

## ALBACORE MANAGEMENT

At the April 2006 meeting, the Council was briefed on the negotiations over the U.S.-Canada albacore treaty, which are beginning this year. This treaty establishes the terms for Canadian fishermen to fish for North Pacific albacore in U.S. waters and reciprocal rights for U.S. fishermen in Canadian waters. The terms of the current treaty expire at the end of this year. If no agreement is reached with Canada to extend the current or modified treaty terms, then default terms come into effect in 2007 and thereafter, until new terms are negotiated. Either party retains the right to terminate the treaty, which would end the reciprocal access rights so provided. An initial meeting between U.S. and Canadian delegations to exchange information on the 2005 and 2006 fishing seasons was held in Vancouver, British Columbia, on April 24–25, 2006.

In April, the Council was asked to provide recommendations on the U.S. position for treaty renegotiation, but declined to do so because the process is still in its early stages. Instead, the Council asked for a report on the April 24–25 meeting from Council members attending. Mr. Rod Moore is prepared to provide such a report (see Attachment 1). The Council may wish to develop recommendations on treaty renegotiation at this Council meeting or identify a time by which any such recommendations should be made in order to substantively influence the U.S. position.

The Council has also been briefed on two resolutions adopted in 2005 by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) calling on parties to not increase beyond current levels total fishing effort by their fleets on North Pacific albacore tuna. These resolutions were adopted in response to information raising a conservation concern about the future status of the stock. The Council directed its Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) to review historical fishing effort by U.S. West Coast vessels targeting North Pacific albacore in order to provide baseline information for any decision-making on what measures, if any, might be implemented to address these resolutions. The HMSMT has collected preliminary data on fishing effort, which will be provided as a supplemental report. One possible U.S. response, implemented under the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for U.S. West Coast Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species (HMS), would be to establish a license limitation program (limited entry) for the West Coast North Pacific albacore fishery. Such a response would have to be carefully considered so as not to disadvantage U.S. fishermen in comparison to fishermen from other nations. At the same time, some current participants in the fishery have raised concerns about the influx of participants from other fisheries in recent years, which might be exacerbated this year because of the severe limits on West Coast salmon fisheries.

There is a possible connection between access to the West Coast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) provided to Canadian fishermen under the terms of the treaty and any response to the resolutions. First, some fishermen are of the view that restricting participation by U.S. fishermen through a limited entry program while Canadian fishermen still have access to the U.S. EEZ would be unfair. Second, if North Pacific albacore stock status worsens, the IATTC and/or WCPFC could recommend a system of national quotas, similar to the current national limits imposed on the catch of bigeye tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean by longline vessels. The issue of whether historical Canadian albacore catch in the U.S. EEZ should be counted toward the computation of such a national quota for the U.S. or Canada could become an issue. It is

important to emphasize that at this point any discussion of this issue is largely speculative; the IATTC has not proposed, and is unlikely to propose this year, establishing national quotas. Nonetheless, it may be something the Council would wish to consider in formulating recommendations for renegotiation of the U.S.-Canada treaty.

**Council Task:**

- 1. Further discuss recommendations for a U.S. position on the U.S.-Canada albacore treaty.**
- 2. Review information on historical fishing effort in the U.S. North Pacific albacore fishery, and provide guidance on the development of a response to the IATTC and WCPFC resolutions.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item E.3.a, Attachment 1: Report on U.S. / Canada Albacore Discussions by Mr. Rod Moore.
2. Agenda Item E.3.b, HMSMT Report.
3. Agenda Item E.3.c, Public Comment.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview Kit Dahl
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- c. Public Comment
- d. Council Discussion and Guidance Regarding the U.S.-Canada Treaty, Limited Entry, and Historical Fishing Effort

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