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AFRF is involved deeply in the ongoing stock assessment of North Pacific albacore as well as the management and regulation in both hemispheres of the Pacific ocean. There are initiatives to establish new and uniform Biological Reference Points (BRP's) and possible Harvest Control Rules (HCR's) both at the international and federal levels. Many of these plans and proposals are competing and different, and laced with politics despite sound science. At considerable expense AFRF continues to represent the U.S. albacore trollers and baitboats at these forums, and continues to be involved in the scientific process through the International Science Committee - Albacore Working Group (ISC-ALBWG). Although we represent ALL U.S. albacore trollers and baitboats since vessels, by delivering to AFRF contracted buyers fishermen and processors contribute. Unfortunately since the market is so diverse with so many buyers, many tons of albacore do not contribute. We encourage all members and nonmembers to pay the \$20/st to keep us in the game for you. We recognize beyond tagging information it is difficult to see something tangible that AFRF is doing since most is at stuffy meetings in far away places where like it or not your future is being set.

Logbooks 2013: As of a few weeks ago only 57% of U.S. albacore logbooks have been turned in for the 2013 season. Most of the noncompliance seems to be from many small deliveries on the coast and not from WFOA and AAFA boats which receive the information on the requirement to fill them out and turn them in. HMS permits by NMFS are required to fish albacore by any U.S. vessel anywhere and they will not be renewed if you do not submit a logbook in a timely manner.

North Pacific Albacore Archival Tagging Project:

Because of logistical and funding issues AFRF will not be doing the conventional tagging this season. We will still be doing sampling where fish can be set aside at outlets such as Ilwaco Fish Co. And other participating buyers and fishermen are paid for the fish. Fish need to be measured and location recorded and marked before freezing. Sampling kits are available from Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC).

2014 TAGGING - Deadline to apply for July 2014 charter is June 27th, and August 30th for late season charter.

As the 2014 nears American Fishermen's Research Foundation (AFRF) is committed to continued tagging of albacore with archival tags to supplement the 800 plus tags we have deployed since 2001. Vessel owners/operators can request an application from AFRF. Boats need to be set up for bait fishing methods and have accommodations for two technicians for up to eight days at sea. Normally tagging on each trip results in 40 - 80 tags deployed over 3-7 days historically. Boats are paid \$3,600/day and \$400/day for fuel. There could be some adjustments if fuel prices continue to spiral upwards. Please contact AFRF at wfoa@charter.net, 530.229.1097, or fax 530.232.0107 for an application.

Vessel Requirements for Archival Tagging of Albacore: (SWFSC Requirements)

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1. Carry and maintain live bait (anchovies and sardines) for up to two weeks. Supply crowders, scoops, and water supply on deck for bait (technician will provide hand scoops and bait bags for chumming and baiting hooks if needed).
2. Water-level access (such as a rack) for transferring hooked fish into a hand-held sling or a suitable alternative for transferring hooked fish to the deck without damage to the fish. Fish cannot be lifted out of the water by the hook and leader.
3. A minimum of two crew members in addition to the captain, at least one of which is experienced in live bait fishing (rod & reel or lift poles).
4. Provide an accessible location near the stern rail to accommodate a tagging cradle (36" long x 20" wide x 12" high) for surgery (see figures below) and a relatively dry area for recording data.
5. Dry storage on deck for toolbox, surgical box (24" long x 12" wide x 12" high)
6. Provide a deck hose that can be adapted to a garden hose with adjustable pressure for irrigating the gills of the fish.

NMFS /AFRF will supply any equipment necessary to complete the project. The NOAA/NMFS technician will carry insurance. The vessel and alternates will be selected by June 30, 2014 by AFRF and SWFSC personnel.

North Pacific Albacore Management – Faith or Science Based? – By Dr. Vidar Weststad

There is a growing debate as to how to best manage albacore in the North Pacific Ocean. The question basically relates to the need for control of fisheries and to what extent and how to institute. For background a U.S. fisherman must understand he is foremost subject to the control of the U.S. government. Secondly, he falls under the control of two regional fishery management organizations (RFMOs): in the eastern Pacific the Inter American Tropical Tuna Commission and to the west of 150 W the Western and Central Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and its subunit the Northern Committee. All of these organizations have proposals in place designed to control fisheries within their jurisdiction. The basic items under discussions are biological reference points (BRPs) and Harvest Control Rules (HCRs). A BRP establishes the level of fishing that can occur without impairing the reproductive capacity of a stock, essentially not reducing future amount of fish available for harvest. A HCR establishes the rules that will be followed to not exceed the BRP; this can be either through effort controls such as limiting the length of days at sea, or via catch control – trip limits or quotas. Both BRPs and HCRs are valid and valuable management controls when properly applied. The problem with multiple proposals is which one is the properly applied one. That is a difficult question and one that WFOA members should pay attention too as it is a major controlling factor relative to your future operations.

The situation is that the stock assessment and evaluation of harvest levels has primarily taken place within the Albacore Working Group (AWG) of the International Scientific Committee, which provides stock abundance, and harvest level advice to the two RFMOs (IATTC and WCPFC). The AWG produces a stock abundance assessment every three years, the latest to be released in July, and provides analysis of proposed harvest levels for management. Until recently most of the interaction has taken place with the NC of the WCPFC. After several years of refining information to the NC there are several options for them to select for target harvest level of albacore in the North Pacific. Within the past year the IATTC has come forward with another proposal for a harvest level. It is at the lowest level of those examined by the AWG and when presented to the AWG there were several questions raised on the model used and parameters utilized.

