

WESTERN FISHBOAT OWNERS ASSOCIATION

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Members:

December 15, 2021

WFOA wishes all Happy Holidays and an upcoming New Year. After two years of Covid and its effects on the fishing industry combined with uncertain weather and ocean conditions a normal year would be welcome in all coastal and offshore U.S. fisheries.

Fishing: Albacore landings on the west coast in 2021 did not even approach 4,000 tons. U.S. landings in Canada it may make that help make that mark. 2021 is produced only about half the catch of 2018 – 2020 which in itself was 30% off the historical average. The 3rd year of low and lower landings is raising some concern in the management bodies as well as the fishing community. As a historical comparison, west coast albacore fisheries have had some very low years in the late 80's and 90's. Given that they came back in big numbers may be a reason not to panic yet.

Nonetheless, there is increasing speculation on why the north Pacific albacore catch has fallen in the past three seasons. Effort has been down due to weather, markets, and fleet attrition. Another reason may be a shift in ocean conditions and an absence or displacement of forage fish for albacore to feed upon. More research probably should be carried out on forage species in the North Pacific. Also, the increase in some cetacean populations that feed on the same forage species may be a hidden factor which should be considered. We also cannot discount the pressure on the stocks in the western Pacific and IUU fishing as factors.

South Pacific: We expect the same effort in the South Pacific this upcoming season as the past two years with some vessels arriving on the grounds early. Catches have varied widely in the past two seasons but may be attributed to the vast area and few vessels that cover the area. The U.S. needs to maintain presence in the region especially the isolated small boat troll fishery as management (see management section) is considering reducing

catch and effort in the South Pacific zone and our small presence is being caught up in the effort.

Member Dues: WFOA has received an encouraging amount of member dues since October and we thank all members for that. Although member dues are not officially due until January, we appreciate those that pay ahead of time. Also, WFOA has received a fair amount of \$20/st tonnage assessments, all voluntary, which will help us stay in the management game despite low catches in 2021. WFOA's budget for the past year has been bare bones and eventually will have to improve with improved catches but in the meantime, we appreciate the support helping out.

MANAGEMENT: Peter Flournoy has been attending the recent online WCPFC annual meeting and it has some important ramifications for South Pacific albacore trollers that need to be kept on the front burner in 2022. Over the years there has been a push by some of the Pacific Island States to close all of the high seas to fishing including for South Pacific albacore. The U.S. as well as other nations are opposed to this but hybrids of such plans with limited entry or TACs have been in the discussion and there was some action with consequences taken in the annual meeting. First the

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developments in the WCPFC subcommittee meetings should be reviewed as background.

WCPFC Sub-Committees Meetings - There were a number of virtual committee meetings held throughout 2021 which led up to the annual meeting which was held in December. These were meetings of the Science Committee, the Technical and Compliance Committee, and the Northern Committee.

Newer subjects resulting from some of the meetings above including creating a more specific definition of what is meant by "fishing for" albacore in Resol. 2015-02 so nations with a large bycatch of albacore which are not targeting albacore will report catch and effort instead of just reporting they have no vessels "fishing for albacore". Also new is an effort to push hard for completion of the MSE process for South Pacific albacore. This has assumed new importance particularly to the purse seine fleet that catches yellowfin, skipjack and the longline fleets that catch yellowfin and albacore. The pressure is increasing from the processors and environmental groups to do whatever MSC says is necessary to keep their resource certification. What needs to be done is to complete the MSE process with resulting Target Reference Points, Threshold points, and Harvest Control Rules for both NP and SP albacore at the upcoming annual meeting of the WCPFC.

An outstanding issue is how to assure that both the WCPFC-NC and the IATTC MSE processes will come to the same LRP_s, TRP_s, Threshold points and HCR_s. All seem to agree this must be done, but to date the Western Region Office which has jurisdiction for the IATTC has not pressed this point to get a definite conclusion from the scientists. This has been hampered by the fact that despite two meetings of the IATTC in 2021 all the meeting discussions were to resolve issues with tropical tunas and hammer out a new resolution. No time was spent on North Pacific albacore.

In preparation for the annual WCPFC meeting there was a virtual meeting of the Permanent Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section. This virtual meeting was held on October 13-15, 2021. As a summary many recommendations cover earlier WFOA positions such as: preserving the transshipping availability; getting better

information on longline fleets' catches and effort on South Pacific albacore; keeping SP albacore regulations confined to the longline fleet and not have them apply to the US troll fleet; and focusing on child and forced labor without getting into the specifics of wages and hours.

