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**AMERICAN FISHERMAN'S RESEARCH FOUNDATION STATEMENT ON SOUTH PACIFIC  
ALBACORE TROLL FISHERY AND U.S. HISTORIC INVOLVEMENT.**

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## AMERICAN FISHERMENS RESEARCH FOUNDATION STATEMENT ON SOUTH PACIFIC ALBACORE TROLL FISHERY AND U.S. HISTORIC INVOLVEMENT

Western Fishboat Owners Association (WFOA) along with American Fishermen's Research Foundation (AFRF) were instrumental in researching the feasibility of a small vessel troll albacore fishery in the South Pacific.

Through two contracts with the Pacific Fisheries Development Foundation (PFDF) in 1985 and 1986, WFOA vessels explored the fishing grounds in the South Pacific with 3 vessels in 1985 and 4 vessels in 1986.

In 1985 the PFDF contributed \$90,000 and AFRF contributed \$148,000, and in 1986 PFDF \$115,000 and AFRF \$ 172,800 for vessel charter costs and fuel expenses. These were 60-80 ft WFOA member boats which transited from the US west coast over 4,000 nm to the fishing grounds in the South Pacific on which they spent an average of 3 months fishing, tagging, and documenting their catch. The general areas covered were from 35 S latitude to 42 S latitude and from 145 W longitude to 165 W longitude. Very good sign of albacore was had in most regions on jigs, with the average size from 13-18 pounds. Fish were also dart tagged along the way.

After 1986 US vessels began fishing in the South Pacific self-funded and did very well. The fishery lasted from Mid-December through early April and was generally centered about 800 nm south of American Samoa and Tahiti. Weather was always a factor in that area, known to sailors as the "roaring forties". From 1987 - 1998 anywhere from 12 - 55 US boats ranging in size from 50ft to 90 ft fished in the region. Total catches were as high as 5,500 tons with CPUE's also very good compared to the North Pacific.

Vessels in those years were predominantly brine-freezing their albacore and selling to StarKist or COSI in American Samoa. Some of the catch was also transshipped to Samoa by high seas carries contracted through Marine Chartering Co. of San Francisco, and on one occasion to Bangkok. Very detailed records were kept by WFOA on the carrier transshipping.

As freezing systems changed, and quality was stressed, the markets changed more toward the sashimi grade fish and these vessels generally shipped fish from Tahiti and New Zealand to Asian markets. Many of the larger vessels took the fish directly back to Vancouver, B.C. A few boats also unloaded in Ecuador, and in 2001 all albacore landed went through Bumble Bee Seafoods in Fiji for loining and then shipped to Santa Fe Springs for canning.

After 1998, fuel and the wear and tear of fishing in the South Pacific was a self regulating factor. The number of participants have diminished from the high of 55 to less than 10 vessels although 2012 saw an effort by 13 vessels. The price of fuel has been the main limiting factor.

To this date there are no other fleets of any nation fishing albacore in that area except for 1-2 from Canada, and rarely a few from New Zealand. There is absolutely no longline effort south of 30 S in the area east of the dateline. The albacore are traditional jig fish 12-25 pounds, 2-4 year old age class.

AFRF continued to do dart tagging in the South Pacific until around 1998. In 2000 AFRF sent 2 vessels on a charter off the Chilean EEZ and found mainly bad weather, although in the past vessels venturing over to the Easter Island area have found considerable sign of fish.

Weather and costs are very regulating issues for the South Pacific fleet and it's a very serious commitment to take part in it. However it has been very good and could be again. We believe the fish are available but with so little fishing effort occurring now it is difficult to remain on the fish.

This fishery has zero effects on the albacore stocks in the South Pacific, and is totally separate from the longline fishery in the areas of both amount of catch and age class it catches. It would be a shame to divide up the fishery in some sort of catch share scheme that may be appropriate for the longline fleet but not for the albacore troll fleet.