

# American Fishermen's Research Foundation News

**Archival Tagging 2019:** AFRF along with Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) may be able to deploy 60 tags in the coming month or so. This would most likely be carried out off Oregon if there is access to larger albacore. It has been disappointing that we have not been able to tag albacore over the past couple of seasons when ocean conditions were interesting and may show more than the past migration pattern noted from past tags that were recovered.

We do not have a good indication where that tagging will go after this season. SWFSC may have a new and different direction and it is still confusing given the personnel changes at the center to determine. Old style dart tags may be utilized in the future as they are cheap and easy to deploy in great numbers. There is some discussion on using pop-up tags which would be great but albacore tend to be too small and their flesh softer than other tuna species to hold the implanted tag. That has been also a concern with the archival tags and slow recovery rates.

## BIO-SAMPLES:

WFOA/AFRF will use the services of four albacore boats this season to collect about 15-20 fish at random this season and probably next. These will be used primarily for otolith sampling at the SWFSC and other research. The science people involved seem to like the information collected by these projects and they are easy to do for the boats and buyers holding the fish.

## INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION MEETINGS: By Peter Flournoy

**Inter American Tropical Tuna Commission, Bilbao, Spain:** The IATTC met from July 22 through July 26 and passed resolutions, two of which are of interest albacore troll and pole and line fisheries. The first was a resolution on sea turtles (C-19-04) which initially would have required the NMFS to send all albacore vessel operators and crew for training on how to resuscitate turtles. This unnecessary potential training was averted by having that requirement rewritten to read:

Ensure that vessel operators and/or at least one crew member on board vessels targeting species covered by the Convention *in fisheries that have reported sea turtle interactions*, And particularly those without observers, are trained in techniques for handling and release of sea turtles to improve survival after release.

The italicized language was inserted to avoid the measure being applied to U.S. troll and pole and line vessels since NMFS was certain that no such interactions had been reported for the West Coast albacore fleet.

The second resolution related to the observer and notification measures for transshipping on the high seas. The current resolution in force exempts the albacore troll and pole and line fleet from these measures. The EU proposed amending this resolution, but in a manner which would have

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made no changes to this exemption. Ecuador also proposed to amend the current transshipping resolution; however, it would have limited the exemption to albacore vessels less than 24 meters. There has been confusion as to which measure was passed and checking the IATTC website as late as August 18<sup>th</sup> revealed that the final text had yet to be posted.

Another matter left hanging at the very end of the meeting about 11pm on Friday was whether the IATTC meeting of 2020 would be held in Columbia or Ecuador. Depending upon the outcome of the WCPFC-NC-IATTC meeting in Portland, OR this September on bluefin, there may be an extraordinary meeting of the IATTC scheduled in the Fall of 2019 in La Jolla.

**Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Northern Committee and IATTC Joint Meeting:** For the last three years the Northern Committee, chaired by the Japanese, and the IATTC, represented by former PFMC Chair Dorothy Lohman, have been meeting to resolve conservation and management of North Pacific Bluefin tuna. These meetings have been fairly informal, although this year detailed minutes and other formalities are likely to be followed. However, with the Joint WCPFC-NC/IATTC meeting at the same time and venue of the WCPFC-NC meeting, the structure of the WCPFC-MC meeting has gotten complex. The primary interest for albacore fishermen is the WCPFC-NC meeting which will start on September 3, but then almost immediately adjourn until Thursday afternoon and Friday. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday morning will be devoted primarily to bluefin issues, however, that does not necessarily mean that albacore issues will not be discussed on the margins.

Issues of continuing importance for albacore fishermen will be setting a Target Reference Point (TRP) for albacore, based on the work to date on the Management Strategy Evaluation work which has been going on for two years, but which is still incomplete. In addition, the Canadians have pushed the idea, apparently accepted by NMFS, there should be a “threshold” reference point, which precedes the TRP, and which will be a point that management action will be taken as the fleet approaches the TRP. To this writer such a “threshold” reference point is unnecessary since the TRP is the point where the fleet should be fishing, so what is it that requires management action before that, if the TRP is not exceeded. One can only assume the managers, similar to their liking of the precautionary approach, like a point at which they can take action so the target reference point is not exceeded to bring fishing closer to the Limit Reference Point (LRP). It is possible I have misunderstood where the threshold reference point would be placed, and instead it might be placed between the TRP and the LRP. While this would make more sense, in either case the placement of the “threshold” reference point has now become as important as placing the TRP which is the subject of the MSE process.

Another subject of importance which wasn't fully discussed at the IATTC despite the efforts made by the fleet to get a resolution which would limit any further movement of the Chinese longline fleet targeting albacore into the North Pacific, is how to obtain correct and timely data on all countries' fleets which target or incidentally take albacore in the North Pacific – both in terms of catch and effort. Because both the WCPFC-NC and the IATTC have Treaty Areas which encompass parts of the North Pacific, obtaining reliable data between the two organizations has been extremely difficult.

Finally with Canada at the WCPFC-NC meeting it is a good opportunity to discuss issues relating to the Treaty fishing regime and its future, and the prospect for cooperative scientific research into the decrease in the albacore catch in the eastern North Pacific and the overall decline in catches throughout the North Pacific over the last several years.

