

American Fishermen's Research Foundation News

Note from the AFRF President: "As the newly elected President of American Fisherman's Research Foundation with those reports come a new, to me, line of thought regarding this summers tagging charters and how the sample collection will go this year. Though the charters for tagging fish are already contracted, we always appreciate more samples from more areas. If you want to help out in that way get a hold of Wayne at (530) 229-1097. Good luck this year, stay safe and maybe I'll see you on the grounds." Rick Goche, F/V Peso II

Tagging: AFRF will continue archival tagging of albacore through at least 2017. One or two coastal trips are planned for 2016, in August and later. SWFSC has 10 tags that they have to send back to the factory to repair, but have ordered 75 additional tags due for delivery in August. This will make 85 available for the 2016 tagging project. AFRF may fund purchase for a few more tags. Tags will again be deployed in the NW unless there is a sign of albacore in SoCal in which case some will be deployed down there.

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: 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. If interested contact AFRF.

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>

A link to this site can also be found on the WFOA website at www.wfoa-tuna.org under the "Permits" and "Fish Reports" menus. Also, on that link a downloadable user manual is available.

International Management: By Peter Flournoy

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ISC Albacore Working Group Meeting May 24-25, 2016: This meeting was held in Yokohama and consisted of primarily fisheries managers and scientists, although there were two representatives from the U.S. harvesters and I believe several from the Japanese, however, most of their backgrounds were in bluefin, and not albacore.

I could not at this time send out the “not for distribution” 8 page report, however, I think it might help to boil down some of the verbiage. The first important point is that it is anticipated that this will only be the first of several meetings and reports on MSE for albacore. Secondly, while I will go through the “objectives” that the meeting settled on, neither the Northern Committee (NC) nor the stakeholders are committed to these objectives because it is expected that there will be modifications to the current set of objectives based on information from the initial evaluations. It was repeatedly emphasized that this was a continuing process with repeated consultations between harvesters, managers, and scientists.

There were five management objectives put together during the meeting. Objective six was added later by the Albacore Working Group (AWG). They are:

1. Maintain Spawning Biomass (SSB) above the limit reference point (LRP);
2. Maintain the total biomass with reasonable variability (within x%), around the average depletion level in the [most] recent 10 years of the latest stock assessments [full assessments are normally done every 3 years];
3. Maintain harvest ratios by fishery (fraction of the SSB harvested) current average;
4. Maintain catches by fishery above average historic catch;
5. Limit the magnitude of change to effort or catch to less than 15% at any one time due to management actions by fishery;
6. Maintain F [fishing mortality] at the target value [target reference point?] with reasonable variability.

One thing that should be noted here is that we were able to get the managers to move off this idea that an objective should be to maintain catches at the same level every year even as the biomass or stock increased. Rather than put a cap on catches by setting an average, the use of average in this list of objectives is to maintain catch above the historic average and to maintain the same relationship between the surface fleets. and the longline fleets as there are today, whether the stock, and therefore the allowable catch goes up or down. We also did not want to face a situation where management measures reduced catch by more than 14% (objective 5). Also Objective 6 indicates that even when a target reference point is set the actual catch can vary around that point within reason – sometimes higher and sometimes lower, but not constrained by management because catch is higher than the target level for several years. Hopefully, we built in the same flexibility in Objective 2.

Another part of the report that could use more clarity is under “Operational Objectives”, which is the same as saying measurable objectives, so they can be evaluated as to their effectiveness. Here the three basic things needed are to set a target reference point, set a limit reference point, figure over what period of time you are going to measure changes to the stock, and third, how much risk on is willing to take in achieving those objectives. Believe it or not, scientists have actually come up with word descriptions to go with various risk levels. I will not repeat all of them here, but as examples:

95% risk means almost certain;
85% risk means highly likely;
75% risk means likely; and
65% risk means better than even.

Unfortunately, while the MSE workshop had filled in a column under “risk” as to what an acceptable risk was in achieving the various objectives, that column seems to have disappeared from the most recent chart (attached). Also, there had been a column labeled “period of measurement” which now appears to have been morphed into the column labeled “Example Output” by the AWG. The important thing to note here however is that the evaluation of methods to get to the management objectives will be measured over a 30-year span which is two or three generations of albacore. This should allow for normal fluctuations in albacore abundance without a variation in abundance necessitating a dramatic management measure.

There are many other aspects of the report and the accompanying chart which clearly need more explanation from the scientists, and it is unfortunate that the AWG changed columns and entries subsequent to the MSE workshop having adjourned.