In addition to the RFMOs the Pacific Fisheries Management Council is formulating their own set of measures to control harvest in the U.S. 200 mile zone should it be determined that international management is ineffective. It's not clear who makes the determination, U.S. Government, Environmental organizations, or the courts. So, it's shaping up that there could be three competing sets of rules put in place that one would have to comply with while fishing.

With regard to potential harvest levels, the best available science is the BRPs produced by the AWG and other proposals have not undergone the same level of rigorous scientific review. I think it would be best for fishermen to realize that with most things in life the best result lies in the middle of the range of potential choices and provides the best long-term alternative.

From my experience there has been great progress in the determination of stock abundance and harvest level and a good understanding of the key parameters governing abundance of albacore, and I'm certain that we will make further refinements to better estimate biological data and stock abundance. At the current time all indications are that stocks are near the MSY level and overfishing is not occurring. That was three years ago, things haven't changed. In a month the assessment document will be released and everyone can examine the information.

The other issue under discussion is Harvest Control Rules (HCR), primarily a socio-economic political choice dependent on societal values. The proposals now being put forward by IATTC and PFMC would produce control rules that would only effect U.S. vessels and could be effected as pointed out above through limiting fishing time or landings.

My argument against unilateral establishment of BRPs and HCRs solely for the eastern Pacific is that they will largely be biologically ineffective. The majority of catch is in the western Pacific Ocean and the majority of spawning fish are there too. The idea of reference points and harvest control rules is to control fishing to insure maximum stable reproductive output. I'm not sure controlling only 15% of the total catch and not having any controls on harvest of spawning population is going to be of much value.

There are lots of questions on catch and effort and governments should be closely monitoring significant changes in effort throughout the Pacific. The U.S. And Canada are pretty bit players in terms of overall catch and effort and people concerned with excess and growing effort should look more to the western Pacific. My concern on the present rush to establish untested proposals is that it will just lead to rushed regulations that will provide more opportunity for lawsuits against NMFS than effective management of a resource largely outside the control of the U.S. And who will bear the brunt of suits to close the fishery for exceeding harvest limits?

I do believe there is adequate time to take all of the information available and do a full and rational assessment of all management options without a rush to judgment as it seems is happening now. I would hope members pay close attention to this issue and actively participate in the political and management process to insure an outcome beneficial for your continuance in the fishery.

El Nino Prognosis: From Mark Hess - Ocean Imaging Co.

See: http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/enso_advisory/ensodisc.pdf

They are still only giving a 65% chance that El Nino will start to form before the end of the year. In my experience, this would not necessarily affect the 2014 fishing season as much as it would the 2015 season. El Nino (if it fully develops) will reach its peak in late Fall 2014 to Winter of 2015 and only play a minor role between July of 2014 to October of 2014. That said, the waters in the Northeast Pacific

albacore fishing region are presently 1° - 3° C above normal and this IS significant. SeaView SST images from the end of May time period from 2012, 2013 & 2014 show the definite warmer conditions in 2014. If this continues, we may see the fish enter the coastal zone at a higher latitude and perhaps a bit earlier than usual. Traditionally El Nino years or years following strong El Nino winters have provided better than average albacore fishing, so we can keep our fingers crossed that these warm conditions hold. As I am sure you already know, a few of the boats coming home from the SP already saw signs of fish west of Southern to Central California. I'll be keeping a close eye to the imagery and ear to the phone in the coming few weeks.

New FDA Fish Consumption Advice (Good and Bad) - FDA and EPA have issued a draft updated advice which recommends that " . . . pregnant women eat at least 8 ounces and up to 12 ounces (2-3 servings) per week of a variety of fish that are lower in mercury to support fetal growth and development . . . The draft updated advice cautions pregnant or breast-feeding women to avoid four types of fish that are associated with high mercury levels: tilefish from the Gulf of Mexico; shark; swordfish; and king mackerel. **In addition, the draft updated advice recommends limiting consumption of white (albacore) tuna to 6 ounces a week** . . . When eating fish caught from local streams, rivers and lakes, follow fish advisories from local authorities. If advice isn't available, limit your total intake of such fish to 6 ounces a week and 1-3 ounces for children . . . "

***Note** - Again there is no distinction made between the 3-4 year old albacore caught predominately by troll and baitboat methods which are very low in mercury compared to the larger longline caught albacore. Also, both troll and longline are all well below FDA guidelines.*

Document Title: * The title of the June 10, 2014 FDA News Release is "FDA and EPA issue draft updated advice for fish consumption"

For Full Release and How To Comment See:

See: <http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm397929.htm>

Contact: Questions may be directed to: Philip Spiller who is with the FDA Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition in College Park, Maryland at 240 402 1428; e-mail: Philip.Spiller@FDA.HHS.gov

Jeffrey Bigler who is with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at 202 566 0389; e-mail: Bigler.Jeff@EPA.gov

Partial List of Science and Management Meetings: AFRF and WFOA will be represented at these.

- Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) Annual Meeting - July 7-18 - Lima, Peru
- ISC - Albacore Working Group - (Stock Assessment) - July 13, 2014 - Chinese Taipei
- Northern Committee of the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission - September 1, 2014 to September 4, 2014 - Japan
- Annual Meeting of the WCPFC - December 2014 - Apia, Western Samoa

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, New Day Fisheries, Pacific Seafood Group, Papa George Gourmet Albacore, Pelican Packers Inc., Seafood Producers Co-op, Star Kist Seafoods, Starvin Marvin Seafoods, Trident Seafoods, Tri-Marine International, Whole Foods Select Fish, Wild Planet Foods Inc

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