

American Fishermen's Research Foundation News (AFRF)©

Given that it is a slow time of the year, information on AFRF, its history, and a summary of projects AFRF has funded since 1971 would be appropriate for the membership. Also, I have attached on pages 3 and 4 the U.S. 2015 albacore landings and market prices per port from the March 2016 PFMC briefing book, and NOAA's 2017 Budget Request Highlights for your interest.

How AFRF was founded is well described in the below segment by AFRF President John LaGrange.

History of The American Fisherman's Research Foundation

The American Fisherman's Research Foundation (AFRF) was organized shortly after the founding of the Western Fishboat Owners Association in the early 1970s. The vision of Frank Martins, the first president of AFRF, was to facilitate cooperative research between the albacore fishing industry and research scientists. The goal of that research was to provide information that would lead to a consistent, and increased, supply of Albacore to the west coast fishery. Since that supply would benefit both fishermen and fish buyers, the board of AFRF was set up to equally represent both sides of the industry.

The focus of AFRF research projects in the first two decades was exploratory fishing and efforts to predict the distribution and abundance of albacore. The results of this research included the development of the Midway and South Pacific offshore troll fisheries, the use of oceanographic and satellite data to locate albacore, and the accumulation of logbook data that documented catch and effort in the fishery for many years. During those years there were also predictions issued before the season, exploratory charters, fish reports during the season, and satellite imagery and weather information provided to the fleet.

By the end of the 20th century the political climate and the needs of the fishery had changed. It had become obvious to many that the major problem facing the fleet was no longer locating good fishing grounds. In the face of increasing restrictions in all fisheries, maintaining access to the resource would be the biggest challenge going forward. Policy changes at the federal and international levels meant that fisheries could be restricted not on the basis of information showing depletion, but just for lack of information showing the health of the stock. It is vital to the fishermen's interest that good data and good science is available and is used in management decisions. Fortunately, much of the previous and ongoing work of AFRF provides information that is used for stock assessment. At this point the main focus of AFRF is to continue to provide good data inputs for the management process, and to have representation present, both during the scientific process and the political process, to insure that policy decision are based on good science.

Although the marketing of albacore on the west coast has changed considerably, the fact that both fishermen and fish buyers are dependent on a reliable supply of fish has not changed. Whatever friction exists between the two sides of the industry does not change this shared interest. It is this shared interest that has held AFRF together for more than 40 years, and it has been limiting AFRF activities to projects that benefit both segments of the industry that have allowed this unlikely coalition to survive.

*John La Grange
President, AFRF*

Almost all of AFRF has been funded by industry contributions from fees of fish landed. The exception is NOAA funding for a segment of the archival tagging

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during the past decade. AFRF also spends on representation at international and federal management and scientific meetings. Since 1995 AFRF has spent nearly 1.5 million albacore industry generated dollars on these efforts in order to maintain fleet access to the resource.

Next board of Directors Meeting: The next AFRF meeting of the board of directors will be on Wednesday, March 23, 2016 at the Hallmark Resort in Newport, Oregon. Future tagging, cooperative research with NOAA, possible scholarship initiatives and public outreach are some of the agenda items. As always AFRF is open to new ideas and thoughts concerning projects that would benefit U.S. albacore industry through science and education.

67 th Annual Tuna Conference:

This announcement is to remind you about our invitation to attend the 67th Tuna Conference (<http://www.tunaconference.org/>) Monday through Thursday, May 16-19, 2016. The conference will be at its traditional venue at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Lake Arrowhead Conference Center (<http://uclaconferencecenter.com/>). In order to secure our venue and lodging, we must receive your registration no later than January 13, 2016. Please, R.S.V.P. by this date or before. Please share this announcement with any other interested parties and refer to our webpage www.tunaconference.org for detailed information.

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.

This year's theme will be "Tuna Trials and Tribulations: Is all hope lost?" Recent stock assessments, direct counts, and casual observations have indicated that tuna and tuna-like species have declined to critically low levels and face an increased risk of extinction if current trends continue. Yet, after decades of high landings and increased global demand, they are still among the most persistent species of the sea. This leaves one to speculate that tuna and tuna-like species may possess certain traits which make them resilient to high levels of fishing pressure. This year's Tuna Conference will focus on the population status of these fishes and their unique biological, physiological, and behavioral traits that may help or hinder their ability to withstand the enormous pressure exerted upon them and, ultimately, if all hope is lost for future of these species. However, as always, we welcome presentations on tuna and tuna-like species whether they conform to the theme or not!

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 US 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, High Seas Tuna Inc., Interocean Fisheries, Island Trollers Inc., Jessie's Ilwaco Fish Company, JK Fisheries, Ilwaco Landing LLC, Pacific Seafood Group, Papa George Gourmet Albacore, Pelican Packers Inc., Seafood Producers Co-op, Star Kist Foods, Starvin Marvin Seafoods, Trident Seafoods, Tri-Marine International, Wild Planet Foods Inc

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