One final note is that the Japanese started down their favorite road of making exceptions for “artisanal” fisheries. That is why the report contains a quite detailed definition of artisanal and subsistence fishing. All participants in the albacore fishery should be subject to the same rules, and if there are going to be exceptions to the rules for “artisanal” fisheries they need to be well defined.

Pacific Fisheries Management Council June Meeting and IATTC Annual Meeting: Since the PFMC meeting from June 21st to June 28th overlaps with the Annual IATTC meeting from June 25th to July 1st, it is unlikely that the Council will make any recommendations to the US Delegation to the IATTC, although the US proposed resolutions may well be discussed by the HMSAS when it meets on the 21st to the 24th. The primary discussions at the Council meeting will focus on exempted fishing permits and reports on the effectiveness of deep-set buoy gear which is being used to catch swordfish. There is little that on the surface appears that it will impact the albacore fishery. The same seems to be true for the IATTC Annual meeting where the major issues will be bluefin, choosing a new executive director for the IATTC, and a new management and conservation measure for the tropical tunas (skipjack, yellowfin and bigeye).

The staff has not recommended any changes to the current albacore resolution. It is my view that we should watch the developments in the North Pacific bluefin fishery closely as a model of what could happen in the future with the albacore fishery, particularly if the Japanese longline catch of albacore declines. With bluefin, even though the Japanese years of catching 0-1 bluefin have caused the problem, when their longline catch of bluefin declined, they have been successful in forcing the U.S. and Mexican fleets to drastically reduce their catch of bluefin in the EPO (40% for the U.S. commercial fleet). It is again, my view, that the measures taken in the IATTC and the NC of the WCPFC, because of Japanese scientific sleight of hand, have not been focused on the real problem fisheries, which are Japanese.

WCPFC SC, TCC, NC, and PAC Meetings: These meetings will occur in July, late August, and the PAC will be in October as usual. The most important of these will be the SC and the NC meetings because of the likelihood that attempts will be made to set harvest control rules and target reference points for both North and South albacore. Also there are rumors that some ENGOs, and perhaps the Pacific Islanders, will try and change the current South Pacific albacore conservation and management resolution (there does not appear to be any desire in the IATTC to change its North Pacific albacore resolution). Thus far in the South Pacific we have been successful in separating our surface fishery from the longline fisheries. The problem is that the WCPFC has to do something to curb Chinese

longline albacore fishery, and in the past their solution, rather than cutting down the sale of licenses to the Chinese, has been to close the high seas, which would put the US fleet out of business. Again here so far we have been successful in arguing that this should only apply to the longline fishery, not the surface fishery.

Implementing the Port State Measures Agreement - On June 5, 2016, the Port State Measures Agreement entered into international force, marking a major milestone in the effort to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing as called for by the Presidential Task Force. Below, NOAA Fisheries examines the Agreement, its anticipated impacts, and steps for implementation.

What is the Port State Measures Agreement? The Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing is an agreement that seeks to prevent IUU fishing through the adoption and implementation of effective port state measures as a means of ensuring the long-term conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources. The intention is that the Agreement will be applied widely and effectively by countries, in their capacities as port States, to vessels not entitled to fly their flags that are seeking entry to, or are in, a country's ports.

How does the Agreement help combat IUU fishing? IUU fishing is a global problem that threatens ocean ecosystems and sustainable fisheries. IUU fishing includes violations of conservation and management measures, such as those establishing quotas or bycatch limits, established under the domestic laws of coastal nations and international agreements related to high seas and shared fish stocks. Since all fish must come to port to enter into trade, preventing vessels carrying illegally harvested fish from accessing ports around the world is an effective way to prevent and deter IUU fishing. Denying port entry and access to port services, and consequently preventing illegal seafood from entering trade, increases the costs associated with IUU fishing operations and removes the financial incentives for engaging in these activities.

This Agreement does not solely focus on IUU fishing vessels. It also requires action against vessels that engage in supportive activities such as refueling or transshipping fish from IUU fishing vessels at sea.

With the Agreement in force, will there be better data available on IUU fishing? One of the major provisions of the Agreement is increased information sharing and communications among participating nations, relevant enforcement agencies, and relevant international organizations such as RFMOs. The increased information sharing called for by the Agreement, combined with other international initiatives to combat IUU fishing, will increase the data available on vessels engaged in IUU fishing or IUU fishing related activities. . .

For full story see: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ole/about/implementing_psma_faq.html

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, 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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