



Mike Conroy - President
SBN - 165335
Mike@wecofm.com
(562) 761-7176

Please share the following with the AAFA Board and Membership as it recounts items of interest that arose during the month of February and looks forward to certain events occurring in upcoming months.

Follow-up on January's upcoming events:

1. February 7 – 10 – IATTC Extraordinary meeting. Nothing related to albacore was on the Agenda; but Natalie and I did use this opportunity to sit down with Dave Hogan (State Dept) and Heidi Taylor (NMFS) to discuss the US-Canada Tuna Treaty and the possibility of requesting interim Harvest Control Rules during the next Ordinary Meeting of the IATTC (June/July 2017). More on this below.

Federal Register Items of Interest:

The following appeared in the Federal Register which may have an impact on AAFA vessels.

1. February 3 – The USCG has set the calendar year 2017 minimum random drug testing rate at 25 percent of covered crewmembers. <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2017-02-03/pdf/2017-02337.pdf>

Other items of interest:

1. *Meeting with Dave Hogan (State Dept) and Heidi Taylor (NMFS).* Natalie and I had an opportunity to meet with Dave and Heidi during the recently completed Extraordinary IATTC meeting. Amongst the topics discussed were the US-Canada Albacore Treaty and MSC Recertification.
 - a. US-Canada Albacore Treaty. Natalie and I had, what can be deemed, a productive conversation regarding the future of the Treaty. Provided we receive confirmation the catch attribution language is signed by both Parties, we would not protest an extension of the recently completed regime. Ie – 3 years, 45 vessels, etc. We also asked whether we could receive preliminary data from the Canadian Government earlier in the year than we are being made privy to it now. Typically, we are shown that data in the late March to middle April time frame. During the November Council meeting, the Canadian Government made reference to preliminary catch information for the recently completed 2016 season. This shows that preliminary data could be shared well before the March/April timeframe. We also asked about the possibility of requiring Canadian vessels to update/upgrade their reporting protocols and procedures so that we can have increased confidence in the numbers reported. Last May, there were significant differences in the data reported by the two Countries.

- b. MSC Recertification. As you should be aware, the AAFA/WFOA North Pacific albacore tuna fishery is up for recertification this year. The World Wildlife Fund, through Bill Fox, has expressed concern over the fact that no formal Harvest Control Rules are in place. It is highly likely that WWF will file an objection to the recertification. It is unlikely the fishery will be denied its' Certificate; but the filing of an objection will increase the cost of the recertification. We informally spoke with Heidi about possible ways to appease WWF while not overly constraining the fishery. Amongst the ideas that came up was, via the PFMC, asking the US Government to propose interim Harvest Control Rules for north Pacific Albacore during the upcoming IATTC meeting to be held in June/July. Further conversations with Heidi gave us comfort that we don't have to make a final decision on this in the immediate future. Provided we give NMFS advance notice, we can tee this up for discussion during the June PFMC meeting.
2. *State Fish and Wildlife Budgetary shortcomings.*
 - a. Washington House Bill 1597. This Bill, if enacted, will increase revenue to the state wildlife account by increasing commercial fishing license fees and streamlining wholesale fish dealing, buying, and selling requirements. Included within the Bill's language is a \$35 crew license (exempt from the requirement would be the vessel's operator and alternate operator as well as family members – although there is a numeric limitation on the number of family members). See - <http://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1597&Year=2017> for the Bill's text and where in the process it is. Many thanks to Eric Hopfer for keeping us updated and working with the CCF to get a reduction in the cost of the crew license to the albacore fleet (originally was supposed to be \$110).
 - b. State of California. While no Bill has been published yet, the Governor has recently proposed a 12-fold increase in landing taxes on seafood. A hearing is scheduled for March 2 and will be a part of the report for next month. See - <https://www.undercurrentnews.com/2017/02/10/cfsi-california-governors-budget-would-impose-12-fold-average-tax-increase-on-processors/>
3. *The Seafood Import Monitoring Program and Canada*. Interesting commentary of how Canadian fisheries will have to adapt to the Seafood Import Monitoring Program. This could impact how Canadian albacore harvesters report their catch in future years. See <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/canadian-seafood-industry-braces-us-traceability-rules-1.3962778>
4. *Voluntary Safety Initiatives and Good Marine Practices for Commercial Fishing Industry Vessels*. In late January, the USCG released the aforementioned Policy. This voluntary set of guidelines was presented as an alternative to the Alternate Safety Compliance Programs which would have been mandatory. We attended two workshops during 2016 which showed the USCG that a “one-size fits all” approach didn't necessarily make much sense. See - https://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgcv/cvc3/news_and_activities/VSIGMPForCFVs_Jan-2017.pdf.
5. *USCG/NOAA position on citizen requirements on certain U.S. flagged fishing vessels*. As you will recall, in December a group of four Congressmen submitted a letter asking for clarification on what is meant by “fishing exclusively for Highly Migratory Species.” In short, the USCG/NOAA interpret this statement to reference the vessels' **intended target species** without consideration of incidental catch of species that do not fall into the category of ‘highly migratory species’”. That letter is attached to this report.
6. *Hawaiian legislators are considering a Bill which would require anyone seeking a commercial fishing license in Hawaii to appear in person (which would bar non-citizens)*. This would change the law so people not permitted to enter the U.S. cannot get a license to fish on American-flagged vessels sailing from Hawaii. I think there may be federal preemption issues here if the Bill becomes law. See <http://www.nbc-2.com/story/34578054/hawaii-bill-would-ban-licenses-for-some-foreign-fishermen>

7. *Forage fish (including Northern Anchovy) undergo boom and bust cycles even without commercial fishing.* A number of preservationist/obstructionist NGOs have been going after the west coast sardine and anchovy fisheries for a number of years. This study will provide a factual basis for refuting many of the claims of these NGOs. See <https://swfsc.noaa.gov/news.aspx?ParentMenuId=39&id=22407>

Upcoming items of interest

1. March 7 – 13 – Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting in Vancouver, Wa. There are no Agenda items which are specific to the albacore fishery; but as noted above, there will be discussions on amending the HMS FMP.
2. March 14 – Port of San Diego Redevelopment meeting at Sea World/Hubbs. Those of you who tie up in Tuna Harbor (or Driscoll's Wharf) may be interested in seeing a few options of how the Redevelopment Project will impact those areas. If you are interested in information about the meeting, please email Mike Conroy at Mike@wecofm.com.
3. April 18 – 20 – Highly Migratory Species Management Team meeting in La Jolla, Ca. Of the proposed topics, only one could impact the albacore fishery - the review of biological reference points for HMS stocks managed under the Council's Fishery Management Plan for U.S. West Coast Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species. These biological reference points, identified in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, include maximum sustainable yield, optimum yield, and status determination criteria. The HMSMT will initially focus on identifying these reference points for Pacific bluefin tuna.