

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON CONSIDERATION OF EFFORT LIMITATION IN THE ALBACORE TUNA FISHERY

Introduction

As an outcome of deliberations over the Laurs-Powers North Pacific Albacore White Paper at its November 2009 meeting, the Council directed the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) to look into “relevant matters” and information needs for the Council to consider related to limit fishing effort in the west coast North Pacific albacore (NPA) fishery. The Council provided guidance to the HMSMT to gather information that could support formal consideration at a future Council meeting. The Council also scheduled consideration of changing the current control date of March 9, 2000, at its April 2010 meeting. The HMSMT met in La Jolla, California on February 23-25 to review the Albacore White Paper and to compose a list of potential issues relevant to the Council’s charge.

The HMSMT began compiling and analyzing information in response to the Council’s directions. This report describes our progress and offers initial comments, organized as follows:

- Review of the North Pacific Albacore “White Paper”
- Issues Related to Limiting Effort in the Albacore Fishery
- Considerations for Changing the Current March 9, 2000 Control Date
- Appendix 1: Additional Information Relative to Participation in the West Coast Albacore Fishery
- Appendix 2: Preliminary Catalog of Data Types Needed to Develop a Limited Access/Limited Access Privilege Program

Review of the North Pacific Albacore “White Paper”

The HMSMT reviewed the final version of the White Paper which was submitted to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Southwest Region in early 2010 and discussed the status of comments the joint HMSMT-HMS Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) compiled and submitted to the authors after their presentation on October 31, 2009. The HMSMT notes that several of these comments were incorporated into the final White Paper and commends the authors for these revisions.

However, there are several key issues and concerns that were left unresolved in the White Paper. These would need to be considered should the Council decide to direct the HMSMT to begin the process of gathering the relevant information to support development of future management options to limit effort. These include:

1. Compiling past and present information for non-U.S. NPA fisheries/fleets (e.g., Japan, China, Taiwan, Canada) including catch and effort statistics; participation trends; pertinent management and regulatory actions; and monitoring, compliance, and enforcement oversight. The HMSMT and HMSAS noted in their previous comments that

U.S. industry support for future management options will be contingent on concurrent efforts in non-U.S. fisheries, so having available information tabulated is imperative.

2. Analyzing the socio-economic impacts of referenced possible future management options to limit effort in regard to vessels that fish multi-gear/multi-species and taking into account pertinent fleet dynamics such as new entries, new construction, composition of hulls, age of fishermen, etc.
3. Incorporating the Scientific and Statistical Committee's recommendation of characterizing fishing effort in terms of "partial F," or the U.S. portion of fishing mortality as a comparison with basing action on a projection of stock status several years in the future using a past stock assessment (stock overfished 2015 based on 2006 assessment).
4. Discussing Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing in the high seas and how it may or may not have impacted the stock and landings for NPA.

Issues Related to Limiting Effort in the Albacore Fishery

The White Paper discusses the establishment of an effort limitation framework that could be implemented at a later date if required by international action. The HMSMT recognizes the desire of the U.S. to demonstrate it is in compliance with international management measures and to take a regional leadership role that would assist in encouraging other NPA fishing nations to take similar action. The HMSMT also recognizes the benefit of early engagement in the task of developing the information needs to support future Council action given the historically slow pace in establishing programs to limit effort. The HMSMT believes, however, that it would be prudent to await further guidance from the Council before compiling the information needed to design a management framework to limit effort, as this process is generally very contentious and time consuming. There are a large number of vessels that are "part time" participants in the U.S. NPA fishery, many of which engage in a "portfolio diversification strategy" targeting salmon, albacore, and crab. This "part time" aspect adds an extra layer of complexity to the exercise. Furthermore, since participation changes over time, the management framework could become quickly dated.

If the Council directed the HMSMT to begin compiling the information in support of a management framework to limit effort, we would draw upon the previous HMSMT experience with developing the information needs for a proposed West Coast longline limited entry program to serve as a guide.

In addition to the HMSMT comments above regarding effort limitation, the team reviewed the information in Agenda Item G.3.a., Attachment 2, and makes the following general observations:

1. A large number of vessels (1,300) participated in the albacore pole/troll fishery at some time during 2004-2008, the time period analyzed for Attachment 1. However, the number of vessels in any given year averaged about 600, an indication that many vessels

move “in” and “out” of the fishery, perhaps as part of a fishery portfolio diversification strategy (See Figure 3 in Attachment 2).

