

## American Fishermen's Research Foundation News ©

American Fishermen's Research Foundation (AFRF) is involved in the ongoing stock assessment of North Pacific albacore as well as the management and regulation in both hemispheres of the Pacific ocean. There are initiatives to establish new and uniform Biological Reference Points (BRP's) and possible Harvest Control Rules (HCR's) both at the international and federal levels. Many of these plans and proposals are competing and different, and laced with politics despite sound science.

At considerable expense AFRF continues to represent the U.S. albacore trollers and baitboats at these forums, and continues to be involved in the scientific process through the International Science Committee - Albacore Working Group (ISC-ALBWG). AFRF represents all U.S. albacore trollers and baitboats who are members of WFOA or not, because vessels delivering albacore to AFRF contracted buyers pay the fees.

**Logbooks:** It is extremely import that logbooks either electronic or paper be turned in ASAP! This applies to ALL U.S. vessels that landed albacore, also;

SWFSC / NOAA is renewing the OMB authorization for the albacore logbook and they're requiring feedback prior to the publication in the federal register. They wuld like response this questionnaire by 5-10 captains.

As part of the supporting statements for renewing the Pacific Albacore Logbook information collection, SWFSC is soliciting comments from stakeholders and respondents on:

- The availability of data (This refers to the availability of the logbook data that fishermen submit to SWFSC. This would include any data products that the SWFSC produces that include or are based upon albacore logbook data.)
- The frequency of collection (This refers to how often the information is collected. In the albacore troll fishery, the FMP requires that logbook data be submitted within 30 days of the end of a fishing trip.
- The clarity of instructions and record keeping: (This refers to how easy are the instructions to understand. Do the labels on the fields in the form clearly define what information is to be entered?)
- The clarity of instructions and record keeping
- Disclosure, or reporting format (This refers to the how the data are sent to the SWFSC ie:paper forms, email, etc.)
- The data elements to be recorded (This refers to the values that the fishermen are requested to provide - lat, long, hours fished, weather, etc. Are the elements really needed to be able to manage the fishery or adequately assess the stock?)
- The accuracy of estimated burden (1 hour to complete a logbook for all trips in a year) (Is this an accurate estimate of the time it takes to fill out the form and mail it to SWFSC?)

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Link For Logbook: <http://tinyurl.com/18r>

Please provide your responses to John Childers at: [john.childers@noaa.gov](mailto:john.childers@noaa.gov)

**Electronic Logbooks:** AFRF and WFOA vessels have been requesting a uniform electronic logbook for nearly 10 years. There is a test model that has been used by about 10 boats but NMFS has not produced one acceptable to the fishery or all fisheries yet. AFRF is suggesting that it might be time to approach a private entity that can produce such a logbook and have it available for fishermen. Fishermen could possibly be offered an I-Pad or similar with it already loaded which would probably be cheaper in the long run than the 50k or so spent on paper logbooks annually.

**North Pacific Albacore Archival Tagging Project:** The F/V Her Grace with technicians from SWFSC onboard completed the first tagging charter of 2014 deploying 39 archival tags. AFRF expected to deploy another batch in October on the F/V Royal Dawn but fishing slowed and weather deteriorated fast forcing a cancellation. SWFSC has tags left over and tested ready to deploy and in a conversation AFRF had with SWFSC recently it was decided that one trip with a larger amount of tags be undertaken in 2015, probably in August to insure all get deployed.

A tag that was deployed by the F/V Royal Dawn on October 8, 2011 about 50 miles off the Columbia River. After 1,035 days at sea and traveling 4,257 nautical miles it was recovered by a Chinese longliner about 200 miles north of the equator along the 170 E longitude. The fish was 18 pounds when tagged and 42 pounds when recovered. SWFSC says the data on it is interesting. Also, another tag was recovered in a Spanish cold storage that was deployed off the west coast which we are awaiting information.

