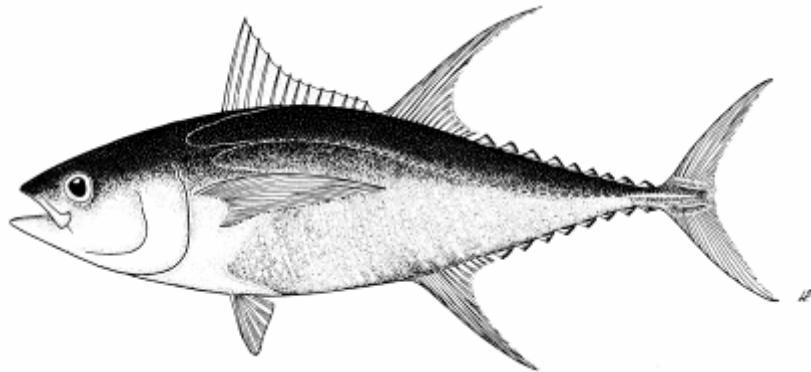




## **Canadian albacore tuna fisheries in the north and south Pacific Ocean in 2004**



**M. Stocker & W. Shaw**

Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada.

August 2005

# **Canadian Albacore Tuna Fisheries in the North and South Pacific Ocean in 2004<sup>1</sup>**

Max Stocker

Fisheries and Oceans Canada  
Science Branch  
Pacific Biological Station  
3190 Hammond Bay Road  
Nanaimo, B.C., Canada V9T 6N7

and

William Shaw

Fisheries and Oceans Canada  
Fisheries Management Branch  
3225 Stephenson Point Road  
Nanaimo, B.C., Canada V9T 1K3

July 2005

---

<sup>1</sup> Canadian National Fishery Report for the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Scientific Committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission in Noumea, New Caledonia, August 8-19, 2005. Document not to be cited without permission of the authors.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Canadians began fishing albacore tuna (*Thunnus alalunga*) in the north Pacific with troll vessels using tuna jigs in the mid 1930s. Canadian trollers began fishing albacore in the south Pacific in the mid 1980s. In the last two decades, larger vessels in the Canadian troll fleet have increasingly expanded their albacore fishing from the North American coast westward past the dateline and southward to the southern tropical convergence zone.

Increased fishing interests on the high seas formed the basis for Canada's entry into the multilateral negotiations for a new, Pacific Ocean wide, Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (HMS) in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. Canada was a full participant at the Multilateral High-Level Conference on the Conservation and Management of HMS in the Central and Western Pacific (MHLC). The Convention was adopted on September 4, 2000 during the seventh and final MHLC session in Honolulu, Hawaii. Representatives from the Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade were in attendance. Canada signed the Convention in May 2001.

Canada is committed to providing detailed catch and effort statistics, logbook data and fishing vessel information, as is required under the new HMS Convention. This report provides brief descriptions of Canada's fisheries in the north and south Pacific in 2004, and recent Canadian fishery statistics and logbook information. Similar reports were prepared for SCTB12, (Argue et al. 1999), SCTB13 (Argue and Shaw, 2000), SCTB14 (Shaw, 2001), SCTB15 (Shaw and Stocker, 2002), SCTB 16 (Stocker and Shaw, 2003), and SCTB 17 (Stocker and Shaw, 2004).

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE CANADIAN ALBACORE TUNA FISHERIES**

### ***North Pacific Jig Fishery***

The Canadian jig fishery is comprised of two fleets. The coastal fleet operates within and near the Canadian and United States fishing zones in accordance with zone and port access privileges under the Canada/U.S. Albacore Tuna Treaty. Vessels in this fleet, mostly 35 to 60 feet in length, concentrate their fishing effort primarily from the southern California coast to the northern tip of Vancouver Island and, in some years, as far north as off the west coast of the Queen Charlotte Islands. Ocean conditions, the availability of albacore, and abundance and distribution of Pacific salmon all influence the size and distribution of the Canadian tuna fleet in any particular year. Effort in the coastal fishery normally starts in June and peaks in September, after the salmon season for trollers has wound down. The catch is primarily bled and blast frozen with some vessels holding fresh caught fish in ice or frozen brine. The catch from the coastal fleet is sold either into U.S. or Canadian plants where the fish are sold in the canned tuna market or the fresh-frozen sashimi market.

The Canadian high seas fleet is comprised of larger jig vessels (most greater than 60 feet) with crews typically of two to four fishermen that remain at sea for trips of several months. These vessels, most of which are equipped with large freezers, operate primarily from west of the dateline to the Canadian zone in the north Pacific. Offshore fishing in the north Pacific on the Midway and Wake Islands grounds usually starts in late May or June and, weather and tuna abundance permitting, lasts through late fall as the vessels follow albacore towards the North American coast. Offshore vessel catches are also sold into the canned market, although the majority is bled and blast frozen then sold into the fresh-frozen sashimi market. There are a number of small processors that have established special niche markets for albacore. The product is either smoked (hot or cold) or loined and sold directly to consumers.

