

American Fishermen's Research Foundation News

Archival Tagging 2019: AFRF was unable to deploy tags this summer. Small fish and a lack of a qualified boat, plus scheduling of SWFSC played a role once again. We had one potential boat available for a time that has a background in research projects but timing did not coincide between the owner and SWFSC. The 60 tags left at SWFSC could probably be used on other tuna species or possibly in the South Pacific.

We do not have a good take 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 collected some sample albacore this season this season and will continue in 2020. These will be used primarily for otolith sampling at the SWFSC and other research. Buyers like Westport Seafood, Ilwaco Landing, and Jessie's were available to collect and store the sample fish until pick up and transport to the SWFSC. 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 ; The Northern Committee meeting took place over 5 days in Portland, OR from September 2-6, 2019 and the Technical and Compliance Committee meeting was held in Pohnpei, FSM from September 25 to October 1, 2019.

NORTHERN COMMITTEE - The first day of the NC meeting was spent on a catch documentation scheme (CDS) chaired by the Japanese. It was the third such meeting and discussions of the CDS are currently limited to large bluefin tuna. The second through the fifth days of the meeting were a mix between the NC agenda and the Joint Working Group of the IATTC and the WCPFC-NC on bluefin tuna. The primary issue at the Working Group meeting was the Japanese request for a larger allocation.

The NC meeting was a disappointment because several countries did not send delegates (Vanuatu, Philippines, China, Fiji) so there was no quorum. This led to a discussion of whether the NC should add a rule that the quorum should be changed from the current $\frac{3}{4}$ of the committee membership to a less demanding quorum requirement. No decision was reached. Since there was no quorum, the NC will meet again during the WCPFC annual meeting in December in Papua New Guinea to consider what was discussed in Portland.

Dr. Holms (Canada), chair of the International Science Committee (ISC) reported on the results of

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the ISC Plenary held in Taipei, Taiwan from July 10-15, 2019. A benchmark stock assessment of striped marlin was conducted which showed that the stock was over fished and overfishing was occurring, which was the same situation with the 2015 assessment. The NC has not yet been given authority over the striped marlin stock because it has not been determined to be a northern stock in the WCPFC treaty area. No new assessments were done for swordfish, blue marlin, blue shark, or shortfin Mako shark. There also was no new assessment of North Pacific albacore, however, corrected catch numbers from the 2017 assessment were run with no change in the conservation advice. The ISC workplan includes benchmark assessments in 2020 for North Pacific albacore and bluefin tuna.

Dr. Soh (Korea, WCPFC Science) reported on the SC meeting in Pohnpei held August 12-20, 2019. While I have not reviewed a report from that meeting, Dr. Soh made no mention of South Pacific or North Pacific albacore in his presentation.

Those countries present gave information on catch and effort for 2018. Concern was expressed that Vanuatu's earlier reported number of vessels was nearly 3 times the baseline of 2002-2004. The Chair will contact Vanuatu to clarify this report and see if it is a compliance issue. Korea noted that it did not have any vessels "fishing for" albacore in the North Pacific and had not since 2008. In 2018 its longline fleet had an incidental catch of albacore of only 100 mts.

The chair of the ISC albacore working group reported on the first round of results from the North Pacific albacore MSE held from March 5-7, 2019 in Yokohama and indicated that the MSE specialist was continuing work. The ALBWG is focusing on data preparation and is having assessment meetings scheduled for November (Shimizu, Japan) and March 2020 (LaJolla). The second round of MSE results will be presented at the 5th ISC-MSE workshop in late 2020 or early 2021.

Canada proposed amendments to Resolution C-18-03 supplementing C-05-02 to change the reporting from every 6 months to annually and was supported by the US. Japan said the measure should also be amended to apply to only north of 20 degrees north. The US disagreed and Canada and the US presented a joint proposal for the amendment (NC15-DP-15 Rev 2). Unfortunately, there were further discussions and amendments and the cleanest copy available (attached) is not clear on what was agreed to, therefore, there will be further discussions when the NC meets on the fringes of the WCPFC annual meeting in December 2019.

Finally, the NC requested that the Chair of the NC write to China, the Philippines, Vanuatu, and Fiji over their lack of attendance and their failure to submit data.

TECHNICAL AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE - Thus far the TCC has only issued its "Outcomes Document." This document indicates there were suggestions for changing reporting requirements, but nothing that has not already been discussed regarding albacore, North or South Pacific. The High Seas Transshipment Monitoring Working Group (reviewing CMM 2009-06 did adopt terms of reference for its future work (attached). The TCC also requested the Science Provider to annually prepare reports so compliance monitoring efforts could be improved.

PERMANENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE: At the WCPFC Permanent Advisory Committee meeting in Hawaii on October 10-11 there were 61 advisories agreed to which will guide the U.S. Commissioners to the December 2019 meeting of the WCPFC in Papua New Guinea. As you may recall during an earlier PAC conference call this year we were able to move the subject of South Pacific albacore up to the priority issue column.

The relevant advisories from the entire report for South Pacific albacore are:

36. The PAC recommends that a TRP for South Pacific albacore be achieved 'soonest' (less than 20 years) under harvest scenarios #4 or #5 brought forth by the SPC, with initial incremental annual reductions of at least 2.75%. The Commission may elect to increase catches of South Pacific albacore immediately after a TRP is achieved to 'minimize overshoot' of the TRP so that the stock can be fully utilized while maintaining the TRP.

38. The PAC recommends that since the U.S. South Pacific albacore troll fleet, (which is the only troll fleet fishing on the high seas South of 20 degrees South) caught an average of less than 350 metric tons of albacore during 2015-2017, it should be exempt from catch reductions under harvest scenarios to reach the TRP and under an allocation scheme for South Pacific albacore, until its catches exceed 5% of total catch of South Pacific albacore, which should trigger troll fisheries under their corresponding CCM being subject to reductions.

39. The PAC recommends that the U.S. insist that all future stock assessments for South Pacific albacore, including the assessment scheduled for 2021, be conducted throughout the entire range of the stock, including areas within the IATTC Treaty Area and including the Overlap Area. The TRP can be evaluated under WCPFC Convention Area.

40. The PAC recommends that the U.S. place before the Technical and Compliance Committee the flagrant disregard by certain CCMs of the provisions of both the North Pacific albacore and the South Pacific albacore CMMs and their limitations on effort.

41. PAC urges USG to work with other parties to evaluate the efficacy and relevance of CMM 2015-02 in controlling albacore longline fishing effort and supporting the attainment of newly established TRP. If CMM 2015-02 is deemed effective and relevant to attaining conservation objectives, PAC recommends USG urge in the strongest terms possible that the Commission consider enforcement measures to have countries abide by the current South Pacific albacore resolution CMM 2015-02. If CMM 2015-02 is found to not be relevant and effective, PAC recommends USG work with other parties to develop and introduce a CMM that does effectively address SP albacore fishing effort and supports the attainment of TRP.

The PAC recommends the U.S. continue to protect the interests of the U.S. South Pacific albacore troll fleet in qualifying under para. 34 and 37 of CMM 2009-06. (transshipment).

The PAC recommends that the U.S. work through the NC to recommend an amendment to WCPFC rules of procedure to set the threshold for a quorum of the NC as [50% + 1] of membership or recommend a reinterpretation of the phrase that members of the Committee "include the members situated in such area and those fishing in the area" of Article 11 paragraph 7. The PAC recommends that the U.S. develop and exchange views with other CCMs with intent to revise the ROPs applicable to the NC to address the lack of quorum as soon as possible.

IUU Fishing: NOAA Fisheries released its 2019 Improving International Fisheries Management Report to Congress identifying nations with vessels reported to be engaged in illegal, unreported or unregulated (IUU) fishing activities, and announced its certification determinations of nations previously identified for these activities from the 2017 Report.

The Improving International Fisheries Management Report to Congress is an important part of NOAA Fisheries' work to improve global fisheries management, support the effective management of protected species and shark catch on the high seas; and ensure that legal, sustainable fisheries

are not disadvantaged.

Three nations (Mexico, Ecuador and the Russian Federation) identified in the 2017 Report for reported IUU fishing activities have since taken corrective actions to remedy those activities which has resulted in a positive certification decision for each nation from the United States.

However, in the 2019 Report, Mexico and Ecuador are again identified for reported IUU fishing activities (occurring in 2016-2018); and the Republic of Korea is identified for reported IUU fishing activities. The report also highlights several areas of concern involving China.

NOAA Fisheries is committed to working with the nations identified in the 2019 Report to remedy the reported IUU fishing activities through a three-step process of identification, consultation, and certification.

To learn more about the 2019 Improving International Fisheries Management Report to Congress, please visit: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/foreign/international-affairs/identification-iuu-fishing-activities>.

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) - November 13-20, 2019, Costa Mesa, CA

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

71 st Tuna Conference - May 18-21, 2020 - Lake Arrowhead, CA

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