

American Fishermen's Research Foundation News ©

AFRF Board Meeting: The AFRF board met in Astoria, Oregon on April 2, 2008. The board retained it's present officers; President - John LaGrange, Vice - President - Anthony Vuoso, and Secretary - Bill Carvalho. The meeting covered a wide range of issues described below and had present representatives from AAFA as well as a representative from Ecotrust - Ed Backus to discuss cooperation and research.

The board also approved developing the following award from AFRF:

Frank Martins Award:

The board of directors of The American Fisherman's Research Foundation recognizes Frank Martins for outstanding contributions to the knowledge of the Biology, life history and oceanography of the Albacore tuna fishery. The directors further establish an award in his name to be given occasionally to a person in the fishery or the scientific community who has made exceptional contributions to the scientific knowledge and management of albacore tuna. This Award shall be called "The Frank Martins Award" The first recipient of the award shall be Frank Martins.

Resolved this day:
April 2, 2008
Astoria, Oregon

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Archival Tagging: Since AFRF did not deploy any tags in 2007, AFRF and NMFS will be redoubling our efforts in 2008 to deploy the 2007 tags and additional tags again in NW waters. Dr. Gary Sakagawa gave an update to the AFRF board and also presentation at the AGM luncheon showing results of five years of tagging. SWFSC will soon make A complete report public.

Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) did recommend that out of the 105 tags available to deploy in 2008 that approximately half be used in the NW coastal area in September, and the others be deployed by the Hawaiian Handline fleet out of Hawaii earlier this year. The AFRF board disagreed with this concept and recommended two (2) NW charters, one in July and one in September to deploy the tags. Details will be worked out within NMFS. However, if any vessel owner is interested please request an application from AFRF, and turn it in by June 15, 2008. There is a downloadable form on the AFRF website www.afrf.org within informational box on the home page.

Two Tag Vessels Needed: The tagging trips if finalized and approved, would take place in July and September off coastal Oregon and Washington. Compensation will be \$35,000 and the same conditions will apply as follows:

Vessel Requirements for Archival Tagging of Albacore: (SWFSC)

1. Carry and maintain 100 scoops of live bait (anchovies and sardines) for two weeks. Supply crowders,

AFRF DIRECTORS '2008- 2009'
Mike McGowan Bumble Bee Seafoods
Kevin Bixler Chicken of the Sea
Eddie Bensen Star Kist Seafoods
Anthony Vuoso Tri-Marine International (Vice President)
Pierre Marchand Ilwaco Fish Company
Bill Carvalho Wildplanet, Inc. (Secretary)
Larz Malony Pacific Seafoods
Wayne Moody WFOA
Paul Pellegrini WFOA
John LaGrange WFOA (President)
Stan Davis WFOA
Lewis Hill WFOA
Karl Johnson WFOA
Mark Halvorsen WFOA
Frank Martins (Special Advisor)

scoops, and water supply on deck for bait (technician will provide hand scoops and bait bags for chumming and baiting hooks if needed).

2. Water-level access (such as a rack) for transferring hooked fish into a hand-held sling or a suitable alternative for transferring hooked fish to the deck without damage to the fish. Fish cannot be lifted out of the water by the hook and leader.

3. A minimum of two crew members in addition to the captain, at least one of which is experienced in live bait fishing (rod & reel or lift poles).

4. Provide an accessible location near the stern rail to accommodate a tagging cradle (36" long x 20" wide x 12" high) for surgery (see figures below) and a relatively dry area for recording data.

5. Dry storage on deck for toolbox, surgical box (24" long x 12" wide x 12" high)

6. Provide a deck hose that can be adapted to a garden hose with adjustable pressure for irrigating the gills of the fish.

NMFS /AFRF will supply any equipment necessary to complete the project. The NMFS technician will carry insurance.

Deadline for application will be June 15th and the board will make the selection by June 20th. If you have applied in the past please request a new application in case of any updates. Last year since all vessels were qualified, they were chosen by a random drawing, but selection process will be decided by the selection committee made up of AFRF (both fishermen & processor reps), and SWFSC.

Additional: The AFRF board is also having an on-line discussion about the feasibility of combining a fuel subsidy type charter with tagging early. This would be possible given that its an extraordinary year as far as fuel prices and potential lack of early season scouting along the coast. I decision on this will be made soon.

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Onboard Sampling: Vessels measured about 700 albacore last season at sea. SWFSC would like to see that number increase. 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 2008 or turn in the troughs to get them on other vessels. AFRF will contribute a \$200/vessel stipend for measuring in 2008.

