

## American Fishermen's Research Foundation News

The board of directors of AFRF met in Astoria, Oregon on Wednesday, March 29, 2017 at the Holiday Inn Express in Astoria. The board reviewed the projects about to begin such as Stephanie Snyders work with past and new tagging data collected from the archival tags. David Itano also attended and is embarking on his science consulting work with AFRF. Gerard DiNardo, Ph.D. - Director, Fisheries Resources Division NMFS-Southwest Fisheries Science Center also attended.

The board took much of this meeting doing catching up on AFRF budget issues for the future. Rick Goche was re-elected President, Christa Svensson - Vice President, and Bill Carvalho - Secretary/Treasurer. A budget committee and science committee were also formally established.

The processors on the AFRF board are still in the process of holding elections for the buyer segment of the board which is to happen every year. ARF will always entertain new processor board members who show interest in serving. Let AFRF know and we can distribute your name to the board for consideration now or in the future to serve on the board.

**Tag Data Processing:** The board previously adopted Stephanie Snyder's project as detailed in the March 2017 AFRF newsletter. Most of the discussion was technical and budgetary in nature. However this project will soon begin and provide the American Fishermen's Research Foundation with analytical reports and presentations of data collected through the Albacore Archival Tagging Program. By collaborating with members of AFRF and scientists at NOAA, she will bring to this project her experience with both movement data and remote sensing data to deliver timely first looks at newly recovered tags as well as in depth analysis to understand patterns across fish. In addition to the analysis, she will advocate for the continued funding of the tagging program through annual program productivity reports to the Southwest Fisheries Science Center.

**Objectives -** The proposed services will address the following needs (From March):

- ✦ News & Updates: A prompt "first look" into the tracks and behavior of new recoveries as well as reports on deployment trips.
- ✦ Insights into albacore behavior: Scientific analysis of the tagging data that provides an understanding of albacore diving behavior and migration within the context of dynamic oceanographic conditions.
- ✦ Program promotion & funding: Promotion of the importance of the tagging program to the management of the albacore fishery.

This project will require considerable funding which usually comes from our processor's contributions which depends on catch and tonnage. AFRF has also contributions committed from the Central California Cable Committee, Oregon Albacore Commission, and probably some from NOAA/NMFS - SWFSC. There

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will be a few other sources we are exploring, but AFRF generally agrees we would rather not continually depend on awards and grants except in the short term. AFRF will encourage all buyers to sign up with AFRF. The present AFRF contracted buyers are listed at the bottom of page 4. Besides the tagging data project AFRF has as mentioned in the prior newsletter hired David Itano as a science consultant to oversee processes such as the ISC ALBWG North Pacific albacore stock assessment and the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE). David wrote a brief report below on the recent ALBWG meeting in LaJolla. More information will be available later as most is confidential right now. The stock assessment on North Pacific albacore will wrap up in mid-July in Vancouver, BC.

#### Albacore Working Group – Intersessional Workshop (Stock Assessment): David Itano

The ALBWG met in La Jolla, CA in mid-April 2017 to develop and complete a new stock assessment for north Pacific albacore. The work was carried out by scientists from Canada, China, Chinese Taipei, Japan, USA and the IATTC. AFRF was represented by its science advisor, David Itano who has been endorsed as a member of the US delegation to the ALBWG, replacing Dr. Vidar Wespestad who retired in 2016.

The effort went beyond an update of the previous model (2014) and incorporates some revised inputs, assumptions and model structure. After examining available data and estimated abundance trends the working group agreed to focus on building a stable, scientifically robust base model that can be improved over time as additional data becomes available. However, the new model incorporated some important improvements that more accurately represent albacore fisheries and life history traits.

Note that details of the assessment and recommendations are considered confidential to the ALBWG at this time. The report of the working group and model results are preliminary until reviewed and approved by the ISC in July 2017. A full reporting of the model results, approved research projects and management recommendations will then be made available.

During the workshop, research recommendations were drafted and approved to be addressed on an ongoing basis building up to the next formal development of the stock assessment (2019). Most of the proposed research projects will examine data quality issues or improved data collection with some initial exploration into the use of tagging data and the role of ocean productivity on albacore catchability and stock dynamics. Management Strategy Evaluation and an MSE work plan was also discussed in preparation for the MSE workshop scheduled for Vancouver, Canada in October 2017.

The ALBWG will meet briefly in July 2017 prior to the ISC Plenary to review the stock assessment presentation and results. It was noted that the current ALBWG Chair, Dr. John Holmes will be retiring from the group at that time, requiring the election of a new WG Chair. The final report and recommendations of the April ALBWG stock assessment workshop will then be discussed and adopted at the ISC Plenary in Vancouver, Canada (12-17 July 2017).