2. About one-third of the vessels account for nearly two-thirds of the albacore landed on the west coast. For example, during the 2004-2008 period used in the analysis, 398 vessels (30 percent) accounted for 58 percent of albacore landed. For these vessels, albacore represents over 80 percent of their landings of all species. For another third of the vessels (446), albacore comprise 10 percent or less of their west coast landings of all species (See Table 1 in Attachment 2).
3. There are a large number of vessels that are “part time” participants. In this analysis, it appears that almost 75 percent of the vessels (964) engage in a “portfolio diversification strategy,” combining salmon troll and/or crab pot with albacore troll. For these vessels, albacore can be economically important (See Tables 3 and 4 in Attachment 2).

These characteristics of the fishery would need to be considered in designing an effort limitation framework that would effectively limit effort while not unnecessarily excluding part-time participants who rely on a portfolio diversification strategy. For example, a “liberal” permitting standard using any landings during 2004-2008 could qualify 1,300 vessels while on an annual basis only about half that number of vessels make landings. Such a standard would do little to limit effort. Given the diverse participation strategies involved, identifying appropriate criteria to accommodate these strategies, yet maintain effort at recent levels, will be difficult.

The highly migratory behavior of albacore and multiple international fisheries targeting the same NPA stock make it difficult to define catch and effort goals for the U.S. fishery off the west coast. There is currently no catch limit, either for the U.S. fishery or any other foreign fishery, and consequently it is difficult to define an appropriate effort limit. Accordingly, a tiered permitting system based on different levels of access privilege could be hard to design if not tied through fishing opportunity to some overall catch limit objective.

Considerations for Changing the Current March 9, 2000, Control Date

A control date is primarily intended to discourage speculative participation in a fishery in advance of limited entry. Use of the control date as a management measure is optional; it doesn't have to be used in any qualification scheme ultimately adopted for limited entry. Detailed information on participation relative to the current control date is provided on pages 8 and 9 of Agenda Item G.3.a, Attachment 2).

Participation in the albacore troll fishery has been stable or slightly declining since 2000. During the period 1990-2009, 2,649 pole/troll vessels made at least one albacore landing. About a third of these vessels appear to have regularly participated in the fishery, both before and after the current control date. The other two-thirds probably represent turnover in the fishery.

It is not clear that a more recent control date would affect the overall number of vessels who might qualify if the date were used in a limited entry qualification scheme. However, if there is

concern about speculative entry into the fishery should the Council decide to move forward with a limited access / limited access privilege program, a new, current control date may be warranted.

Any control date, if ultimately used in a qualification scheme, would have effects at the individual vessel level even if it has limited effect in terms of overall participation. Fishery participants (e.g., HMSAS) would be in a better position to describe how a specific control date would affect fishery participants.

PFMC
3/25/10

Appendix 1: Additional Information Relative to Participation in the West Coast Albacore Fishery

The graphics presented and discussed below are intended to address the HMSAS's November 2009 request that the HMSMT provide information on the characteristics of the current west coast albacore fishery.

