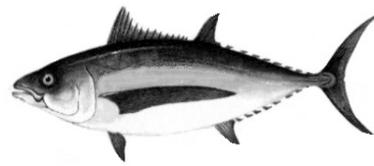


WESTERN FISHBOAT OWNERS ASSOCIATION ©



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Members:

WFOA wishes all members Happy Holidays and a prosperous 2018 with good fishing, high prices, and safety for all. The 2017 season hopefully was an outlier and not a new normal. Albacore catch of 60% of a 20-year catch average seems to point out that something is up. Ocean conditions, feed supply and location, or stressed stocks all could be factors. Most believe it may be more the conditions and feed since stocks have been good in the international scientific assessments. Time will tell, but this sort of drop off has happened occasionally.

In the meantime albacore and tuna management and regulation marches on at all levels and takes most of our time and funds maintaining access to the fishing grounds. This will always be a fight and not making our case would hasten the U.S. albacore fleet's exit from the fishing grounds.

NOTICES:

Annual Meeting: The WFOA board due to budgetary concerns attributed to the low catch in 2017 did not budget for a formal annual meeting in 2018. The turnout was good last March for our 50th season meeting in Astoria, OR but not from regular members who are busy with other fisheries and trying to make a living. WFOA will probably hold an annual meeting again in 2019 at a new location. WFOA will try to arrange enhanced district meetings from January - April with the manager attending most in person or online.

Raffle: The WFOA \$20/ticket raffle which we usually draw four prizes at the AGM is still on. Sale of the tickets has been good and we will again have top prizes up to \$500 for the winners. The drawing will occur around April 1, 2018 and be done in a way to be determined. Anyone can purchase these tickets by contacting WFOA or sending extra fees with your dues. Prizes will be posted soon.

December 20, 2017

WFOA Board Meeting:

The WFOA met online December 11th. The main issue was the 2018 budget given the low catch in 2017 and less AFRF fees collected from processors. Given the stressed budget the board is considering ways to raise revenue now generated basically through processor AFRF contributions as well as annual members dues.

There was some discussion on possibly reverting back to a 2-Hemisphere vessel dues system as it was prior to 2002. With more management issues affecting the South Pacific more effort is required to attend RFMO meetings to keep U.S. trollers access to the ocean. There was no action at this time but it is a possible item for next meeting. There will be no action without outreach to members and processors on any item affecting dues or fees. AFRF is having a similar discussion.

MARKET and CATCH:

2017 Catch - Updated:

Updated figures for the North Pacific U.S. landings have been revised to nearly 8,165/st. That is still about 65% of average but better than it seemed a few months ago. Westport, WA accounted for

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TERESA REEVES

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nearly half of the total landings, followed by Ilwaco, Newport, Coos Bay, and Astoria. By state, Washington's total was 5,707/st, Oregon 2,367/st, and California at 90/st. Not included is some catch sold off vessels and to small markets locally. Also, we do not have landings for the recreational fleet yet.

Canadian Catch: Canadian trollers who could access the U.S. EEZ (45 vessels) had the vast majority of their catch made in the U.S. Zone. Although there are no figures out yet Canadian catch in their own EEZ was reported to be poor. A few U.S. boats fished in Canada and reported similar poor catches for most of the season.

High Seas: There was a higher percentage of catch made beyond the U.S. and Canadian EEZ's this year compared to recent years. Albacore were found across a very wide area with little concentrations. Vessels fished from the 200nm EEZ to the dateline through the season. Although there was not a large effort offshore, it seemed to support a possible resurgence of catch to the offshore region. More vessels may fish in the offshore regions in 2018 starting earlier as in the past.

South Pacific: About 12-14 boats are now headed to the South Pacific for the season. Last season fishing was early starting in late December. We wish the guys luck in this long trip. Markets should remain good. South Pacific albacore is a hot issue with the management bodies internationally. WFOA has been represented at these RFMO meetings trying to keep our very small far offshore fishery separated from the longline albacore fishery which has had some recent issues and expansion by nations such as China into the region. As a source of information the following is a brief history of this fishery we presented a few years back and why we cannot lose access.

Exploration and Development of the South Pacific Fishery- From a White Paper AFRF presented to the WCPFC CAIRNS, AUSTRALIA DECEMBER 4, 2013.

