

◆AFRF Seeking skippers interested in tagging albacore as part of a west coast fishing mortality study.◆

AFRF is in discussions with NMFS on conducting a tagging program that will deploy tags during the fishing season.

We would like to get out a couple of thousand tags early, mid-season and late season. For those interested we would like to have a scoping session at the annual meeting in Newport to discuss ideas on methods of tagging, recording information and tag release validation. Also, how to compensate vessels for tagged and released albacore.

NMFS may have some funding for this year, and there is interest within AFRF board to seek SK funding or private foundation funding for an industry effort in 2015.

Release of conventional tags could provide valuable information on in-season movement and help measure the relative fishing rate of the west coast fishery.

Let us know if you are interested in archival tagging and/or conventional tagging in 2014. We would like to establish a list of potential vessels to call on.

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Archival Tagging /Recent Recoveries: AFRF in cooperation with NOAA/NMFS and SWFSC have deployed over 800 tags since 2001 generally off Oregon and Washington with some tags deployed off Southern California in 2001 - 2003. Overall there have been 33 recoveries, which includes 5 dummy tags placed in the first two years of the project. There have been four recent recoveries of the archival tags. These were released off the Oregon and Washington coast. Two archival tags were recovered in the summer of 2013 off the Japanese coast after two years at sea, another was recovered in 2012 by a sport vessel from Westport after a year at sea, and just recently a tag was recovered in a cold storage in Spain and had been three years at sea. Until the Japan recoveries only one other tag was recovered after transiting across the North Pacific ocean, all others migrated out to the central Pacific and back to the coast in summer. SWFSC is processing the data and we are hoping soon for some sort of information off these.

China? A Factor in Science and Harvest? - By Dr. Vidar Wespestad - A reoccurring question is "What's going on with the Chinese albacore fishery?" A good question, but it's difficult to answer at the moment. At the 2013 albacore working group meeting we received Chinese albacore catch data for the first time. As seen in the following graph the Chinese longline fishery reported only small catches of albacore until very recently. The target species has been bigeye tuna and albacore a bycatch. The catch was reported by EPO and WPO and the EPO divided into north and south. Most of the EPO catch was south of 10° N and the northern catch was southwest of Hawaii. The reported size frequency consisted of albacore 90 cm and larger, similar to

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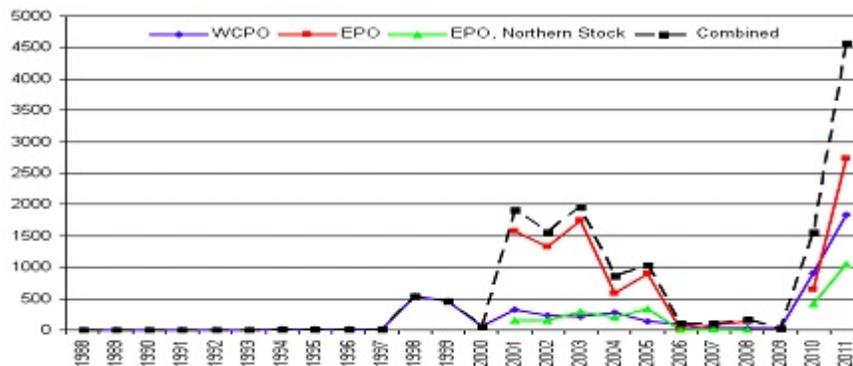
Barry Nelson
WFOA

the Hawaiian longline fishery.

For the 2012 the north Pacific albacore catch estimates for China were received from the SPC. The Chinese fishery is growing but there are few data available from this fishery. The 2012 catch estimate for China is 6,092 t, which is a substantial increase relative to past years. It appears that the increase in catch is coming from targeting on albacore during the winter months to the north of PNG.

The Albacore Working Group is trying to assess the size and effort of the Chinese fleet. We have been told that there is a fleet that targets bigeye and another that targets albacore. Beyond that there is little known. A request has been made for more spatially explicit data, i.e., monthly 5° x 5° catch and effort data from China. It is hoped that receiving this information will help to understand what the Chinese fleet is and if there will be continued growth in the harvest of albacore.

China is a difficult place to obtain information. Even the Chinese admit that they don't know themselves what the actual harvest is since there are several agencies involved in monitoring and statistics collection. For instance one agency is charged with collection of far seas fisheries, another with internal waters, and another that monitors landings and then once the fish are landed other agencies come into play. The one certainty is that China is a growing player in the Pacific tuna fisheries and hopefully it will be come clearer how big a player.



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

- Pacific Fisheries Management Council - March 10-15, 2014 (HMS March 10-12) - Sacramento, CA
- U.S. / Canada Treaty Negotiation - April 16-17, 2014 - Portland, OR
- ISC - Albacore Working Group - (Stock Assessment) - 14-28 April 14-28, 2014, LaJolla, CA
- 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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