

ALBACORE MANAGEMENT

In 1981, the United States and Canada entered into a treaty regarding fishing for albacore in the eastern Pacific. The treaty was amended in 2002 and codified by law in April, 2004. It allows U.S. vessels to fish for albacore in Canadian waters seaward of 12 miles from shore and Canadian vessels to fish for albacore in U.S. waters seaward of 12 miles from shore. The treaty also allows Canadian vessels to use certain U.S. ports to obtain supplies and services and to land fish, and it allows U.S. vessels to use certain Canadian ports for the same purposes. The treaty also calls for exchange of fisheries data between the governments of the two nations. Agenda Item G.2.a, Attachment 1, provides information on current compliance requirements for U.S. fishermen.

The United States and Canada established limits on reciprocal fishing access so that, over a period of 3 years, the number of fishing vessels that will be permitted to fish under the treaty will decrease. The limit can be exercised in terms of either (1) the maximum number of vessels that can fish under the treaty for up to 4 months each in a year or (2) the maximum number of fishing months that vessels can conduct in a year without a limit on the number of vessels that can participate in the year (i.e., vessel fishing months). The United States administers the effort limit in terms of vessel fishing months.

If no agreement is reached with Canada to extend this arrangement or to put another limit regime into effect, then, beginning in 2007, the limit will drop indefinitely to 375 vessel months or 94 vessels per year. In any year that the albacore fishing fleet uses less than their assigned quota, the remainder is added to the next year's vessel month quota. However, the additional quota can not exceed the maximum quota allowed in the previous year.

A meeting between representatives of the governments and albacore industries of the United States and Canada has been scheduled for April 24 - 25, 2006. The agenda has not yet been finalized; however, information will be presented by both countries on catch and effort, performance of the fishing fleets, fishing months used, border crossing requirements, enforcement operations, if any, and plans for the upcoming 2006 fishing season. In addition, the Coast Guard and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Enforcement may be asked to report on activities during the fishing season, such as boardings of treaty vessels and vessel marking compliance. Discussion of treaty renegotiation could also take place at this meeting.

NMFS is seeking input from the Council as part of the process for formulating a U.S. position in renegotiations of the treaty. The United States could (1) simply continue the treaty through the default contained in the current agreement, (2) decide not to continue its participation in the treaty, or (3) re-negotiate the treaty. Changes to the treaty that might be pursued through a re-negotiation include reducing the fishing effort allowed to participate from both countries as well as increasing reporting and enforcement of treaty provisions.

The Council may also consider adopting positions relative to albacore fishery management in the international forums. The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) is scheduled to meet June 25-30, 2006 in Busan, Korea; while there is not a standalone agenda item for North Pacific albacore management, there is a recent IATTC resolution on North Pacific albacore (Agenda Item G.2.a, Attachment 2) and albacore management discussion may develop under the

status of stocks agendum. The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) adopted a similar resolution for North Pacific albacore (Agenda Item G.2.a, Attachment 3). The next full meeting of the WCPFC is scheduled for December 11–17, 2006, in Apia, Samoa.

Council Task:

- 1. Provide Recommendations on the U.S. Position for Renegotiating the U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty or other International Issues.**
- 2. Provide Guidance to the HMSMT for their Scheduled May 8–9 Meeting.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item G.2.a, Attachment 1, Guide for Complying with the Vessel Fishing Requirements of the U.S. - Canada Albacore Treaty
2. Agenda Item G.2.a, Attachment 2, IATTC Resolution on Northern Albacore Tuna (C-05-02)
3. Agenda Item G.2.a, Attachment 3, WCPFC Draft Resolution on North Pacific Albacore
4. Agenda Item G.2.c, HMSAS Report
5. Agenda Item G.2.d, Public Comment 1, Letter from Western Fishboat Owners Association

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview Kit Dahl
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Provide Recommendations on the U.S. Position for Renegotiating the U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty

PFMC
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