Sampling: AFRF is still conducting sampling for otoliths and other information where fish can be set aside at outlets such as Ilwaco Fish Co. And other participating buyers and fishermen are paid for the fish. Fish need to be measured and location recorded and marked before freezing. Sampling kits are available from Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC). Unfortunately we did not get this organized and hardly any fish were brought in by WFOA. Fortunately AAFA did deliver 40 or so. But we want to stress the importance of this for the 2015 season and will be reaching out directly to the boats for participation.

### **Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission -Northern Committee:**

The tenth meeting of the Northern Committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission was held for four days in Fukuoka Japan in September. It was chaired by Masa Miyahara who heads the Japanese Delegation to the WCPFC and who has been the chair of the NC since its inception (and who was re-elected for another 2-year term).

The primary concern for the US albacore fleet was not to lose the progress which had been made at the IATTC meeting in July to bring the IATTC in line with the WCPFC-NC following the scientific lead of the Albacore Working Group of the International Scientific Commission.

A secondary goal was to prevent the PFM from pushing the Northern Committee (NC) out ahead of the available science with regard to biological reference points and harvest control rules. The Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) office of NMFS cooperated with the West Coast Region (WCR) of NMFS in drafting the IATTC resolution, and the Executive Director of the PFM signed off on the draft IATTC resolution.

By the time of the US Delegation meeting in Fukuoka a Canadian draft resolution was available. Although phrased as building on what the US had submitted in September of 2013 to the NC and what the US had submitted to the IATTC, it went well beyond anything the albacore harvesters could live with. There were basically two points: (1) the limit reference point was to be set at

SSB20% and; (2) the target reference point was to be set at F40%. Initially, it was thought this resolution would go nowhere because it was thought the Japanese would not want to move off of the interim limit reference point. Surprisingly, at the first US-Japanese meeting on the side of the NC meeting, the Japanese indicated they could agree to a limit reference point of SSB20%. This was okay, since that is what the ISC scientists had recommended and the US scientists agreed with this.

However, this left the albacore harvesters with the problem of the rest of the Canadian resolution and too conservative F40% target reference point. WFOA/AFRF/AAFA was successful in making the argument that there had been no such recommendation from the ISC or US scientists, however, more importantly, there had been no research into what such a target reference point would mean to the economic viability or the fishery or the US fleet. WCR added support that it was premature to consider agreeing to such a target reference point. The US went into the meeting prepared to agree to a limit reference point, but not the target reference point. Nevertheless, the Canadians continued to push for the target reference point.

One issue brought up by Canada and supported by the US was trying to encourage the Chinese to improve the reporting and completeness of information of their catches and its timely submission. Unfortunately, the Chinese have not attended the last ISC meetings, and have not attended the WCPFC-NC for the last two years.

As has been the case for the last 4 years, the Japanese concern over North Pacific Bluefin took up most of the meeting. The WCPFC-NC will be in Japan again next year. The US offered to host it, however, Miyahara said it would place too much of a burden on the Japanese since they had such a large delegation (audience – about 40 at this meeting).

**PFMC SEPTEMBER MEETING:** The PFMC-HMS-AS met for two days and HMS was discussed on two different days before the full Council. There was not a tremendous amount of discussion of albacore, other than reports made by NMFS on the July Annual Meeting of the IATTC and the September meeting of the WCPFC-NC, which I have already reported on. The Executive Director of the PFMC still expressed concerns that the Council was not involved sufficiently in the discussions of biological reference points and harvest control rules for North Pacific Albacore. The Council “decision summary” relates that “The Council recommended NMFS investigate ways which the Council can be more directly involved in the stock assessment process conducted by the ISC for tuna and tuna-like species in the North Pacific Ocean using SWFSC staff participating on ISC Working Groups as the conduit for information flow.” Basically, the Council was told that neither the ISC nor the Working Groups were the place for fisheries managers, but rather the place for fisheries scientists. If the Council believed it needed to have more involvement it should work through the SSC of the Council.

The HMS-AS asked the Council for two things which do not appear to be reflected in the “Council decisions”. First, to assign the economists from the HMS-MT to develop information on the impact that different target reference points would have on the economics of the fishery and the fleet. Second, to provide for additional meeting time for the HMS-AS. At the September meeting the MT met for three days, whereas the AS met for only two days and at least one half of a day was taken over by having to attend the Council plenary discussion of HMS.