### ***South Pacific Jig Fishery***

Since the mid 1980s a smaller fleet has fished south Pacific albacore between the New Zealand zone and 140°W and 30°S to 45°S. After the end of the north Pacific albacore season (sometime in October), a small number of Canadian vessels fish in the southern albacore fishery during the austral summer months (December to April). These vessels range between 70 and 90 feet and have a crew of four. The majority of the fish are bled and blast frozen with a few vessels using brine. Some of the vessels will tranship their catch to carrier vessels at sea in order to continue fishing operations on migrating schools of tuna. However, in most cases the catch is sold to American Samoa, Fiji, French Polynesia (Papeete) and Canada. The Canadian markets are the same as for the north Pacific fishery.

## **ANNUAL FISHERY STATISTICS**

Prior to departing for the fishing grounds, Canadian tuna fishermen are requested to notify DFO of their intent to fish albacore tuna, and under the Canada/U.S. Albacore Tuna Treaty must indicate to DFO at least 48 hours in advance whether they intend to fish in the U.S. zone (Shaw 1997, 1999). The reporting information includes vessel name, homeport, CFV #, registration #, radio call sign, and Captain/operator name. All Canadian vessels must carry logbooks while fishing for highly migratory species in any waters. Logbook information consists of daily catch and bycatch (numbers of fish), effort (numbers of jigs, hours fished), position (Lat/Long), average fish weight, and SST. Logbooks and sales slips must be returned to DFO for entry into DFO's relational database (Argue et al. 1999).

### ***North Pacific Albacore***

Below, for FAO Statistical Areas (Figure 1), are the estimates of the 2003 and the *preliminary* estimates of the 2004 northern albacore catch by Canadian jig boats.

<b>FAO STATISTICAL AREA</b>	<b>ESTIMATED TOTAL 2003 CATCH (mt)</b>	<b>ESTIMATED TOTAL 2004 CATCH (mt)</b>
Northeast Pacific, Area 67	6,314	7,620
Northwest Pacific, Area 61	330	44
Eastern Central Pacific, Area 77 <sup>2</sup>	91	132
<b>TOTALS</b>	6,735	7,796

The distribution of total north Pacific Canadian catch between FAO Statistical Areas was based on the distribution of reported catch from logbooks. Logbooks coverage was 98% of an estimated fleet of 193 vessels that were fishing in 2003, and 90% of an estimated fleet of 218 vessels that were fishing in 2004.

The total estimated Canadian catch in the north Pacific for 2004 was 7,796 mt, compared to 6,735 mt in 2003. Most of this catch (98%) was taken in FAO Area 67. Catch in 2004 in Area 61 was substantially less than the catch in 2003, whereas catch in 2004 in Area 77 was 45% greater than the catch in 2003. The Canadian fleet off the North American coast caught fish from southern California to the northern tip of Vancouver Island.

### *South Pacific Albacore*

In recent years, a small number of Canadian flag vessels have fished southern albacore stocks below the equator during the November to March seasons. These vessels fished primarily in an area that extends from 130°W to 165°W and 30°S to 45°S. They have landed their catch at ports in American Samoa, Fiji, French Polynesia (Papeete) and Canada. Based on analyses of transshipment records and discussions with skippers, Canadian landings in this fishery from its inception in 1987/88 to 1994/95 are estimated to have ranged from 134 to 335 mt per season. Based on log book, sales slips, transshipment data, and fisherman interviews, the 1995/96 to 2003/2004 catch of southern albacore by Canadian registered vessels was:

---

<sup>1</sup> Excludes catch data from below the equator.

<b>FISHING SEASON</b>	<b>ESTIMATED TOTAL CATCH (mt)</b>
1995/96	136
1996/97	149
1997/98	167
1998/99	253
1999/00	351
2000/01	206
2001/02	144
2002/03	0
2003/04	63

No catch was reported for the 2002/03 fishing season. The estimated catch for the 2003/2004 fishing season was 63 mt.

## **REFERENCES**

- Argue, A.W. and W. Shaw. 2000 MS. An update for Canadian albacore fisheries in the north and south Pacific Ocean. Report prepared for the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish in Tahiti, French Polynesia, July 5-12, 2000.
- Argue, A.W., W. Shaw and N. Williscroft. 1999 MS. An update for Canadian albacore fisheries in the north and south Pacific Ocean. Report prepared for the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish in Tahiti, French Polynesia, June 16-23, 1999.
- Shaw, W. 1997 MS. The Canadian albacore fishery off the west coast of British Columbia, 1996-97. 15 pp. Document submitted by DFO to the Fifteenth Meeting of the North Pacific Albacore Workshop, Nanaimo, B.C., December 1997.
- Shaw, W. 1999 MS. An update of the Canadian north Pacific albacore fishery. 6 pp. Document submitted by DFO to the Second Meeting of the Interim Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species in the North Pacific Ocean, Honolulu, Hawaii, January 1999.
- Shaw, W. 2001 MS. An update for Canadian albacore fisheries in the north and south Pacific Ocean through 2000. Report prepared for the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish in Noumea, New Caledonia, August 6-19, 2001.
- Shaw, W. and M. Stocker. 2002. An update for Canadian tuna fisheries in the north and south Pacific ocean for 2001. Report prepared for the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish, Honolulu, Hawaii, July 18-27, 2002. NFR-3: 9 p.

