

# WESTERN FISHBOAT OWNERS ASSOCIATION ©



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Members:

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Happy Holidays and New Year! WFOA wishes that all have a productive 2017 both in fishing and life. This is the last newsletter of 2016 and contains some information concerning management and upcoming issues that will affect albacore bait and troll fishermen. Please feel free to contact us or your directors if you have questions.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS:

**Members Dues:** WFOA thanks all who have paid 2017 membership dues thus far. The formal date for billing members is January 1<sup>st</sup> so no one is late yet. WFOA will be sending out new invoices in a few days to those who have not yet paid for 2017 and regular reminders through springtime.

**Garage Sale Page:** WFOA still maintains a garage sale section on [wfoa-tuna.org](http://wfoa-tuna.org) marked as menu item "classifieds". We have cleaned off all but recent content but anyone that has an item, boat, or a service to sell please send the information in to WFOA (email is [best-wfoa@charter.net](mailto:best-wfoa@charter.net)) and we will post it. We can add a couple small file size photos also.

**2017 WFOA Annual Meeting:** The WFOA/AFRF AGM will be held March 26<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> 2017 in Astoria, Oregon at the Holiday Inn Express. The prime day for the general membership will be Tuesday, March 28<sup>th</sup> for seminars and dinner plus the raffle. More details will be in the next issue! WFOA will be sending out requests for support to the regular sponsors as well as requests for seminars in the coming weeks.

**Annual Meeting Hotel Room Deal:** If you need a room in Astoria at the AGM venue please call the Holiday Inn Express at 503.325.6222 and ask for the WFOA rate. This is spring break so rooms go fast!!

Also if you are a WFOA paid up regular vessel owner member (not on the board) and attend most of the seminars and dinner you may be eligible for one free

room night reimbursed by WFOA. This is limited and more information will be sent out in the next issue.

## 2016 SEASON:

**Final North Pacific Catch Figures:** Final catch tonnage for the U.S. west coast was 11,458 st split between WA-7,740 st, OR - 3,612 st, and CA - 106 st. For updated U.S. port by port landings see: <http://tinyurl.com/jugprj3>

As far as official landings in Canadian ports by U.S. and Canadian boats, these numbers are not usually available until April or May. We estimate Canadian catch including both U.S. and Canadian waters to be around 3,500 st and U.S. landings in Canada around 700 st.

**South Pacific:** At this time from 10-14 vessels will take part in the South Pacific albacore fishery. Demand for albacore with higher prices should make this long arduous effort easier to the vessels that still take part. In recent years fishing has occurred later in the season (March-April) than in the past and also farther south (Down as far as 46 S Latitude).

The South Pacific troll albacore fishery for U.S. vessels began in the mid 80's with AFRF sending a few boats on

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charters prospecting the in the region. The fishery quickly developed with good catch rates and peaked in the later 1990's. As many as 55 vessels participate in 1998 and over 5,000 st of albacore were landed. Mostly brine frozen vessels were there originally and delivered mainly in American Samoa to the major canners or onto freezer ships sponsored by WFOA. Since then costs and distances have taken its toll with 6-15 boats on average fishing in the SP since 2000. Now its almost exclusively larger blast/bled vessels that can hold their entire seasons catch and deliver it back to the west coast or elsewhere for higher value.

**MANAGEMENT & REGULATION:** Please see the AFRF segment of this newsletter with Peter Flournoy's reports on recent international management and regulatory issues.

**Pacific Fishery Management Council:** The Pacific Fishery Management Council met November 16-21, 2016 in Garden Grove, California. The only item on the agenda concerning albacore tuna was the U.S.-Canada Albacore Tuna Treaty which the council took the following action:

*The Council supported the Department of State in reaching a satisfactory conclusion to negotiations with the Government of Canada in relation to a renewed regime for reciprocal fishing and port access privileges in 2017 and beyond under the U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty. The Council expressed appreciation for the Department of State's efforts to consult with stakeholders on their views, as represented in the advisory body statements and public comments received at the Council meeting.*

The fishing regime under the U.S./Canada Albacore treaty expired at the end of 2016. The "fishing regime" under the present treaty controls fishing access by either side, number of vessels, check in and check out procedures, etc. It is described in the treaty annexes and can be modified by exchange of diplomatic notes between nations as opposed to modifying the actual treaty that would require Senate ratification in the U.S. Changing the regime does not require eliminating the entire treaty.

As stated in the October 2016 newsletter, WFOA will support an extension of the present regime with certain conditions and vessel number by Canadians in the U.S. EEZ not exceeding 45. The member poll WFOA

conducted reflected this action by a 2-1 margin. However, the comments included and subsequent discussions did not support any more than 45 Canadian vessels.