With the meeting being in Portland, OR (the first time the NC has met outside of Japan) there will be several albacore fishermen and their representatives at the meeting.

**WCPFC-SC Meeting in Pohnpei, FSM, August 12-20, 2019:** This meeting is ongoing, and while we did not send our Scientific Adviser there, he is present on someone else's dime. He has reported briefly on South Pacific albacore discussions, and there are several papers on the management of that fishery aimed at achieving the TRP over the next 20 years. While this seems a little esoteric, we need to pay attention to these developments, especially since fishing in the south was better last year than it has been. We also continue to fight to keep open our right to transship on the high seas recognized by the WCPFC Treaty. Unfortunately, NMFS has not gone through the administrative process to make that right a reality. Apparently, NMFS is also determining that the transfer of fish from one fishing vessel to another, as opposed to the usual definition of transshipping as transferring fish from a fishing vessel to a carrier, will be imposed in the South Pacific. These issues need to be thoroughly discussed with the PIRO office of NMFS.

On August 20<sup>th</sup> the SC15 noted that no stock assessments were conducted for North Pacific albacore in 2019. Therefore, the stock status descriptions from SC13 are still current for North Pacific albacore. Updated information on catches was not compiled for and reviewed by SC15.

The next scheduled Stock Assessment for the NP ALB is 2021. I think that will be a benchmark assessment, meaning new and not just updated, but not positive.

**U.N. Treaty Negotiations on Biological Resources In Areas Beyond National Jurisdictions (BBNJ):** These negotiations begin on August 20, 2019 for two weeks at the UN in New York City. For fishermen the primary issues are: (1) guarantee this proposed body does not impinge on the authority of the RFMOs to manage HMS fisheries throughout their range; and (2) avoid the proliferation of Marine Protected Areas which could be established by this entity. Glenn Delaney, representing the American Tunaboat Association and An East Coast fishing association, has been following these negotiations over the last couple of years and has strongly advocated on behalf of fishermen. Most recently, WFOA, AFRF, AAFA, and HLA have come to understand the potential danger of these negotiations and have their views made known to the U.S. Delegation (which as far as this writer can tell has had no fishing representatives on the U.S. Delegation – the U.S. Delegation for these current negotiations I was told cannot be released to the public). Until July of 2019 there had just been several nebulous ideas being floated around by ENGOs, however, now there is a rough draft treaty text. While albacore fishing representatives had attended “public session” conference calls (1 last year and 1 this year) requests for the State Department to state a clear USG position have gone unanswered. Most recently we were told there was no “white paper” stating the U.S. positions, nor would one be forthcoming before this year’s negotiating session, however, we were invited to listen to 20-hours of statements made by the U.S. over the last two negotiating sessions to divine what the U.S. position has been and is.

**Electronic Logbooks:** From NMFS - The operator of any commercial fishing vessel and any recreational charter fishing vessel for highly migratory species in the management area must maintain onboard the vessel an accurate and complete record of catch, effort, and other data on report forms provided by the Regional Administrator or state agency. All information specified on the forms must be recorded on the form within 24 hours after the completion of each fishing day. The original logbook form for each day of the fishing trip must be submitted to either the Southwest Fisheries Science Center or the appropriate management state agency within 30 days of each landing or transshipment of the highly migratory species. Each form must be signed and dated by the fishing vessel operator.

E-Log Information and Download Link: <https://tinyurl.com/y6kpsrcr>

**Subject: Update on the Albacore Genomics Project**

From: Kathleen O Malley

I just wanted to let you know that my postdoc, Felix Vaux, is scheduled to present the results of our albacore population genomics project on Thursday, October 31st at 3:30 pm in the Library Seminar Room at the Hatfield Marine Science Center. The seminar is open to the public so feel free to share this information with others.

If you are unable to attend in person, the seminar will be streamed. I will send out a link a week or so before the 31st.

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**Upcoming Meetings With Albacore Issues:**

Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC) - Sept 12-16, 2019, Boise, ID

WCPFC - Northern Committee - September 2-6, 2019 - Portland, OR

Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC) - November 13-20, 2019, Costa Mesa, CA

WCPFC Regular Session - December 5-11, 2019 - Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

AFRF Contracted Buyers: Bornstein Seafoods Inc., Bumble Bee Seafoods, C2C Premium Seafood, Chicken of the Sea International, Da Yang Seafood, Driscoll's Wharf, Garibaldi Landing Fishermen, Hag Fish LLC, High Seas Tuna Inc., Interocean Fisheries, Island Trollers Inc., Albers / Jessie's Ilwaco Fish Company, JK Fisheries, J. DeLuca Fish Co., Ilwaco Landing Fishermen, Manabe & Co LLC, Oregon Seafoods, Pacific Seafood Group, Papa George Gourmet Albacore, Pelican Packers Inc., Seafood Producers Co-op, Star Kist Foods, Trident Seafoods, Tri-Marine Fish Company, Westport Seafood Inc, Wild Planet Foods