary of State, [shall] immediately take appropriate action at the international level to end overfishing; and*

(2) *Within one year after the Secretary's determination the appropriate Council . . . for fisheries under Section 302(a)(3) shall —*

(A) develop recommendations for domestic regulations to address the relative impact of fishing vessels of the United States on the stock, and if developed by a Council shall submit such recommendations to the Secretary; and

(B) develop and submit recommendations to the Secretary of State and to the Congress, for international actions that will end overfishing in the fishery and rebuild the affected stocks, taking into account the relative impact of vessels of other nations and vessels of the United States on the relevant stock.

Hopefully these sections will be interpreted to be clear guidance to Councils that they are not required to take unilateral actions against the U.S. fleet which would put them at a competitive disadvantage.

While there are many other provisions of the amended Magnuson Act which should improve the flexibility of NMFS in managing fisheries and encourage it to pay more attention to the cumulative impacts of their regulations on both the lives and livelihoods of fishermen, much of the effectiveness of these provisions will depend upon how they are interpreted by NMFS and how they are implemented in regulations.

WFOA and AFRF were also successful in encouraging the PFMC to fight to have equal representation with the WPFMC on the U.S. Section for the WCPFC. That is, of the five Commissioners to be appointed by the President, one shall be from the PFMC. Other provisions of the implementing legislation call for the Secretaries of State and Commerce, with respect to highly migratory species in the Pacific, to develop a memorandum of understanding with the three Pacific Councils which will clarify their roles and participation in U.S. delegations to international fisheries organizations.

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AFRF Buyers: The following have signed AFRF contracts, and WFOA members selling to others not listed here are responsible to pay the \$20/st AFRF fees. In reality if you do sell to a non-AFRF buyer they should pay you \$20 more per ton to cover this, otherwise they have a \$20 advantage over all that have signed:

Arrowac Fisheries, Bluewater Fisheries, Bumble Bee Seafoods, Carvalho Fisheries, Chicken of the Sea International, Driscoll's Wharf, Interocean Fisheries, Island Trollers Inc., Jessie's Ilwaco Fish Company, 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, Tri-Marine International.

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