



WCPFC-TCC7-2011-OB-04

Report on WCPFC Northern Committee's 7th Regular Session (NC7)

Sapporo, Japan

September 6-9, 2011.

Report made by Ocean Friends Against Driftnets (OFAD) president and Albacore Tuna Troll Fisherman (stakeholder), John Harder.

Report to be submitted to WCPFC Technical and Compliance Committee's 7th Regular Session (TCC7)

Report summary:

- Conflict with North Pacific Albacore stock assessment made by ISC.
- CMM 2005-03 non compliance by China
- Comments on Process to develop a Precautionary Management Framework for Northern Pacific Albacore Tuna.
- Commission Vessel Monitoring System (CMM 2006-06)

North Pacific Stock assessments:

OFAD was not supersized to hear the results from ISC on the North Pacific Stock assessment done this year, considering that science dose take in the consideration of what method of fishing is being used to take, or harvest the stocks of North Pacific Albacore. ISC, or science has no formula to compute whether one method of fishing would or could under mind another method of fishing. Nor does scientific data recognize a sustainable fishery to compute MSY. It seems that science is concentrated on how much the species can reproduce itself at a given rate considering that the catch rate, per unit, does not drop. I, for one, do not have a clue to how that can be computed if you do not have all the data. Estimations are only guessing and should be noted as unreliable.

In 2005, the same year that CMM-2005-03 was adopted by the commission, I presented a report on IUU High Seas Driftnet Vessels that were invading my fishing grounds in the CA. In my report, I stated that the Albacore Troll Fishery, fishing in the CA, had been depleted by the

return of the driftnet fishery. I mentioned that Albacore Trollers could no longer yield a minimum amount of one ton per day, per unit (vessel). This is considered, by an Albacore Troll Vessel, as Minimal Sustainable Yield.

In 2006, only three Albacore Troll Vessels gave effort inside the WCPFC's CA, only to find more IUU high seas driftnet activity. There was no production found & we were forced to leave the area. In 2006, North Pacific Albacore stock assessment was reported favorable and was not considered overfished.

From 2005-2011 (present time) there has been no production coming from the Sustainable Albacore Troll Vessels inside the WCPFC's CA. 1-3 Albacore Troll vessels check the CA for production every year, only to leave the CA with empty fish holds. This result totally undermines WCPFC's effectiveness to manage the long-term conservation and sustainable use of highly migratory fish stocks such as North Pacific Albacore.

In 2009, OFAD started conducting observations of Albacore fish stocks, along the West Coast, for detection of high seas driftnet activity. OFAD detected many Albacore with driftnet marks inside Canada's EEZ. It was encouraging to find that Canadian delegates mentioned this to the WCPFC that same year. USA delegates, unfortunately, have yet to pass on, to the WCPFC, the concern of many US fishermen in this regard.

In 2010, OFAD observed as high as 20% of Albacore Tuna, landed on one given day, with driftnet markings, in an area just off the coast of California. This can NOT be considered healthy stocks. OFAD tried to bring this observation to the attention of the 7th regular session of the WCPFC in Honolulu, HA.

This year, 2011, OFAD observed 2%, of a daily catch, to be marked by driftnets. The West Coast production has dropped as much as 50% from last year with a major decrease in the 14-17 lb weight class. West Coast Trollers are starting to give up on the idea that the season is just late.

In conclusion to the North Pacific Albacore Stock Assessment, OFAD would like to make a final statement to the commission and ISC. All hook and line fisheries can work together in harmony with each other and the Ocean. Longline vessels, Pole and Line vessels, and Troll vessels do not conflict with each other in their fishing methods. All hook and line methods give fish a choice to take the bait, or not. Fish do not feed all the time. Driftnet fishing conflicts with all hook and line fisheries and should be eliminated from the high seas. Driftnet gear type will not only eliminate the troll fishery, but all hook and line fisheries. Driftnets most certainly should not be used for the basis of any highly migratory species stock assessments.

CMM 2005-03 non compliance by China:

While observing NC7, OFAD could not help noticing that China was not present at the meeting, nor did China participate in submitting important data involving North Pacific Albacore.

As it is noted in CMM 2005-03, all CMMs shall report all catches of North Pacific Albacore to the WCPFC every six months. It is further noted that all CMMs shall report annually to the WCPFC commission all catches of Albacore north of the equator and all fishing effort north of the equator in fisheries directed at albacore. The reports for both catch and fishing effort shall be made by gear type. Catches shall be reported in terms of weight. Fishing effort shall be reported in terms of most relevant measures for a given gear type, including at a minimum for all gear types, the number of vessel-days fished.

The NC members expressed their concern that China does not submit required information on NP Albacore.

OFAD requests to the commission that this be addressed at TCC7.

Comments on the Process to develop a Precautionary Management Framework for Northern Pacific Albacore Tuna

OFAD would like comment on Attachment A, Annex A, table 2. Fishing effort for North Pacific Albacore. Canada shows its fishing effort both inside & outside the CA area, noting that there has been no effort inside the CA since 2005.

It would please OFAD if USA would show the same breakdown including the number of vessels that fished inside the CA during the years of 2002-04. This would clearly show the decline of the North Pacific Troll fishery directly affected by IUU driftnet fishing.

Commission Vessel Monitoring System (CMM 2006-06)

In regards to implementation of the WCPFC Vessel Monitoring System in the Northwest Quadrant of the CA (west of 175°E), OFAD would like to request to the Commission that this area be especially covered by the VMS program. Since this is the most likely area for IUU driftnet activity, it should be regarded as a “high surveillance” area. OFAD feels that this should be held in high regard to all fairness to the rest of the vessels conducting fishing in the CA.

In conclusion, the North Pacific Albacore Troll Fishery has suffered greatly, for the past 10 years, both inside and outside of the WCPFC CA. It is doing the best it can with what it has left, and could sure use your help!

Thank you for your time and understanding, OFAD president- John Harder