WFOA does not expect any action on the treaty until after the Trump administration is sworn in on January 20<sup>th</sup>. President-elect officially selected Rex W. Tillerson, the chief executive of Exxon Mobil, to be his secretary of state. We know little about the direction on fisheries issues but expect to know more soon.

Also, Wilbur Ross of New York has been nominated for Secretary of Commerce. Again we will wait and see how it affects NOAA/NMFS and who gets the lower political appointments.

**State of Washington Licence Fees:** 12-27-2016 WA Proposed License Fee Increase -Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, WDFW, currently has a proposal going to the WA legislature that would increase the WA Food Fish Ocean Delivery Permit renewal fee which is necessary for a vessel to deliver albacore into WA unless they have a WA salmon, crab, or shrimp permit that includes a Delivery Permit for all species harvested in the ocean. The proposed increase in renewal fee is from \$250 to \$400 for "in state" residents. Out of State residents fee for the same license is proposed to increase from \$340 to \$400. Making both "in state" and out of state the same due to the lawsuit in CA that was recently reversed. In addition to the proposed fee increases, there is also a proposed \$100 crew license requirement for each crew person that is on any commercial vessel delivering into WA.

The good news is that WDFW cannot arbitrarily institute the proposed fees independently, but have to go through the WA legislature where the industry has some supporting legislators that are sympathetic to the concerns of the industry. The bad news is that The WA Legislature has a fiscal shortcoming due to a Court mandated substantial fiscal increase to WA education and the Legislators are scratching for money any place they can. Also, the fiscal needs of the Legislature have led to reductions in the WDFW budget that WDFW is trying to fill. This is not a done deal by any means. WFOA is working with the Coalition of Coastal Fisheries to get changes in the proposed license fees that are more favorable to albacore fishermen delivering into WA.

**Marine Stewardship Council (MSC):** WFOA and AAFA completed the 3<sup>rd</sup> year surveillance audit recently on the

MSC certifications for the North and South Pacific. Reports have been published on the MSC website.

North Pacific Re-Certification: There now will be a re-certification in 2017. Given the ongoing stock assessments for North Pacific albacore and the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for Northern Albacore we are anticipating an uneventful re-certification at this time. The MSE processes which will lay the groundwork for future management structure will be completed in about two years. The 2017 ISC stock assessment will be finalized around mid-July 2017. The ISC albacore stock assessments occur every three years.

South Pacific MSC: The MSC certification for South Pacific Albacore held by WFOA and AAFA has some ongoing issues with meeting certain conditions and achieving scores that can sustain the certification. SP politics in management have threatened to close many high seas areas since there are issues with the expansion of longline catches in the SW Pacific and declining catches. Our fishery that operates on an entirely different age class of albacore by a very small fleet that catches 300-600 tons per season and fishes at least 1500 miles from any longline areas seems to get caught up in the problems. Under MSC we are supposed to develop certain Harvest Control Rules that will remedy the situation thus securing out certification. Given we are such a small segment of the overall fishery in the South Pacific our political clout is as much. Fortunately the U.S. government does seem to know we exist because of WFOA and AFRF's continued presence at the WCPFC and No Committee meeting and communications with NMFS in Hawaii and elsewhere

WFOA has considered dropping out of the South Pacific MSC certification because of the issues involved plus time and expenses, but it does affect some of our members and developing markets they have. So we will be working with MSC and the certifiers to find a remedy within our certification or possibly through a certificate sharing with the New Zealand troll vessels who also have a certification in the SP.

**Public Outreach:** WFOA discussed the promotion of west coast albacore in coordination with MSC as well as Oregon Albacore Commission, but since there is little supply for the winter this will have to be delayed at least for any aggressive public promotion approach. Regardless, WFOA keeps the public informed and

educated of the fishery and activities through its numerous social media outlets such as Wild Pacific Albacore on Facebook and through a public seafood promotional statement on Constant Contact monthly. WFOA at this time is re-formatting the Constant Contact E-Letter and should have it back out there soon. Most content when it is not albacore season is on favorable reports and information on U.S. caught and processed seafood in general.

Photos Needed: We would appreciate new photos of albacore, fishing, catching, handling, processing, and people and boats. Please email to [wfoa@charter.net](mailto:wfoa@charter.net) or send on a thumb drive to WFOA, POB 992723, Redding, CA 96099.

**Member Discussion Forum:** WFOA is developing a membership discussion forum page. This would allow any paid up member to start a discussion thread and/or comment on an existing one. It would be similar to some of the discussion forums connected with NFL teams or other specific issue forums. It would help get out information from members that maybe helpful in solving problems or address issues affecting the fleet. Or maybe just a place to blow of steam!!

