



**AMERICAN ALBACORE FISHING ASSOCIATION**

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## **US FISHERY RESOURCES SHOULD BENEFIT US ALBACORE FISHERMEN AND THE US ECONOMY – NOT CANADA**

At the end of 2011, the fishing regime under the US-Canada Albacore Treaty expired. The American Albacore Fishing Association (AAFA), an association representing US commercial albacore fishermen, viewed this expiration as a welcome development and advocated for a cessation of the fishing regime for the 2012 season.<sup>1</sup> This goal was accomplished and the 2012 season was profoundly better for US fishermen – both in regard to catch levels and the safety and civility on the waters.

Up until the 2012 season, Canadian fishermen, supported by their government, have been reaping enormous economic benefits by capturing fish in US waters at the direct expense of the US albacore fishing industry. US natural resources should first and foremost benefit American workers and the US economy. **The expired fishing regime between US and Canada should not be renewed.**

### **Background**

Following the seizure of 19 US vessels by the Canadians in 1979 and a subsequent responsive boycott of Canadian albacore by the US, the two countries entered into a treaty to establish albacore fishing within each other's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and unloading privileges in each other's ports. Throughout the 1980s and 90s, with Canadian government encouragement and support through advocacy, research, retraining, market development, reduced trade barriers, capacity funding, and loan guarantees the Canadian albacore fleet charted an aggressive path to expanding its harvest in the US EEZ.<sup>2</sup> The treaty has been amended three times, and the fishing regime under the treaty

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<sup>1</sup> The other organization representing US albacore fishermen, the Western Fishboat Owners Association, also supported expiration and co-signed a letter with AAFA to that effect.

<sup>2</sup> Fisheries Development Act; Fisheries Improvement Loans Act; Canada-European Union Trade Agreement; Appointment of Fishery Ambassador; Studies: *Economic Potential for Offshore Highly Migratory Species*; *Tuna Fishing Prospects for Canadian West Coast Fishermen*; Regulatory amendments for Mercury labeling of Canadian albacore.

expired at the end of 2011. The US and Canada are preparing to enter negotiations to renew the fishing regime.

**The expired fishing regime under the Albacore treaty was harming our domestic fishing industry to the benefit of the government-supported Canadian fishing industry.**

Between 1998 and 2011, the number and size of Canadian fishing boats in our EEZ increased exponentially, while US fishing activity in Canada's EEZ was minimal.<sup>3</sup> As a result, our US fishermen were forced to compete in the US EEZ for US natural resources with an aggressive fleet of ever larger Canadian vessels. This dynamic took its toll: In 1997, there were 1200 vessels in the US albacore fleet. In 2010, there were only a little over 600 vessels in the US fleet. The fish taken by the Canadian fleet represent an export of jobs and dollars from our US economy at a time when both are desperately needed.

**The Department of State and NOAA are seeking to begin negotiations with the Canadian Government on a possible renewal of the albacore fishing regime for 2013. It is critical that the Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC) hear from you that this regime harmed US fishermen and our local economies and should not be renewed.**

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<sup>3</sup> The US Government acknowledged current trends as early as 2004 in testimony before Congress: "Since 1998, moreover, Canada more than doubled its albacore tuna fishery in U.S. waters, from its historical average of 75 vessels to 200 or more vessels per year." *Statement of David A. Balton, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and Fisheries in testimony before the House Committee on Resources, Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans, April 29, 2004.*