Selenium Research Update: Dr. Laurie Raymond spoke on this issue at the spring AGM on April 1, 2008 in Astoria. The research is getting close to being complete and she should have a good update on where it stands at this point. In the December 2008 newsletter there was a good discussion of the selenium research and can be accessed on the AFRF website at: <http://afrf.org/newsletters/afrfnewsdecember2007.pdf>

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Albacore Certification: Is it worth the cost and effort? - By Dr. Vidar Wespestad

As many of you may have noticed, Greenpeace is stepping up efforts to highlight tuna as their new sustainability campaign, part of which was storming and holding tuna associated booths at the European Seafood Show last week in Brussels. Also, Greenpeace isn't any fan of MSC

certification calling for the removal of several MSC certified species like Alaska pollock. So, don't expect any rousing endorsement for MSC certification of albacore from them, and perhaps other "stewardship" organizations; but does the buying public want certified product and at what cost?

I've been involved in several certifications at various levels; and have watched the process evolve, as it will continue to do. Each fishery is unique, and in many cases disconnected from the underlying resource in many confusing ways; but the MSC certification is for individual fisheries because the MSC standard is certification of a fishery and not the resource. The net result of this is that there currently exists a certification for the U.S. Troll and bait boat fishery for the U.S. North Pacific and for the U.S. South Pacific administered by AAFA. However, in the near future look for a Canadian troll fishery certification since the B.C. Provincial Government is committed to certify all B.C. fisheries. There is nothing to prevent any group from seeking a certification for any particular fishery.

I have argued the logic of fishery certification independent of the resource with MSC staff and the need for a more unified approach; however, the MSC position seems to be everyone is welcome to do their own assessment, and they don't want to get involved in certification sharing negotiations. Thus, WFOA is in a position of having to buy into the AAFA assessment, or do a separate certification if WFOA members want to participate in a certification program. Many WFOA members find the AAFA fees to be onerous, and processors have indicated that there may not be enough demand for certified product, and/or the fee structure and providing chain of custody costs may exceed product value.

The current situation facing WFOA members is not unique. The Alaska cod fleet found itself in a similar situation where one company obtained certification, and then tried to force others to pay excessive fees for certification. The net result was the initiation of a second certification for the general cod fishery run by the Alaska Fishery Development Foundation is currently underway.

The issues WFOA members should be weighing seriously include first is determining a clear policy expeditiously as possible. The first of which is certification worth pursuing in the first place? There maybe many reasons for wanting certification, but from a business standpoint the only sensible criteria is does it add value? In my one case the American Fisheries Society offers professional certification for biologists that costs about \$100. If certified, one gets a big embossed diploma; but, since being certified proves no advantage it is mainly sought by professors and bureaucrats to hang on their wall. So, seeking certification evaluation that has to be made individually, and then put into action collectively.

Then there is the question of if the market demands for certified product high enough to justify certification costs; and what of the many certification schemes out there is going to dominate.

From my standpoint of watching the battle of the certifiers is that it's hard at this point to sort or winners and losers since the process is fairly new and evolving. At this point third party certification isn't going away and will likely only increase. People are bombarded daily with failures of government and industries to effectively self regulate; and there is the environmental industry beating the drum for more "accountability". So, I think it's fair to say it isn't a fad, but a continuing trend.

From the standpoint of certification systems; MSC is bogged down in a lot of problems but seems to be correcting and has a big advantage with direct lines to the world's largest retailers

of seafood. Unilever originally set it up to get a means of end running enviro pickets, so I expect that they Walmart and the other mega-chains will remain with MSC as long as MSC can avoid shrinking back into their green roots.

To sum up the issue of certification is contentious, but if members do want to seek certification there are some benefits from certification relating to marketing, and does provide a check on potential resource mismanagement. The recent attempts to establish a tuna certification under IUCN may prove fruitful and cost effective, but there are marketing and access benefits related to MSC, and it may be possible to conduct a cost effective MSC certification.

The downside to certification is that periodic review and recertification may be an ongoing cost; and the certification does not cover chain-of-custody which is another expense associated in the processor to retailer chain.

Another item people should consider is a coop certification. The B. C. Provincial government is committed to certification of all B.C. fisheries. The Hake certification is a joint effort, and the certifier issues 2 certificates because of management differences. Not a big deal. The US-Canada cost split was dictated by quota splits 76:24, and for albacore could be split by reported landings, an interesting issue in itself. Doing a join North American troll -bait boat with Canada could further reduce costs

No certification plan will satisfy everyone, but one that provides economical third party assurance and adds value and sales may be worth pursuing. Certification isn't a fad, but a growing part of marketing. I was in Home Depot yesterday and most of their US and Canadian wood products were tagged certified by the Forest Council.

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American Fishermens' Research Foundation (AFRF) a California Non-Profit Organization, founded in 1971 is involved in cooperative research and public education for troll and pole and line caught albacore tuna. Some of the ongoing cooperative research is archival tagging, selenium research, and management and regulatory issues. Cooperative research is in coordination with NOAA/NMFS. Fees paid to AFRF from processors and fishermen benefit ALL albacore trollers and baitboats from the U.S. and Canada. Most important we have gathered data on albacore for 38 years in order to maintain access to the stocks.

AFRF Contracted Buyers: Arrowac Fisheries, Bluewater Fisheries, Bornstein Seafoods Inc., Bumble Bee Seafoods, Carvalho Fisheries, 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

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