Annual Meeting of the WCPFC - The PAC recommendation to keep discussions of limitations on longline fishing separate from the U.S. high seas troll fishery for SP albacore was carried through to the talking points and U.S. delegation discussions. Going into the meeting it was rumored that the Pacific Island States would possibly seek to stop longline fishing on the high seas. The general consensus was that China would never approve such a resolution. WFOA worked with the PIRO staff to strengthen a talking point that emphasized how little impact the U.S. troll fishery had on the SP albacore stock. As the meeting progressed China took the position that if there were to be any limits on the longline fishery for albacore it should also apply to the EEZs of the Pacific Island States. Initially it was thought that these states would not want to forego the monies they were receiving from various Asian fleets which were fishing in their EEZs. The positions of China and the Pacific Island States were sufficiently in conflict that in fact no binding resolution was passed.

The USG towards the end of the discussion wanted to amend the resolution so it would be binding, however, the Pacific Island States decided they didn't want to go against China and Taiwan and lose the revenue from those longline fleets fishing in their EEZs.

Instead, it was agreed finally that nonbinding report language would be included in the meeting's final report. There was no amendment to the existing albacore Resolution 2015-02.

The language which was agreed to place in the report is set forth in its relevant part below:

" 1. The Commission noted concerns regarding the delayed process to implement an interim TRP adopted in 2018, and the need to take action to rebuild the stock to support the economic viability of fleets, and achieve a long-term TRP.

The Commission encouraged the SPA Roadmap IWG to speed up its process and progress its recommendations.

2. Given the urgency of these concerns, the Commission agreed that until a new CMM for South Pacific Albacore is adopted, each CCM is encouraged to take steps to implement interim controls on South Pacific albacore catch or effort across the convention area south of the equator.

a. CMMs are encouraged to limit commercial fishing of South Pacific albacore within EEZs to domestically applied catch or effort limits in recent years.

b. Each CCM is encouraged to ensure that its flagged vessels for this species shall not exceed the high seas catch or effort (such as number of vessels) of South Pacific albacore by its flagged vessels in recent years.

3. These interim arrangements do not confer the allocation of rights to any CCM and are without prejudice to any future decisions of the Commission. These interim arrangements shall not prejudice the legitimate rights and obligations under international law for small island developing State and Participating Territory CCMs in the Convention Area for whom South Pacific albacore is an important component of the domestic tuna fishery in waters under their national jurisdiction, and who may wish to pursue a responsible level of development of their fisheries for South Pacific albacore in their EEZ or adjacent high seas."

Even though this is non-binding report language PIRO has said that their position is for the U.S. to enforce resolution 2015-02 and the number of U.S. troll vessels fishing South Pacific albacore should be limited to 21 vessels in order for them to meet the requirements of 2(b) above. During 2022 it will be important to work with PIRO and the West Coast Region to craft amendments to 2015-02 resolution which are favorable to the U.S. fleet.

U.S. Canada Albacore Treaty: The U.S. and Canadian governments met on December 14, 2021 to exchange data on the past seasons excluding 2021 (From U.S. State Dept) The U.S. and Canadian government set this virtually meeting to begin to get the U.S./Canada Albacore Treaty annual consultation process back on track, including reviewing the 2019 and 2020 fishing seasons, to

the degree possible. About 40 people from government and industry were on the call.

The official numbers showed what all suspected that a reduction in Canadian catches as well as U.S. catches in that time period and a shift by Canadian vessels into their own EEZ. We suspect the 2021 data probably available in the spring to show the same trend. There was concern expressed over the continued lack of U.S. logbook data mainly from coastal boats landing small amounts and not members of either fishing organization. 2022 will be the last years of the present fishing regime under the treaty and talks may begin later in 2022 to discuss extending, changing, or terminating the treaty. Direction will depend on how MSE will steer a course of catch limits or effort limits on each nation.

The U.S. Dept of State and Canadian government wish to set up an advisory committee on the treaty as far as resolving problems and simplifying issue such as port and EEZ fishing access for the vessels involved on both sides. We hope this gets set up prior to the 2022 summer season.

