

American Fishermen's Research Foundation News (AFRF)©

American Fishermen's Research Foundation (AFRF) is fully committed to a number of scientific and management meetings at the international and federal level. AFRF contributes to much of the costs of having Peter Flournoy, Dr. Vidar Wespestad, and others to attend these events when access to the resource is an issue. American Albacore fishing Association (AAFA) also has been splitting the costs of these meeting with AFRF. The next meeting will be the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and an additional version of the Northern Committee of the WCPFC in December in Bali, Indonesia, where many HMS issues will be presented including those affecting albacore such as the MSE planning as well as continued work on biological reverence points stock wide.

As always at this level and at the federal level we are facing increased participation by a number of ENGO groups that may have differing agendas and goals that we do as a fishing industry. They are very well funded and attend virtually all management forums in good numbers.

In addition AFRF is in the 14th season of cooperative tagging with NOAA Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) and is always open to new research ideas and proposals that highlight the albacore life-cycle, migration patterns, and environmental and health issues related to albacore tuna.

Tagging and Sampling: Southwest Fisheries Science Center technicians onboard the F/V Royal Dawn deployed all 120 available archival tags in September 2015. Originally two trips with two vessels were planned, but as the season wound down and fishing was slowing rapidly all tags were deployed on the one trip.

No tags either of those recently deployed or past ones have been recovered yet in 2015. Since 2001 about 1,000 tags have now been deployed with only a few dozen recoveries. Speculation is the stock of albacore may be vast and that is why the limited recoveries, or something has interfered with the fish's survival by having an attached tag. The discussion on this continues. The tag reward remains at \$500 each (whole fish preferred).

A number of WFOA and AAFA vessels did onboard measuring this season and delivered sample albacore for otolith research. The results of this research will contribute to a better understanding of the behavior and habitat utilization of this species and therefore strengthen SWFSC's ability to effectively assess the stock status.

Western Central Pacific Fisheries Committee (WCPFC)-Northern Committee (NC) Meeting: The Northern Committee of the WCPFC met in Sapporo, Japan for three and one half days the end of August and the first couple of days of September. Unfortunately, due to the absence of China, Indonesia, Vanuatu, and the Cook Islands (plus the addition of Fiji, which had the effect of increasing the number of countries needed for a quorum) there was an absence of a quorum. Thus there was no official action taken, and another meeting of the NC was scheduled for November 30th in conjunction with the annual meeting of the WCPFC in the hopes that a quorum can be mustered. The full report of NC-11 is on the WCPFC-NC website, but the following is a summary of

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the results which focuses on our two main topics of interest – North Pacific albacore and North Pacific bluefin.

North Pacific Albacore - John Holmes, who is head of the International Scientific Committee's Albacore Working Group (ISC-AWG), was tasked to prepare a modified chart (similar to the one on the last page of WP-01) to assist, primarily the US, Canada, and Japan to prepare answers to questions which the scientists will need to be answered before the scientists can do their work of evaluating different management scenarios using the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process. This chart will be prepared and given to the NC Secretariat to distribute to the NC members hopefully by the end of October. NC members will then work inter-sessionally to submit their responses to the ISC-AWG requests to the ISC which will endeavor to collect, distribute to other members, and make a first stab at reconciling any significant differences in the responses. This will be done during the October/November time frame.

There will be a formal meeting of the NC during the Management Objectives Workshop IV to be held in Bali on the November 30 to December 1, 2015. At that meeting the NC members will agree on the goals and objectives to be utilized by the ISC-AWG in the MSE process. Then in April of 2016, at a meeting of the ISC-AWG probably in Japan, any difficulties in proceeding with the MSE of management measures for North Pacific Albacore will be resolved. Unfortunately, there will be no change in the decision to use North Pacific albacore management and conservation measures as the MSE guinea pig, even though from a work load standpoint, it would really make much more sense to focus on North Pacific Bluefin.

Bluefin - Despite efforts by the WFOA/AFRF/AAFA representative, (in the odd company of Pew and Monterey Bay Aquarium representatives), to get the U.S. Delegation to push the NC in its requests of the ISC to focus more on bluefin, rather than do any extra management evaluation work on albacore, the US continue to push for the acceptance of their draft requests of the ISC. The one place the harvester representative was successful was to have the U.S. make a statement criticizing those countries who were not attending ISC or WCPFC-NC meetings and who were also not supplying comprehensive catch and effort data from their fisheries. Diplomacy required that China not be referred to explicitly by using their name.

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Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) of North Pacific Albacore: The Albacore Working Group has been charged with preparing a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for North Pacific Albacore. The MSE process is designed to evaluate all available information in a model in order to develop a management framework to achieve the management objectives established by a management authority. For North Pacific albacore the West Central Pacific Fishery Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee (NC) is the lead agency with input from the IATTC. The current timeline is to have a MSE complete by 2017 that the Commissions can utilize for management.

The Albacore Working Group developed an analytical framework that was submitted to the Northern Committee in August of this year; however, several nations did not send representatives to the NC meeting and no action was taken due to the absence of a quorum. A special meeting of the NC has been scheduled for early December prior to the annual WCPFC meeting. At that meeting it is hoped that the NC will provide the guidance requested by the Albacore WG to begin development of the MSE.