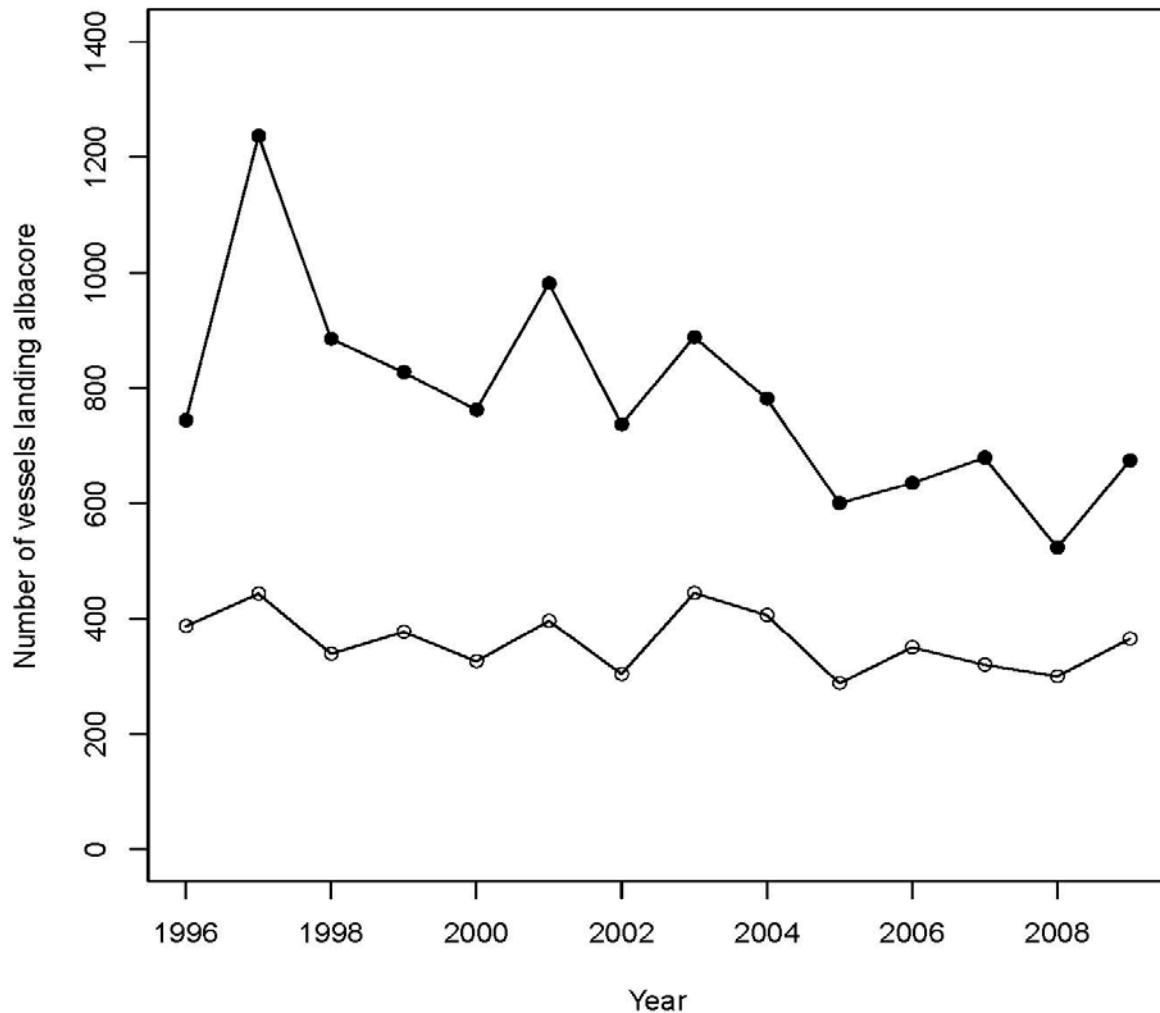


Figure 1. Annual numbers of participating vessels in the albacore surface hook-and-line fishery.

Figure 1 compares the total number of participating vessels in the albacore surface hook-and-line fishery (top series shown on figure) to the number of participating vessels with at least five metric tons (MTs) of catch in each year (bottom series). Vessels with any record of landings for a given year were counted as participating. The graph shows that there are typically about 400 vessels catching at least 5 metric tons of albacore in each year, with a similar number of additional vessels catching fewer than 5 metric tons in

each year. While there was a slight decline in the overall number of participating vessels since 1996, there is no discernible trend over the period in the number of vessels catching at least five metric tons.

