

American Fishermen's Research Foundation News

Tagging: AFRF will continue archival tagging of albacore through 2017. One coastal trip is planned soon for 2016, in September for deployment of 85 tags. Tags will again be deployed in the NW unless since there is no sign of albacore in S California in which case some could and should be deployed there.

Tag Rewards: Fishermen, unloaders, buyers, and processors need to be aware of potential tags in the albacore. A \$500 reward will be paid for recovered fish. Check out www.afrf.org under the menu item "Tagging" for more information and graphics. More than 1,000 albacore have been tagged since 2001 with at least 200 tagged in the past two seasons. The reward is \$500/fish. Retain whole fish even if you suspect it's a tag. For More Information See: <http://tinyurl.com/myho44q>

Bio-Sampling: Five or six boats are taking part in this program again this season. This has seen good results and only requires fishermen to save at random 4-5 fish per trip and mark them with informational tags from SWFSC. Then the fish need to be offloaded and saved at participating companies until SWFSC picks them up. Boats are compensated for the albacore at \$5/fish more than dock prices. AFRF may expand this in the future to include a fin sampling for DNA project.

International Management - Peter Flournoy

As you might recall the IATTC at its annual meeting in June basically made no decisions whatsoever with regard to the conservation and management of tropical tunas, bluefin, or albacore. Rather, all such decisions and discussions were put off to a resumed meeting scheduled for late October, with one exception. The IATTC did accept an invitation from Japan (generated I believe by a request from the United States) that immediately preceding the WCPFC Northern Committee meeting in Fukuoka, Japan at the end of August, the WCPFC and the IATTC would meet to discuss "Pacific wide" management and conservation measures for North Pacific Bluefin Tuna. The thinking at the IATTC annual meeting was that those member countries, specifically the U.S. and Mexico would not have to make any further cuts to their bluefin catches until after August, and perhaps not even then if Japanese actions taken under the Northern Committee were inadequate.

The end of July saw the International Scientific Committee's 2016 bluefin assessment officially released. Generally, it indicates, due to certain improvements in the model, that the bluefin population is slightly larger than previously thought and that it stopped its decline in 2014, even before 2015 and 2016 measures were put into effect. Nevertheless, the biomass of the stock does remain at close to all-time lows, and the amount of fishing mortality compared to the stock spawning biomass is considerably above MSY. However, while it is fairly clear that further cuts in fishing effort may be needed, the primary discussions should be by whom and where. My reading of the 2016 Assessment is that there are about 4-5 Japanese fleets that take huge numbers of 0-1 age fish. There are also at least two other Japanese fleets which take large numbers of spawners. The assessment statistics show quite clearly that the 3-5 year olds taken by the U.S. and Mexican fleets, in addition to being a small percentage of the overall take, have little or no impact on the stock.

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Leading up to the August meeting of the NC of the WCPFC the Japanese press has been full of stories about how Japan will cut back on the catch of young bluefin fish, however, the proposal Japan has submitted in advance of the meeting makes no mention of taking immediate action. Instead it suggests setting up an emergency rule ties to changes in the recruitment rate of the stock. Discussions with US scientists have indicated that while the recruitment rate of the bluefin stock can be measured, changes to it so far can only be measured in very broad terms. Thus without further explanation the Japanese proposal appears to be another smoke screen to allow Japanese fisheries to continue to harvest at close to current rates, while the Japanese seek to have other countries restrain their fisheries.

U.S. bluefin harvesters have been pressuring NOAA/NMFS to restore the U.S. catch limit to the 500 metric tons that it was in 2014. However, so far NMFS/NOAA seems to be caught up in their unscientific philosophy that all fishermen must “contribute” to the conservation of the stock by reducing fishing effort, regardless of the lack of impact such reductions will have on the health of the stock.

Why is this at all relevant to albacore fishermen? The situation of the north Pacific albacore stocks is the same as that of the north Pacific bluefin stocks. The known spawning grounds of both species are in the western north Pacific. The Japanese fish on the younger albacore, just as the U.S. and Canadians do, however, they also fish on the spawners which after a sojourn to the eastern Pacific, return to waters off Japan. I believe if there is a noticeable drop in the catch of either of the Japanese fisheries, Japan will put pressure on the eastern Pacific fisheries to reduce their catch, whether that makes scientific sense or not. So there can be lessons learned from the bluefin scenario.

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Logbooks: All U.S. vessels fishing HMS are required to fill out logbooks and return them to John Childers, SWFSC, 8604 LaJolla Shores Dr., LaJolla, CA 92037-1508 within 30 days if landed in the U.S. Logbooks are available as are e-log options. For Information call 858.546.7192 or john.childers@noaa.gov.

E-Logbooks: The board passed a motion passed to allocate funding for production of thumb drives containing the electronic log book and distribute it to the fleet if fishermen want to use the program instead of paper logs. NOAA has not yet produced an updated version, but the old version does work with most operating systems. The current version of the albacore logbook and users guide on website: <http://tinyurl.com/mvj45xh>

American Fishermen’s Research Foundation (AFRF) founded in 1971, 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. At considerable expense AFRF continues to represent the U.S. albacore trollers and baitboats at management and scientific 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 in maintaining research and data collection that benefits ALL U.S. albacore vessels. AFRF is funded by a per ton assessment paid by AFRF contracted buyers. AFRF also secures research grant funding in cooperation with NOAA/NMFS for items such as archival tagging expenses.

AFRF Contracted Buyers: Bornstein Seafoods Inc., Bumble Bee Seafoods, Chicken of the Sea International, Driscoll's Wharf, Hag Fish LLC, High Seas Tuna Inc., InterOcean Fisheries, Island Trollers Inc., Jessie's Ilwaco Fish Company, JK Fisheries, Ilwaco Landing LLC, Oregon Seafoods, Pacific Seafood Group, Papa George Gourmet Albacore, Pelican Packers Inc., Seafood Producers Co-op, Star Kist Foods, Trident Seafoods, Tri-Marine International, Wild Planet Foods Inc

AFRF Appreciates the new buyers signing AFRF contracts, Hagfish LLC, and Oregon Seafoods LLC both from the Coos Bay/Charleston. OR area.

Check Us Out At: WWW.AFRF.ORG