

Technical Consultation with Canada on the U.S.-Albacore Treaty

November 20, 2000

The United States and Canada held a technical consultation on the U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty on November 20, 2000, in Seattle, Washington. Rebecca Lent, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Southwest Region Administrator, led the U.S. delegation, which included representatives from NMFS, PSMFC, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the Department of State. The Canadian delegation, comprised of representatives of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, was headed by Sandy Argue, Advisor, International/Intergovernmental Affairs Operations Branch (Vancouver), DFO.

Agenda items for the consultation included requirements under Annex A of the Treaty, an exchange of data on the fisheries for the past 10 years (to the extent available), Treaty enforcement issues, and information about the status of albacore fisheries management in each nation.

The review of available fisheries data confirmed a significant increase in Canadian vessels' fishing effort in the U.S. EEZ over the past five years. In response to this data, the U.S. side voiced concerns about crowding and potential gear conflicts, and suggested that it might be reasonable to find some way to limit Canadian effort in U.S. waters beginning in 2001. The data review also revealed gaps in information about catch and effort in each other's waters under the Treaty.

A U.S. Coast Guard report on the 2000 season revealed no observed violations of the Treaty provisions by Canadian vessels in U.S. waters. U.S. Coast Guard and Canadian DFO enforcement officials agreed to report any observed violations of the Treaty to the other party for enforcement action. There was some discussion of replacing the Treaty requirement to display the vessel's radio call sign with another more appropriate designation, but no agreement was reached. The United States announced that it will seek to implement in 2001 a "check-in/check-out" reporting requirement for Canadian vessels in U.S. waters.

Both parties have announced "control dates" that may be used in establishing limited entry for the albacore fisheries in their respective waters, and are both developing fishery management plans for albacore fishing (in the United States, the Pacific Council is preparing a fishery management plan for highly migratory species fisheries, including albacore). In this context, both parties also recognized that the emergence of international highly migratory fisheries management organizations might affect how the

troll albacore fisheries are limited in the future, and that it would be important for all the north Pacific fishing nations to work together to prevent overfishing of the stock.

The United States and Canada agreed that more resources need to be directed to data collection and exchange under the Treaty and to management of the fisheries to make sure that albacore resources are sustained for the benefit of the fisheries. The parties agreed to the following further steps:

- To hold further technical discussions to refine data collection and exchange under the Treaty;
- To compile and exchange all national regulations relevant to the troll albacore fisheries and to make them available to the industry;
- To keep each other informed about progress in developing fishery management plans for the albacore fisheries; and
- To hold a meeting in the near future to discuss fishery management concerns.

In addition, the U.S. side will provide Canada with information about a cost-earnings study of the albacore fleet that will be initiated this year.

Svein Fougner, NMFS Southwest Region, will maintain communications with industry representatives and keep them advised as actions are taken or new issues arise.