**Foreign Crew AP Story (Peter Flournoy):** A federal development occurred when the Associated Press published a story on how foreign crew members were mistreated and held prisoner on Hawaiian long line vessels due to a "loop hole" in U.S. law. There may still be reporters sniffing around to pin a similar story on other U.S. fishing vessels which use foreign crew. If you speak with them you should emphasize a few points. First, for foreign crew these are highly desirable and remunerative jobs. Rather than just getting a low monthly pay of \$450-500/ per month, foreign crew normally get a "share" of the revenue from the catch, thus raising their real pay to thousands of dollars per trip. Secondly, foreign crew are not held as prisoners on board vessels. Rather, it is a requirement of Homeland Security that operators take and keep the passports of foreign crew locked up and inaccessible.

Homeland Security also insists that the crew remain on boards and sometimes requires vessel operators to hire armed guards to enforce this. The only "loop hole" in the law, is that U.S. fishing vessels, unlike U.S. airlines, shipping line, work boats servicing oil rigs in the Gulf, cannot obtain Crew Visas, or "D" for their crew due to an outdated anomaly in the law. Thirdly, both the U.S. Coast Guard and the Border and Protection Service frequently

inspect fishing vessels and interview crew. Finally, point out how important it is for the continued operation of small business fishing operations to be able to hire foreign crew for these positions since they are unable to find stable capable U.S. citizen crews.

#### **OTHER:**

**WCPFC Legislation Passes Congress:** The recent amendments to the WCPFC implementing legislation were meant to accomplish a couple of objectives important to harvesters. First, in Section 16 USC 6902, the requirement to strengthen the Permanent Advisory Committee's ability to comment on USG positions by requiring the Committee to transmit to the US Commissioners the Committee's recommendations 30 days before the WCPFC's annual meeting. Secondly, that these recommendations need to have been approved by a majority of the Committee. And thirdly, that these recommendations "shall" be considered in formulating US positions during negotiations occurring at the annual WCPFC meeting.

Amending language to Section 16 USC 6910 is actually even more important. It requires the Secretaries of State and Commerce to "minimize any disadvantage to US fishermen in relation to other members of the Commission" in US negotiations as well as "maximize the opportunities for fishing vessels of the United States to harvest fish stocks on the high seas", which should be very helpful to albacore fishermen fishing on South Pacific albacore.

The remaining Amendment paragraphs seek to prevent the transfer of fishing capacity and vessels to foreign countries unless such transfers are market based and voluntary (there has been a movement world- wide to force distant water fishing nations to transfer fishing capacity and vessels to disadvantaged nations), and to ensure that management and conservation measures take into consideration "traditional fishing patterns" and "operating requirements" of US vessels. The language of the latter paragraph should continue to bolster the albacore fleet's ability to transship on the high seas if that becomes necessary again in the future.

Some of the most important amendments language:

*SEC. 511. UNITED STATES CONSERVATION, MANAGEMENT, AND ENFORCEMENT OBJECTIVES.*

*The Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of State, in the course of negotiations, shall seek to —*

*(1) minimize any disadvantage to United States fishermen in relation to other members of the Commission;*

*(2) maximize the opportunities for fishing vessels of the United States to harvest fish stocks on the high seas in the Convention area, recognizing that such harvests may be restricted if the Commission, based on the best available scientific information provided by the Scientific Committee, determines it is necessary to achieve the conservation objective set forth in Article 2 of the Convention;*

*(3) prevent any requirement for the transfer to other nations or foreign entities of the fishing capacity, fishing capacity rights, or fishing vessels of the United States or its territories unless any such requirement is voluntary and market based; and*

*(4) ensure that conservation and management measures take into consideration traditional fishing patterns of fishing vessels of the United States and the operating requirements of the fisheries covered by the Western and Central Pacific Convention."*

#### **Yellowfin, skipjack prices jump further against expectations - Undercurrent News- Matilde Mereghetti**

Prices for yellowfin and skipjack tuna for January have continued to rise, against historical market trend in this period of the year. Prices for both species are expected to rise substantially further if catches remain low, sources told Undercurrent News.

Yellowfin tuna prices for January have been offered at up to €2,350 per metric ton and the higher sale recorded was at €2,280/t, one source told Undercurrent.

Meanwhile, skipjack prices in Bangkok have reached \$1,650/t on Thursday, the source said. He pointed out to poor catches in the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean.

A second source confirmed the \$1,650/t price level.

See: <http://tinyurl.com/jhbchha> For Full Story

Good Fishing and Stay Safe!

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