Pacific Management Council Activities: PFMC HMSAS Committee Appointments.

Commercial Troll; Mr. Wayne Heikkila
Commercial Purse Seine: Mr. Michael Conroy
Commercial Gillnet Fisheries: Mr. Gary Burke
Commercial Deep-Set Buoy Gear: Mr. William Sutton
Commercial North of Conception: Mr. Douglas Fricke
Commercial South of Conception: Mr. Austen Brown
Processor North of Cape Mendocino: No appointment
Processor South of Cape Mendocino: Mr. Dave Rudie
Northern Charter Boat Operator: Mr. Jon Yokomizo
Southern Charter Boat Operator: Mr. Mike Thompson
Private Sport North of Conception: Mr. Tom Mattusch
Private Sport South of Conception: Mr. Robert Osborn
Conservation Group: Mr. Josh Madeira
Public At-large: Ms. Pamela Tom

I have remained on the HMSAS as has Doug Fricke for now as albacore management and possible limited effort and/or catch may be part of the discussion soon. Until now albacore has not been a huge PFMC or HMSAS issue but could turn. Also, the stock status assessment will begin in a year and who knows what that may look like.

30/30 - Conserving 30 Percent of California's Lands and Coastal Waters by 2030: To protect biodiversity, advance equitable access to nature,

and combat climate change, the California Natural Resources Agency today released a groundbreaking document detailing strategies and opportunities to conserve 30 percent of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030.

See: <https://tinyurl.com/2p87r4xh>

<https://www.californianature.ca.gov/pages/30x30>

Marine Stewardship Council: Article - Pacific tuna deadlock points to suspension of MSC certification By Kevin White 13 December 2021

The Marine Stewardship Council has warned the long-term future of certified fisheries in the Western Central Pacific remains "in the balance" after the latest round of talks on the issue ended in deadlock. The MSC said critical intergovernmental negotiations ended "without the necessary progress to ensure long-term sustainable tuna fishing in the Western Central Pacific" last week at the annual meeting of the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

See: <https://tinyurl.com/y5k6zmbm8>

Depending on some of those outcomes both WFOA and AAFA as certificate holders will discuss the future of MSC concerning troll albacore. We have almost zero bycatch or management issues for our small effort in the North and South Pacific but there are so many new certified fisheries that do raise red flags for the certification. Stand By.

OTHER:

Don Bellham, F/V Quashala passed away on November 30th after health issues. Don has been a Canadian director for WFOA for nearly 30 years and seldom missed a meeting. He always supported the organization and probably took some flak at home on treaty positions. He was also active in the fishery in Canada as an advisor. There may be some type of celebration this spring and we will pass along any information to the members.

WFOA Future Board: WFOA re-elected board members each spring. In the past two years the board has just renewed present board members given Covid and lack of being able to have district

meetings. WFOA needs to have actual elections for the positions. There are three vacancies at this time that could be filled but not urgent. Any member that would like to be involved please contact the office or your present director and we can put you on an "interested" list. Presently WFOA has 16 active directors, we can have up to 20 but lesser seems to work OK as long as it maintains around the 16ish. Thanks for your participation in advance.

WFOA Manager Job: I have been maintaining WFOA on more of a part time schedule since we separated from AFRF last spring. My intention was to leave the position but have decided to stay on for a while longer but may start a search for a replacement going into next year. The board in December extended my contract as well as Peter Flournoy's indefinitely as to give as all a period post Covid to figure out the best route.

From: American Fishermen's Research Foundation: It's been a successful 2021 for AFRF, with the reorganization completed and significant bio-sampling and tagging research projects accomplished. Thank you to all of those who have sent in your assessment payments. The list of AFRF contract buyers is below. For fishermen who sold to non-AFRF buyers, we'd like to ask you to make an AFRF assessment payment (\$20/short ton) for the fish sold to non-AFRF buyers.

AFRF contract buyers 2021:

Bornstein Seafoods
Cal Marine Fish Company
Chicken of the Sea
Da Yang Seafood
Pacific Seafood
StarKist
Tri Marine Group
Westport Seafood
Wild Planet Foods
Assessments can be sent to AFRF, PO Box 16338, Portland, OR 97292. Please contact erickac@afrf.org with any questions.

New WFOA Members:

Robert Wright F/V Capriccio Eureka/Ft. Bragg

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