Starting in the mid-1980s the American Fishermen's Research Foundation (a 501c(3) corporation funded by the harvester, processor, and supplier members of the Western Fishboat Owners Association) joined with the U.S. Government's Pacific Fisheries Development Foundation to explore and expand the troll fishery for South Pacific albacore.¹ The total budget for the first phase was \$287,800, the federal share \$115,000 and the AFRF's share \$172,800. The project was to send

two to four albacore troll vessels, 60-80 feet in length, with crews of 2 to 4, to the South Pacific to develop a U.S. albacore fishery and to do albacore tagging. The U.S. vessels, in cooperation with New Zealand, were given permission (by Dr. Robin Allen, then with the New Zealand Government) to enter the New Zealand EEZ in the area near Chatham Island. New Zealand thought obtaining data from the U.S. cruises would be a good idea since:

. . . our knowledge of albacore distribution and commercial potential along the east coast is poor, these vessels would provide valuable data for expanding NZ albacore fishing . . . and an opportunity to see innovations used in the North Pacific high seas albacore trolling fishery.

During February and March of 1986 two troll vessels, sometimes accompanied by NOAA's research vessel, the Townsend Cromwell, fished in waters between 38° and 41° S and 140° to 155° W and caught 100mt of albacore while tagging 702 albacore.

A second phase of the 3 year project followed, with the U.S. supplying \$360,000 and AFRF supplying \$180,000 for a total of over a half a million dollars, to send 6 U.S. troll vessels to fish for albacore during December 1986 to April of 1987. Eventually, 40 troll vessels went fishing in the area catching 4,000 mt in the 1987 to 1988 season, while tagging 1,247 albacore.

A third phase was conducted in December 1988 to April 1989 at an additional cost of \$129,000 with the U.S. government and AFRF again sharing the costs. This part of the project was to send 40 albacore troll vessels to tag 2,000 albacore in the South Pacific fishing area.

The thrust of this effort was to develop a fishery which could deliver to the two canneries in American Samoa. Canneries in California and Hawaii had been closed. Also in 1988, there had been a large influx of Asian drift gillnet vessels taking albacore in the North and South Pacific. A log book sheet attached to one of the reports from the 1988-1989 season had the entry that "Because of gilnet [sic] damage, we are tagging small fish to get the quality of fish you specified . . . 75% of the fish we are catching are gilnet [sic] marked . . ."

The U.S. fleet was not alone in its efforts which resulted in the tagging of 3,783 albacore between 1986 and 1989. In cooperation with AFRF, New Zealand tagged 1,866 albacore and French Polynesia tagged 190. The New Zealand tagging occurred near shore on the west and east coast of the North Island. The U.S. tagging occurred between 170° and 140° W and 38° to 41° S.A.

. . . The U.S. troll fleet for South Pacific albacore flourished from about 1987 through 2000. The fleet declined in the last several years, primarily because of higher insurance and fuel costs, and the reduction of cannery demand for troll caught fish in American Samoa, until recently. In addition some of the carrier vessels used by the fleet to transship to American Samoa have been taken out of service. During that time the canneries in American Samoa came to depend on foreign longline fleets for their source of albacore. As can be seen from the chart below, this fishery developed by the U.S. was once a 5,000 mt fishery employing over 50 vessels. . . .

. . . Recent developments in the focus of a processor in American Samoa, improved freezing and transportation capabilities, and the growing public demand for fresh and fresh frozen troll caught albacore all suggest that this U.S. developed South Pacific albacore fishery can be very important to the U.S. in the future.

The position of the U.S. South Pacific albacore troll harvesters remains firm. There is no scientific or economic basis to close the high seas to the South Pacific albacore troll fishery. This fishery occurs entirely outside of any of the Pacific Island Countries' EEZs.

MANAGEMENT:

Limited Entry: Also given the push for international Harvest Control Rules (HCR's) there may come a time soon that national quotas are set in which case it would be up to NMFS and/or the councils to figure how to restrict the US fleet (despite the fact it is on decline by attrition). If there is a limited catch such as a TAC or limited effort (Limited Entry) into the fishery it would take a couple years or more to implement through the PFMC. Any HCR could and probably would end the albacore treaty with Canada as it is written. This is not in motion at this time but another poor year could change the game!

US/Canada Treaty: 2017 was the first year of the new 3-year regime allowing 45 Canadian access in the US EEZ and historical levels of U.S. access into Canada. The Canadian access was from June 15-Sept 15. We have no figures yet on participation but figure Canadian access of 45 boats was near 100% with most of their catch occurring in the US EEZ for 2017. Little U.S. effort in Canadian waters this year occurred. Low catches and landing reported in Canadian waters by both US and Canadian boats.

There have not been any incidents at sea except a few crowding complaints early in July. Most of the fleet did concentrate in the usual areas and since fishing was sparse there was much competition on the grounds for small spots.