#### Update on Albacore Troll Electronic Logbook (ELog) Development - John Childers.

The SWFSC and AFRF continue to seek a solution for an updated version of the albacore troll elog. Using in-house resources at SWFSC and funding obtained from the FIS program at NMFS headquarters, staff have developed a fillable PDF form that captains can use offline and submit directly to SWFSC at the end of each trip when they are within range to connect to the internet. Preliminary feedback from a few captains has indicated that they support the development of the fillable PDF form as long as it contains some features that they consider important to fishermen (running total of fish caught, default values, etc.)

Based on this feedback, SWFSC staff plan to continue the development of the fillable PDF and engage end-user (captains') feedback to ensure a useful product is produced.

Submission of the albacore logbook is mandatory for fishermen targeting albacore with troll or pole-and-line gear. The information collected in the logbook is used in international assessments of the two Pacific stocks (north Pacific albacore and south Pacific albacore) as well as in negotiations of the USA-Canada albacore treaty. While use of an electronic log is not yet mandatory, it streamlines data processing and helps prevent data entry errors allowing for more accurate and timely summarization of the fishery information.

The next steps in the development of the fillable PDF are:

1. Update the PDF form to match a new version of the logbook that was just recently released. The new version omits the form FP that collected information on vessel characteristics and removes a number of fields that are no longer needed (# skiffs, # lines, # poles, SST and weather information, etc.)
2. Develop an open, continuous feedback process to ensure that user requirements are met and important features are included.
3. Determine an optimal, secure method of transmission for submitting each trip's logbook information to SWFSC.
4. Develop outreach and training options to ensure the new PDF form gets widely distributed and users are able to easily learn to use the PDF form.

Archival Tag Rewards: Fishermen, unloaders, buyers, and processors need to be aware of potential tags in the albacore. A \$500 reward will be paid for each recovered fish. Check out [www.afrf.org](http://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 Information from NOAA/NMFS See: <http://tinyurl.com/myho44q>

Bio-Sampling: Unfortunately only a few fish were collected in 2016 for bio-sampling. This has seen good results in past years 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 will do more organizing drop off points with buyers in 2017.

Fisheries Innovation Fund 2017 Request: The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is excited to announce the Fisheries Innovation Fund 2017 Request for Proposals. To view the RFP and to learn more about the program and application process, please visit the Fisheries Innovation Fund website. We will be hosting a webinar Tuesday, May 9 from 3-4pm ET to discuss program priorities outlined in the RFP with interested applicants. You may register using the following link:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6717796525605652737>

Please share this opportunity widely among your networks, noting that the deadline for pre-proposal submissions is Thursday, May 25, 2017 at 11:59pm ET.

The 68th Tuna Conference: (<http://www.tunaconference.org/>) Monday through Thursday, May 15-18, 2017. The conference will be at its traditional venue at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Lake Arrowhead Conference Center (<http://uclaconferencecenter.com/>), interested parties and refer to our webpage [www.tunaconference.org](http://www.tunaconference.org) for detailed information.

#### WFOA members obligation to AFRF Contributions:

Under WFOA's bylaws you are required as a member to submit AFRF fees for any albacore landed to buyers others than those listed at the bottom of this page. If you unloaded all or a segment of your catch to those AFRF buyers you need not submit to that portion.

Payments of USD \$20/ton can be made to:

American Fishermen's Research Foundation  
P.O. Box 992723  
Redding, CA 96099

AFRF relies on funding such as yours to continue this unique organization that has been involved in cooperative research and public education for all North Pacific troll albacore fishermen over the past 46 years. It is extremely hard to show short term benefits of this contribution but without AFRF we may not have access to albacore grounds.

AFRF continues to promote research and education helpful to all those that harvest Pacific albacore with troll and bait boat methods. Thus, fee obligations extend to the entire fleet not just WFOA members! We continue to stress that AFRF is not a vehicle to take money out of fishermen's or buyers pockets for gaining market advantage over anyone. Its entirely about research and trying to keep all albacore fishermen on the ocean so they can supply the buyers product for now and in the future.

For Buyers: AFRF will be compiling an informational package targeted to Non-AFRF buyers as well as contracted buyers which better describes the history and goals of AFRF in supporting research and science for Pacific albacore tuna. Since 1971 processors/buyer contributions have supported AFRF in its many projects. When we had 3-4 canners AFRF contributions were easy to collect but as the markets diversified to the benefit of the fleet AFRF fees became harder to track down and collect on the tonnage split now between 20 or more buyers, unloaders, and processors.

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, Westport Seafood Inc, Wild Planet Foods Inc

Check Us Out At: [WWW.AFRF.ORG](http://WWW.AFRF.ORG)