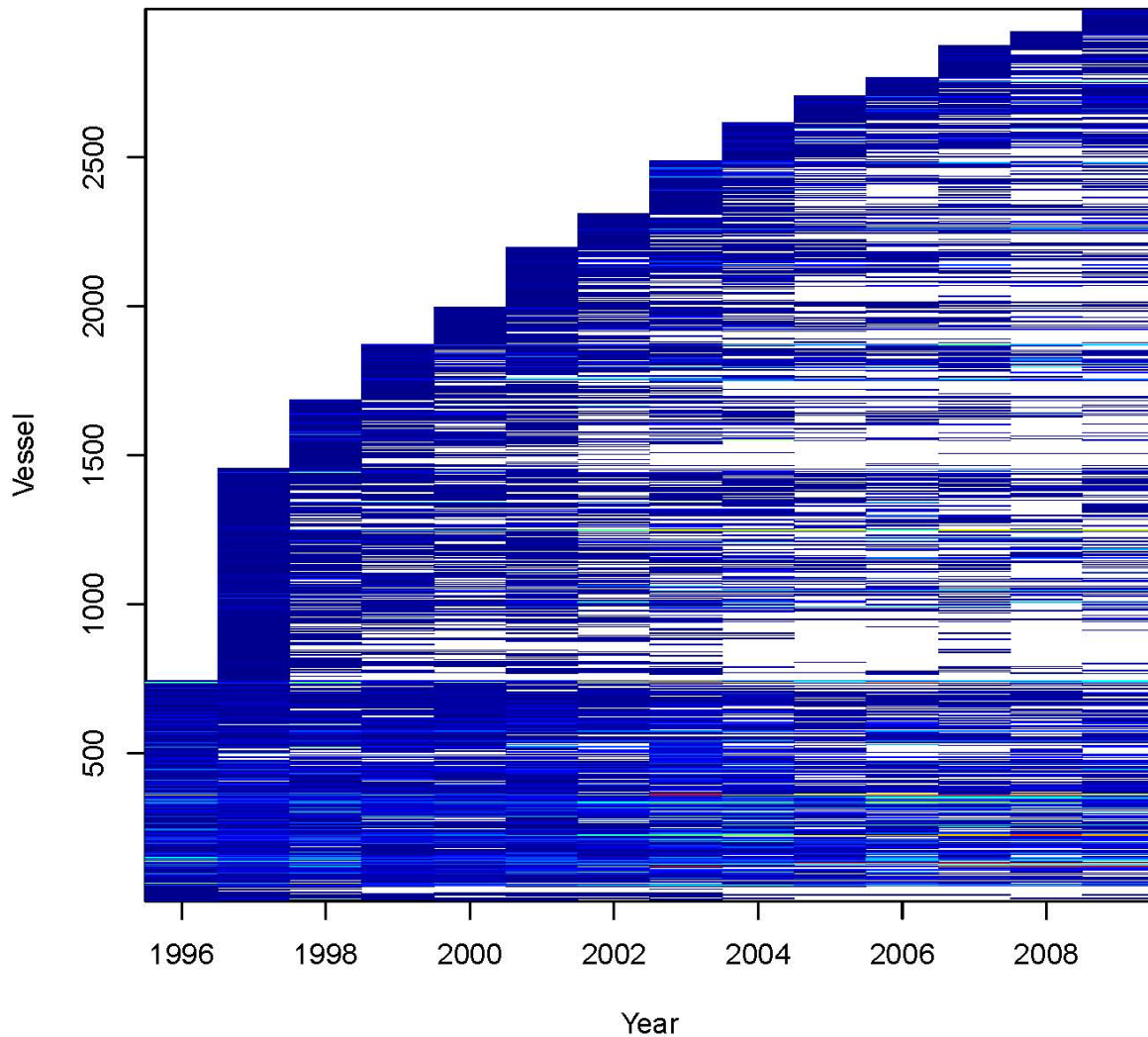


Figure 2. Participating vessels in the albacore surface hook-and-line fishery by year of entry.

Figure 2 represents participating vessels by the year they entered the fishery; subsequent participation for each vessel is indicated to the right of its initial entry point by colored (shaded) bars, with white bars indicating no participation for the year in question. (In this figure and the following two figures the red bars indicate vessels with the highest level of landings.) The initial cohort of 750 or so vessels for 1996 represents not only vessels that entered that year, but also vessels that were already fishing in previous years. The step size for each year forward represents new entry in each subsequent year; for instance, about 750 new vessels entered in 1997, while only 200 or so vessels entered the fishery in 1998. The slightly concave (increasingly flat) shape of the stair step pattern of new entry after 1998 suggests that there was no significant change in the rate of new entry to the fishery after the establishment of the March

9, 2000, HMS Control Date, and that the annual number of new entrants to the fishery has slightly trended down over the subsequent period.