The difficulty has been that there are many issues that impact HMS harvesters such as ecosystem management, amendments to the Magnuson Stevens Act, other legislation, and the management of forage fish, which the HMS-AS does not have time to express its views on before the Council. The HMS-AS and the Council had long discussions on Bluefin tunas. The primary spawning grounds are believed to be close to the coastal waters of Japan. For years Japanese fisheries have taken 0-1 age class fish for their own consumption. Now the Japanese have finally recognized that

this has caused a problem for the stock so they have agreed to cut the take of “juvenile” fish – 60 pounds and less, by 50% over the 2002-2004 levels. The Japanese take by far the largest catch of Bluefin and are the primary market for Bluefin. And yet they push the Koreans, Taiwanese, Mexicans and the US to cut back on their quite small catches. The definition of “juvenile” fish to be 60 pounds and under, apparently proposed by the Japanese and accepted by the ISC and the USG encompass most of the Bluefin caught by the Mexican fisheries and the US sport fleet.

In any event, the US albacore harvesters took the position at the PFMC that the 500 metric ton Bluefin quota for the US commercial fishery should not be reduced and sacrificed due to the past poor behavior of the Japanese. The Japanese need to take the reductions necessary to conserve the Bluefin stocks due to their past overfishing practices, not the US.

Despite arguments to the contrary, the sport fishing representatives agreed to reduce the bag limit for Bluefin from 10 fish per fisherman per day to three. Inexplicably, the Council, with all four California Commissioners voting in favor, decided to reduce the bag limit to two fish per fisherman per day. It has become routine for the Council to ignore the advice of the HMS-AS and HMS-MT and instead turn over the lead on HMS matters to the State of Washington, which of the three west coast states has the least real interest in the fishery.

#### **Lack of Data from Fishing Nations Standing in the Way of Tuna Conservation:**

30 October 2014, 17:56 AEDT - Distant water fishing nations in Asia are continuing to find excuses not to provide the data needed to tell how much fish is being caught in the Pacific. Lack of data from fishing nations standing in the way of tuna conservation (Credit: ABC) Illegal and unreported fishing was one of the main targets of operation Kurukuru, the Forum Fisheries Agency's recently-completed fisheries surveillance operation, which netted a record number of boats in potential breach of their fishing licences. Even on current data, scientists say Pacific bigeye and yellowfin tuna have never been in worse shape and it is known that there are more boats than ever fishing for albacore tuna. In December, more than 30 nations will come together at the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission - the body tasked with protecting the fish stocks - to decide on conservation measures.

Presenter: Jemima Garrett, Speaker: Tima Tupou, Pacific Tuna Industry Association's Executive Officer

**66th Tuna Conference:** Putting the Pieces Together: Integrating Methods for Understanding Large Pelagic Species -First Announcement - October 16, 2014 -All are invited to the 66th Tuna Conference (<http://www.tunaconference.org/>) at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Lake Arrowhead Conference Center (<http://uclaconferencecenter.com/>), Monday through Thursday, May 18-21, 2015. Please share this announcement with any other interested parties.

The annual Tuna Conference is sponsored by the NOAA Fisheries and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, and it attracts an international community of scientists and participants interested in research on tunas and tuna-like species. The Tuna Conference provides an informal forum for the presentation of ongoing research and developing theories, and unique opportunities for stimulating exchanges of views and opinions.

The theme for this year's Tuna Conference will be “Putting the Pieces Together: Integrating Methods for Understanding Large Pelagic Species.”

**AFRF Contracted Buyers:** Bornstein Seafoods Inc., Bumble Bee Seafoods, Chicken of the Sea International, Driscoll's Wharf, High Seas Tuna Inc., 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, Star Kist Seafoods, Starvin Marvin Seafoods, Trident Seafoods, Tri-Marine International, Whole Foods Select Fish, Wild Planet Foods Inc

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