

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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U.S. West Coast Albacore Fisheries Merge MSC Certificates

REDDING / SAN DIEGO, California (April 25, 2014) – American Albacore Fishing Association (AAFA) and Western Fishboat Owners Association (WFOA) today announced the merging of their individual Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) fishery certifications. The two organizations now share one certificate for North Pacific fisheries and one for South Pacific fisheries. AAFA and WFOA represent the vast majority of U.S. West Coast pole and line and troll/jig albacore fishermen. MSC certification of these fisheries, conducted by a third-party certifying body, assures buyers and consumers that the albacore tuna they consume is from a well-managed and sustainable fishery.

AAFA and WFOA are recognized leaders in sustainable fishery practices; for instance, they use the classic techniques of pole & line and troll/jig fishing, catching one fish at time, so there is virtually no by-catch on non-target species and zero interaction with marine mammals. Recent and ongoing international stock assessments by the International Science Committee and the Albacore Working Group (ISC–ALBWG) show the albacore stocks remain stable.

According to Wayne Heikkila, WFOA executive director, “The merging of the individual certifications records a renewed U.S. fleet-wide commitment to maintaining a sustainable resource base for supplying consumers worldwide with the highest quality albacore.”

Albacore tuna caught by U.S. fishermen is an excellent source of protein high in Omega-3 fatty acids. Albacore caught locally by AAFA and WFOA vessels enter into “Chain of Custody” under the MSC program, which ensures that seafood products with the MSC ecolabel are traceable back to an MSC-certified fishery. All albacore deliveries by AAFA and WFOA members are tracked through processing and marketing right to the consumer.

The West Coast albacore fishery comprises a fleet of small-boat fishermen from coastal communities where commercial fishing operations have passed from generation to generation. Albacore are hand-caught by hook and line, then quickly chilled, iced, or frozen at sea to ensure top quality.

“Both AAFA and WFOA are committed to the preservation of the U.S. pole and line and troll/jig fishing families and communities,” said Natalie Webster, AAFA operations director. Consumers who select West Coast albacore help ensure sustainable albacore stocks along with the economic health of fishing families and coastal fishing communities.

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