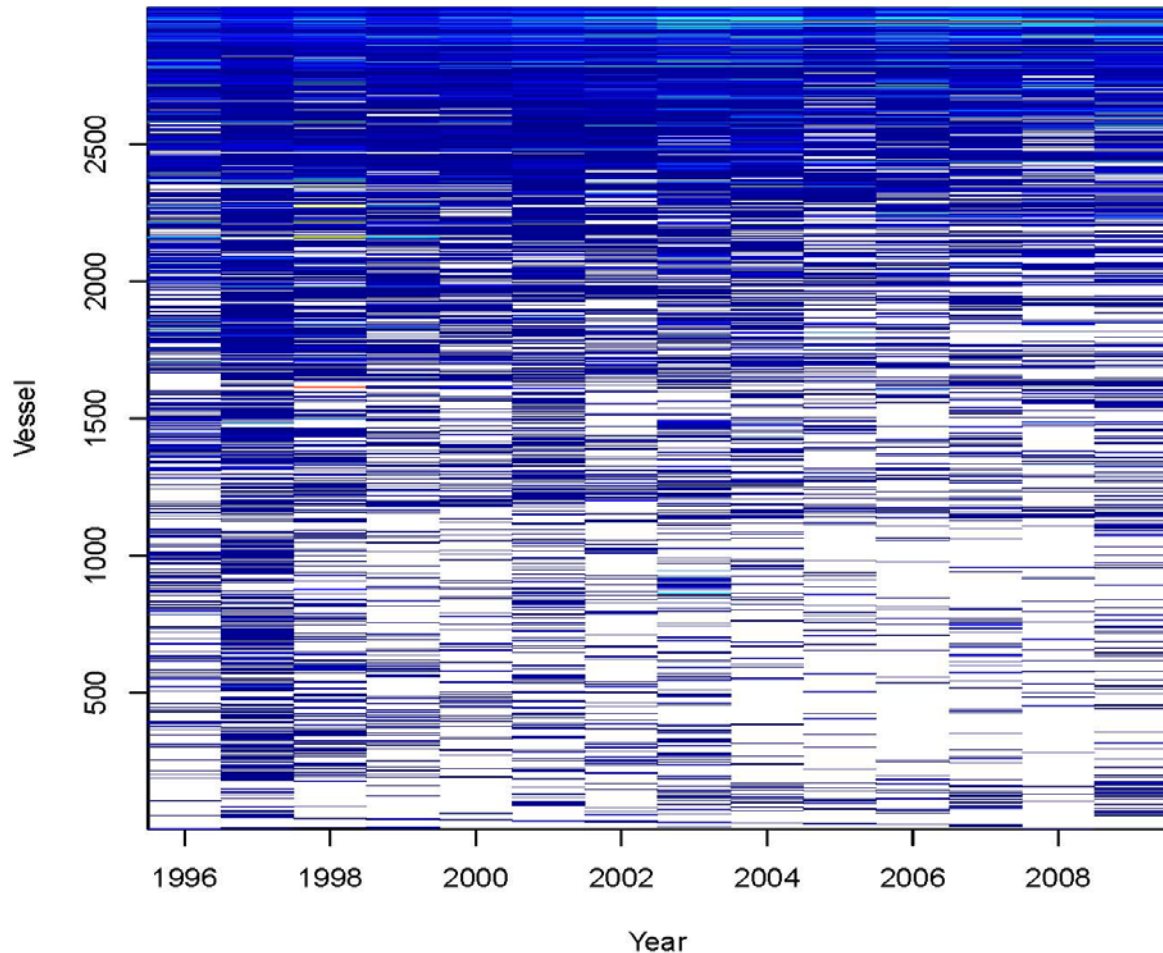


Figure 3. History of participation in the albacore surface hook-and-line fishery, all vessels.

Figure 3 displays the history of participation in the fishery for all vessels with any participation over the 1996-2009 seasons, ranked by years of participation; vessels with the greatest number of years of participation are shown at the top. As noted above, the red shaded bars represent vessels with the greatest amounts landed, while white bars indicate no landings for the year. Aside from 1997, when new entry and participation were both unusually high, the vertical bars on the graph suggest that most years feature a core group of individuals with consistent participation in the fishery, augmented by another group with sporadic, opportunistic participation.

The contrast between consistent and sporadic participants is further highlighted in Figure 4 below, which filters out vessels with less than 5 metric tons of landings in each year. This resulted in reducing the number of vessels with a record of participation since 1996 by roughly two-thirds.

Taken as a group, Figures 1-4 suggest participation in the albacore surface hook-and-line fishery has remained quite stable over the period since 1997. In particular, there is no apparent evidence from the Figures that establishing the HMS FMP or the March 9, 2000, HMS Control Date influenced the pattern of entry to and attrition from the fishery.

