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PETER H. FLOURNOY

June 18, 2014

Ms. Dorothy Lowman
Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Ste. 101
Portland, OR, 97220-1384

**Re: Historic Background of North Pacific Albacore IATTC
and WCPFC Resolutions**

Dear Ms. Lowman:

I am writing to the Council to provide the history of the 2005 Albacore Resolutions so that if the Council decides to discuss these resolutions in the context of giving advice to the U.S. Section to the IATTC it may have a better understanding of the concerns which gave rise to their passage. Additionally, at the IATTC-SC a non-paper was presented which seemed to indicate that the U.S. had not abided by the IATTC Albacore Resolution because there had been an increase reported to the IATTC of catch and the number of U.S. vessels in the fishery during 2012. While the U.S. representatives suggested that data from 2013 should be included which showed that 2012 was an anomaly due to the exclusion of Canadian vessels from the U.S. EEZ, the Council may have some concerns about this issue.

In early 2005 the west coast tuna harvesters were told by U.S. representatives that the (as not yet public 2006 assessment could mean that a 20-30% reduction in the albacore fishery might be necessary. U.S. scientists also informed the harvesters that if there was a problem with the status of north Pacific albacore, it probably originated with the Japanese coastal fleet (not pole and line, but rather small trawlers and longline vessels catching 0-2 year old fish and calling it mackerel) catch of albacore because that was the only albacore fleet which had undergone a recent increase.

Given this information, the harvesters consulted with the Department of State Office of Ocean Conservation about putting forth a resolution in the WCPFC-NC to place a cap on

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albacore effort in the western north Pacific. The response was that the U.S. could not put forth a resolution there because it was not yet a member of the WCPFC. Nevertheless, the State Department made the suggestion that such a resolution on capping effort on north Pacific albacore could be presented at the upcoming meeting of the IATTC in June of 2005. It was explained that the advantage of this approach would be that when the U.S. was in a position to send a resolution to the WCPFC, the IATTC resolution would prevent increased effort shifting from the west to the east. The important point here is that it was the harvesters which sought the resolution. It was purposely left vague in terms of “current effort” because there was no intention of capping either U.S. or Canadian effort. The purpose of the 2005 IATTC resolution was to keep other countries from entering the albacore fishery in the ETP. The purpose was not to cap U.S. and Canadian effort. People seem to have forgotten this.

Later, the State Department withdrew their previous objection and in September of 2005 the U.S. was able to get a resolution passed in the WCPFC-NC to be submitted to the WCPFC for approval in December of 2005. Even though the resolution as passed by the WCPFC-NC only applied to the north Pacific, the Pacific Island States, Australia, and New Zealand said they would not let the WCPFC approve the resolution as submitted. They demanded a companion resolution that would cap effort in the South Pacific troll albacore fishery, even though there was no scientific evidence to indicate that the U.S. albacore troll fleet fishing in the South Pacific had any impact whatsoever on the resource. Thus the U.S. was forced to accept a resolution that was very specific as to a cap on the number of vessels in the South Pacific in order to get at where it was believed the real problem was – off the coast of Japan in the northern Pacific.

Of course over time with Japan practically running the Northern Committee, they quickly exempted their “artisanal” fisheries. Finely, nine years later, it appears Japan may be getting close to the Federal Government being able to manage their artisanal fleets, as opposed to the provincial governments. This might actually improve the condition of the north Pacific albacore stocks. But it should also be remembered that the 2006 and the 2011 assessments, instead of showing the stock was having problems, actually show the stocks are quite healthy and that fishing is below MSY.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to relate this history to which I was an eye witness as I represented the West Coast albacore harvesters.

Sincerely,

Peter H. Flourney