The current management measures in place for North Pacific Albacore are a limit reference point (LRP), and a harvest rule when the LRP is breached, have been adopted by the Northern Committee (NC 2014). At NC10 an evaluation of suitable target reference points for north Pacific albacore tuna was requested, using MSE if appropriate.

MSE is a tool to evaluate management questions and strategies, but could be used to address scientific questions such as spatial structure in the stock, regional differences in growth, and estimates of natural mortality and maturity.

Management questions that could be addressed by MSE include the identification of suitable target and limit reference points, the definition of current effort (e.g., as used in existing NPALB management measures), the impact of information gaps on achieving objectives (e.g., assuming size of fish caught in some fisheries), and directed or albacore-targeting fisheries versus fisheries in which albacore is a bycatch species.

Management strategy evaluation involves using simulation to compare the relative performance of alternative management procedures (including data collection schemes, analysis and assessment methods and subsequent procedures for management action) in achieving management objectives. In recent years MSE has been widely used in numerous management settings to try to identify management procedures that both achieve management objectives for fish stocks and are robust to the uncertainty in the system being managed. In this respect MSE is a tool for evaluating management strategies that explicitly accounts for the uncertainties, includes the linkages between each of the components in the management system (stocks, fleets, assessments, management rules, etc.) and can account for time lags in the management process.

Furthermore the MSE process creates a structured framework for discussion and collaboration between the key stakeholders (fishing industry, managers, scientists, others). It formalizes management objectives and specifies the performance criteria upon which candidate management strategies can be assessed and compared.

The role of the ALBWG scientists in developing the MSE framework is to:

- Quantify the objectives of decision-makers and determine how to measure them;
- Identify the range of management strategy choices;
- Identify and quantify uncertainties (in the assessment, data, and management systems) to represent in the operating model(s);
- Evaluate outcomes, and
- Communicate results, highlighting trade-offs.

The role of managers (and other stakeholders) in the MSE process is to:

- Identify objectives for the stock and fishery;
- Articulate management procedures and relevant performance measures to evaluate MPs; and
- Make decisions on the final management procedure.

The Albacore WG has developed a series of proposals on operational objectives, performance criteria, harvest control rules, and key uncertainties for the operating model along with two proposed workplans and timelines. Albacore WG hopes to receive feedback from the NC to establish a workplan that incorporates the goals of the Management authorities and identifies the appropriate objectives of the MSE analysis.

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Pacific Fisheries Management Council: September 2015 - Sacramento, CA - Despite three days, one of the HMS agenda items (hard caps on the DNG swordfish fishery) took almost the entire day. Also, oddly, even though there were only three HMS issues on the agenda, one of them (initial scoping for a shallow set longline fishery outside of the U.S. EEZ) was put off to the November meeting (the first time

according to Executive Director - Don McIssac that a noticed agenda item had not been heard because of lack of time).

That Council action is an example of how the Council has been, and will be in the future, when it comes to a question of the use of resources whether money, personnel, observer or enforcement resources, etc. The Council, the Region, and the State of California (and Washington, if not Oregon) will continue to make decisions that favor expenditures on salmon and groundfish over HMS.

The primary HMS issue of interest to albacore harvesters was agenda item G.1 which was basically NMFS and Council Staff's reports on the IATTC and WCPFC-NC meetings. The NMFS and Council reports as usual praised the work of the U.S. delegations, but from our view failed to speak up for U.S. commercial fishermen even when there was no discernable downside risk.

More specifically, the pressure the harvesters put on the U.S. delegation to drop their requests for further work by the ISC on albacore before they complete the model for use in the MSE, and instead focus on the MSE model preparation (and Bluefin if they have any extra time), was not heeded, and probably was not mentioned in the USG report personnel's reports the Council. The encouragement the harvesters and the ENGOs gave Mike Tosatto (head of Delegation) to criticize China for non-attendance and failure to provide timely and complete data on their fisheries, was not mentioned either in reports to the Council, even though that pressure did result in a strong U.S. statement (that did not name names).

Probably the most important advice relative to albacore that the HMSAS of the PFMC gave the Council was that at the September WCPFC-NC meeting both the chair of the ISC and the Chair of the Albacore WG emphasized that at the second ISC workshop on MSE (to be held in April 2016 in Japan) it was critically important that true stakeholders be present, not just ENGO and government representatives. Therefore, the HMSAS asked for the Council's support and resources to enable two or three albacore harvesters to attend the meeting in Japan. As with most of the advice given from the HMSAS to the Council, that request drew no questions, nor comments, nor expressions of acceptance from the Council members.

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Vessel Logbooks: From 2014 data it appears that not all logbooks were submitted for albacore. This is troubling as the percentage is not good and logbooks are the first line of data and research establishing a history of the fishery. Issuance of HMS permits will be held up if you have a logbook outstanding. WFOA suspects most of the delinquent logbooks are from smaller boats that have small landings of which many who are not members of any association may be unaware the logbooks are required.

Albacore Data in Easy to Read Format: Also, the update data pages of the SAFE Report are well done and reflect many aspects of west coast landings. See: <http://tinyurl.com/kcp6aod>

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