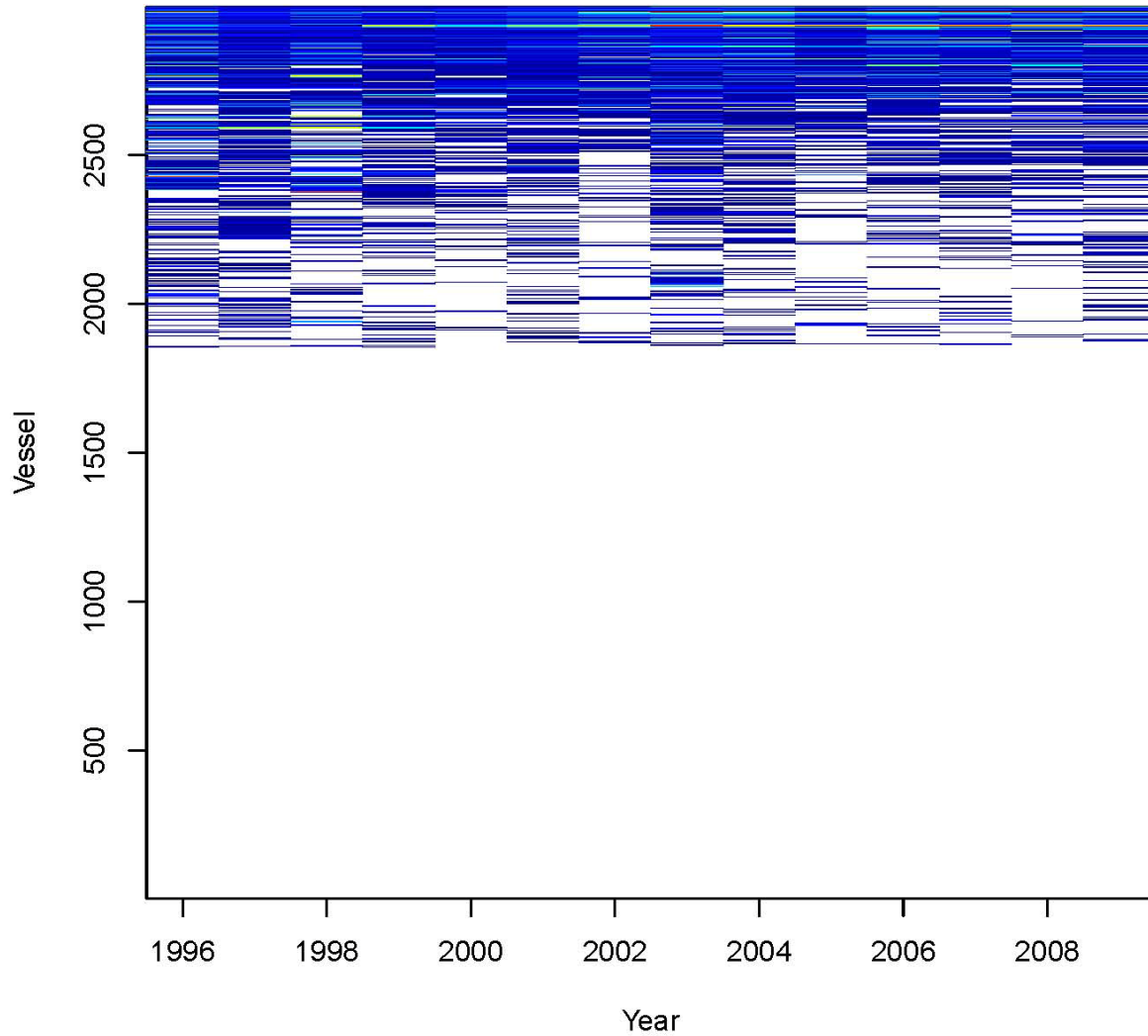


Figure 4. History of participation in the albacore surface hook-and-line fishery, landings over 5 mts.

Appendix 2: Preliminary Catalog of Data Types Needed to Develop Limited Access/Limited Access Privilege Program

Should the Council direct the HMSMT to pursue further analyses on effort or access limitation, the HMSMT proposes to compile and analyze the types of data and specific data elements listed below.

Landings Data

From PacFIN vessel summary files and/or query on FT and FTL tables:

- Date of landing: year, month, day
- Vessel ID: VEID and/or DRVID (USCG document number of small vessel number)
- PacFIN agency ID (AGID)
- PacFIN port code (PCID)
- PacFIN gear code (GRID) and state gear code (FTL.GEAR)
- PacFIN species code (SPID)
- Catch area from AAR table
- Participant group (FT.PARGRP)
- Round weight equivalent in lbs
- Revenue in dollars

Vessel Data

From SV and CG tables:

- Vessel owner address information
- ID type (SV.IDTYPE) to identify Canadian vessels
- Vessel characteristics (length, displacement, etc.)

Permit Data

- Limited entry permits registered to vessel by vessel ID
- General HMS Permit registered to vessel by vessel ID

Logbook and Effort Data

- Logbooks submitted for vessel by vessel ID (Yes/No)
- Days and areas fished
- Landing dates and ports
- Fish ticket ID, if associated with logbook entry