USCG Approved First Aid at Sea Workshops for Commercial Fishermen and Recreational Boaters: Washington Sea Grant and the Port of Seattle Fisherman's Terminal are co-sponsoring two one-day First Aid at Sea workshops on Monday, Feb. 5, 2018 and Friday, Feb. 16, 2018 in Seattle, WA.

Topics covered include: CPR, patient assessment, hypothermia, cold water, near drowning, shock, trauma, burns, fractures, choking, immobilization, first aid kits and more.

When: Monday, Feb. 5, 2018, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 16, 2018, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Where: Nordby Conference Room
Nordby Building, Fisherman's Terminal
Seattle, WA

Fee: \$100 (\$50 for commercial fishermen)

TO REGISTER: Contact Sarah Fisker, Washington Sea Grant, 206-543-1225 or sfisker@u.washington.edu

Logbook Reminder: The U.S. logbook compliance rate for 2016 was only around 80% while Canadian compliance was 100%. Submission of the albacore logbook is mandatory for fishermen targeting albacore with troll or pole-and-line gear. The information collected in the logbook is used in international assessments of the two Pacific stocks (north Pacific albacore and south Pacific albacore) as well as in negotiations of the USA-Canada albacore treaty. While use of an electronic log is not yet

mandatory, it streamlines data processing and helps prevent data entry errors allowing for more accurate and timely summarization of the fishery information

WCPFC Registration issues SP: WCPFC Fishing Zone: A reminder to members if you're planning on fishing west of 150W in the WCPFC zone. We have encountered some issues in the South Pacific where a seemingly minor paperwork issue and a photo of the vessels not showing the Radio Call Sign have been relayed to the NOAA/NMFS PIRO office for potential prosecution and potential large and getting listed forever as an IUU vessel. This is serious and shows sort of how international management can work and potentially put fishermen out of business in an instant. If you are planning on fishing in the WCPFC zone this season make sure you have the Offshore Permit and the WCPFC Endorsement and all the paperwork involved up to date including a picture of the vessel with Radio Call Sign (Doc numbers no longer work)

MSC: The North and South Pacific Albacore MSC re-certifications shared by WFOA and AAFA is almost finished. MRAG is the certification body doing the work starting with site and constituent visits in August. We expect the process to last until early 2018. The last certificate was set to expire December 20, 2017 but has been extended both for North and South Pacific albacore to June 20, 2018, however the new certificate will be in place by then.

There again are conditions that we do more to establish control rules and reference points in a set time frame. We have been able to work around this so far given our limited influence. We continue to be pushed to promote fair and equitable biological reference points and harvest control rules for the North and South Pacific. Again, we have little influence on the politics of international tuna management but we do what we can at the same time protecting our members from undue and irrational management both internationally and federally.

The re-certification will again be for 4 years with action plans for each year we can adhere to. Beyond this certification we do not know if MSC will be a factor for WFOA in the future. There is a discussion within buyers who have supported the MSC certificate on its effectiveness any longer. I am sure this discussion will be of interest to all and we will keep you informed.

OTHER:

Mel Van Ronk: Redcrest man, 77, dies in fishing accident off the coast of Eureka: See: <http://tinyurl.com/y7fjll5f>

Redcrest resident and fisherman Melvin Richard Van Ronk (WFOA member) died November 1st after becoming entangled in fishing gear and being pulled overboard while fishing off the coast of Eureka, according to the Coast Guard Sector Humboldt Bay and the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office on Thursday.

Van Ronk, 77, was fishing on the vessel "Ruth R" out of Eureka about 15 miles off the coast when he became entangled in the fishing gear, according to Coast Guard Sector Humboldt Bay Public Information Officer Audra Forteza. After receiving a call at noon, a Coast Guard helicopter and 47-foot motor lifeboat were sent to the area, Forteza said, arriving about half an hour later. For Full Article

Henry "Chip" Bissell: Chip Bissell who many of you knew and represented AAFA for a number of years died recently.

In 1965 Chip was born in Los Angeles, the last of 7 children to Harriet and Henry Bissell. Chip dove into his future...literally! Chip's family adventures on their catamaran fostered a love of the sea that permeated Chip's life.

Chip graduated from UCSD in 1989 with a BS in Chemistry; Loyola Law School with a Juris Doctor in 1992; and gained admission to the Federal Patent Bar in 1995. Chip was also proud to be an Eagle Scout. See: <http://tinyurl.com/ybagrbk8>

February Newsletter: The next newsletter will be around February 20th. Any supporting member wishing to insert flyers or info sheets should contact WFOA at least a week prior.

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Thanks - Stay Safe