Stocker, M. and W. Shaw. 2003. An update for Canadian tuna fisheries in the north and south Pacific ocean for 2002. Report prepared for the 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish, Mooloolaba, Australia, July 9-16, 2003. NFR-3: 8 p.

Stocker, M. and W. Shaw. 2004. An update for Canadian tuna fisheries in the north and south Pacific ocean for 2003. Report prepared for the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish, Majuro, Marshall Islands, August 9-18, 2004. NFR-3: 9 p.

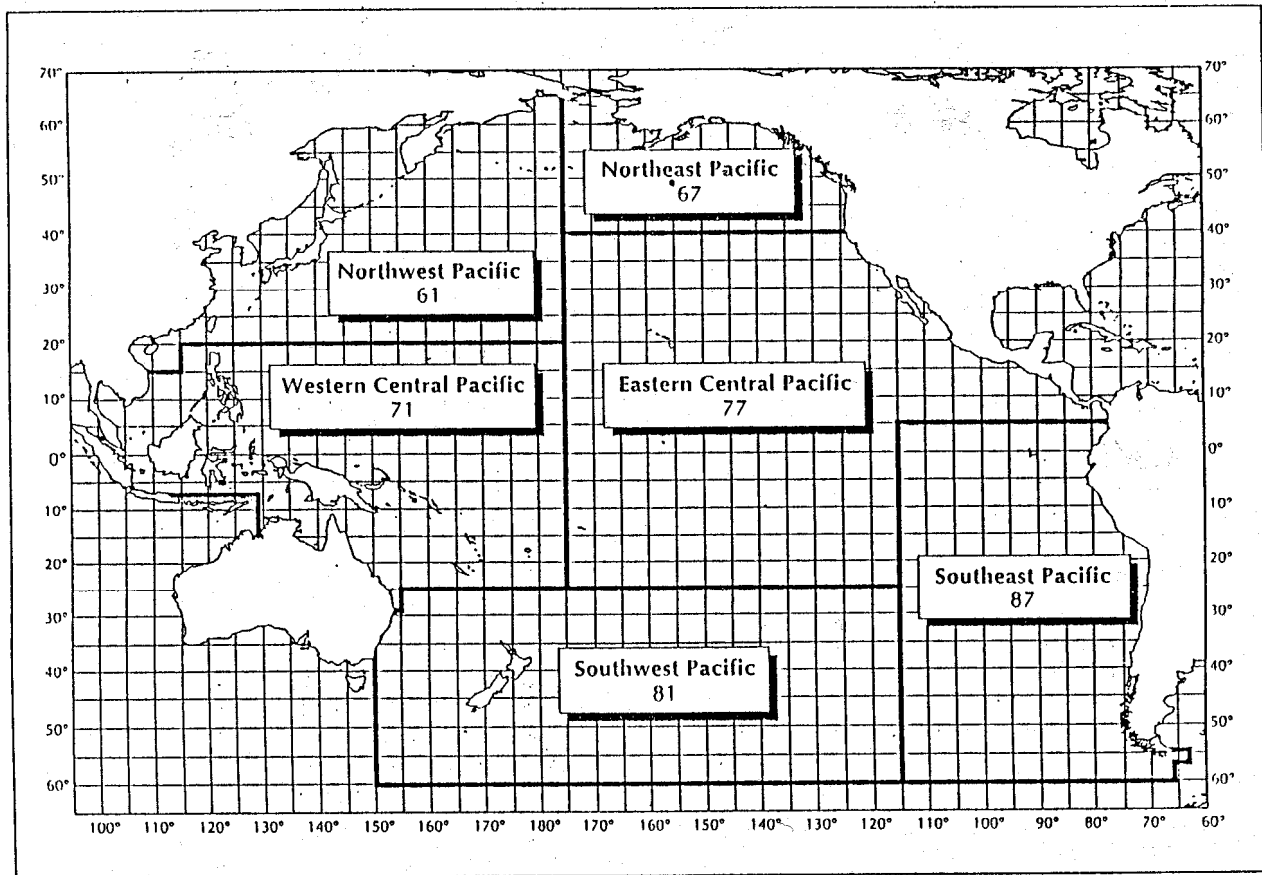


Figure 1. Food and Agricultural Organization fishing areas for statistical purposes.