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TO: Don Hansen, Chairman PFMC

FROM: Rod Moore

RE: Report on U.S. / Canada albacore discussions

At the April, Council meeting, I offered to provide a report on the U.S. / Canada discussions on Pacific albacore if no other Council members were able to attend the meeting. Although Phil Anderson was the official Council designee, his other work duties prevented him from attending and he asked me to provide my notes to the Council.

The meeting took place at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans offices in Vancouver, B.C., on April 24 - 25, 2006. There were 12 participants from the Canadian government and industry, and 9 participants from the U.S. government and industry. The first part of the meeting consisted of the annual exchange of data between the governments pursuant to the Treaty on Pacific Albacore; the second part involved initial discussions on how to proceed under the Treaty or some successor agreement in the future.

Following introductions and agreement on process, Dr. Gary Sakagawa of NMFS provided data on 2005 commercial vessel activity for the U.S. He noted that the total catch (all nations) of Pacific albacore was the smallest since 1993, that catch had shifted northward, and that there was less catch in the central and western Pacific. The northward shift correlated with water temperatures while the eastward shift appeared to be due to increased fuel prices.

Dr. Max Stocker of DFO then presented a report on Canadian commercial activity, using data updated from Dr. Sakagawa's presentation. He noted in particular that the logbook coverage in Canada was 94%. He also presented data correlating 2004 logbook data with fish tickets, which showed excellent correlation.

In response to a question from the U.S. delegation, the Canadian representatives confirmed that 18 deliveries had been made in Canada by U.S. vessels in 2005. However, there was no information on how many individual vessels made deliveries or whether the fish were caught within the Canadian EEZ or on the high seas.

Mr. David Hogan of the U.S. Department of State provided a report on activities of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC). In 2005, IATTC discussed Pacific albacore for the first time and passed a general resolution that total effort on albacore not be increased beyond current levels. No definition was provided for "current levels" nor was there any discussion

about what specific measures should be taken to comply with the resolution. The only countries directly affected by the resolution are the U.S. and Canada. At the June meeting, IATTC will begin examining the status of albacore stocks based on whatever data has been submitted to their scientific staff.

Mr. Blair Hodgson of DFO reported on the Western-Central Pacific Fishery Commission (WCPFC). At its December, 2005, meeting, WCPFC's Northern Committee adopted a resolution on effort increase similar to that which had been adopted by IATTC. The Northern Committee will also monitor the status of stocks report from the IATTC. Finally, the Northern Committee recommended that WCPFC consult with IATTC to ensure development of uniform conservation and management measures.

Enforcement officials from the U.S. and Canada then provided a review of the 2005 fishery. There was agreement that Canada used a total of 403 vessel months in the U.S. EEZ in 2005. A total of 208 Canadian vessels fished for albacore, of which 149 fished on the high seas. Both sides discussed compliance issues and the need for the U.S. to generate a better list of active fishing vessels, as well as to ensure that U.S. vessels understand the treaty requirements for logbooks and reporting in when entering and exiting Canada's EEZ. NMFS and Coast Guard representatives indicated that additional effort would be made to ensure U.S. vessels understand the rules.

At the conclusion of the exchange of data and following a short break, the two sides reconvened to discuss the future of the Treaty.

Mr. Hogan for the U.S. emphasized the uncertainties we are facing on status of stocks and effort controls and how these might affect the U.S. industry. He noted the view of some in the U.S. harvesting sector that the advantages of the Treaty accrue more to Canada than the U.S. He also noted that the Treaty was considered important by the U.S. processing sector. Because of the uncertainty, he suggested that the U.S. wanted to proceed with caution on any future bilateral arrangements and that there was a default option for limiting vessel access available under the Treaty which might be the best course.

Mr. Hodgson responded for Canada that the way to deal with uncertainty is to provide a long-term arrangement so that the commercial industries of both countries knew what to expect. Canada views the default option as an incentive to reach agreement, which Canada wants to do prior to 2007. He indicated that Canada was willing to be flexible on agreement language and to explore new options.

Following these opening statements, there was considerable discussion about the details of Canadian and U.S. law and regulation regarding fisheries management, vessel licensing, and entry into the albacore fishery.

The meeting adjourned for the day and reconvened the following morning for a brief session. There was further detailed discussion about the Canadian licensing system. No further progress was made on the future of the Treaty. Both sides agreed that it would be more productive to consult with constituents over the summer and meet again in the fall with perhaps some additional options on the table.