



Honor and Integrity -- Representing the albacore troll fishery since 1967

**TO: HMS Permit Holders:**

**January, 2009**

The Western Fishboat Owners' Association (WFOA) was founded in 1967 and we remain a non-profit California based association. Our purpose is to promote the interests of the hook and line albacore fishery and other small boat pelagic fisheries.

Until 1998 the main purpose was to negotiate vessels prices with the major U.S. canners. However, in the past 10 years, markets have become very diverse. Over the last couple years WFOA has taken on a new direction aimed at marketing albacore to high-end and quality-conscious U.S. consumers. Such marketing will bypass the payment of overseas shipping costs, and at the same time give the U.S. consumer increased access to this local, wild, and sustainably caught product.

WFOA is moving forward to secure Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification for the troll albacore fishery in order to add a promotional tool aimed at West Coast markets. MSC certification has been popular in Europe, but during our PR campaign in 2008 it became evident that this certification will be more in demand in the U.S. in the near future.

*This certification would be available to anyone meeting the criteria.*

WFOA contracted with a marketing firm, Crocmedia America LLC, in March 2008 to promote locally caught albacore to the U.S. public. The focus of the marketing program, which has been quite successful so far, is the health, sustainability, and nutrition benefits of Wild Pacific Albacore -- and the benefits of supporting West Coast fishermen and fishing communities.

WFOA also continues to represent albacore trollers at federal and international forums to maintain fishermen's access to the ocean. Some of our priorities include:

- Continuing the marketing campaign funded by WFOA to promote local Wild Pacific Albacore in U.S. markets

- Securing MSC certification of the fishery and making the use of the certification easily available to others
- Opposing unilateral management by the U.S. on albacore trollers, especially domestic limited entry on albacore trollers, until a need is clear and a multinational approach is undertaken
- Continuing to raise the issue of IUU (illegal, undocumented, unregistered) drift gillnet vessels -- at every management and legislative forum we attend
- Interpreting the new Magnuson-Stevens Act, especially striving to exempt U.S. vessels engaged in an internationally managed HMS fishery, from unilateral U.S. regulations in required rebuilding of stocks and annual catch limits.
- Representing troll interests at the Inter American Tropical Tuna Commission( IATTC) and the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) regarding quotas, reference points, and other measures.
- Representing U.S. trollers in future negotiations of the U.S./Canada albacore treaty
- Monitoring the unnecessary development of Marine Protected Areas, especially regarding access to offshore sea-mounts
- Keeping the public informed about health and environmental aspects of the albacore troll fishery
- Striving for fair and unobtrusive FDA/HACCP on-board issues if they are required
- Continuing to collect data on health aspects of troll-caught albacore tuna regarding Omega-3s and other positive benefits of eating albacore and seafood in general.
- Maintaining public educational websites for wfoa-tuna.org, PacificAlbacore.com, afrf.org, and albatuna.com
- Managing the American Fishermen's Research Foundation (AFRF), involved in archival tagging, representing all U.S. troll albacore fishermen at management forums, and other public education issues. Continue supporting projects such as archival tagging and selenium research.

Although WFOA's primary focus is on troll-caught albacore, we recognize the need for a healthy and strong U.S. commercial fishing industry. WFOA strives for broad support from all gear types on common issues affecting commercial fishermen. While other groups may have a narrower perspective on issues such as limited entry and the U.S./Canada treaty, WFOA concentrates on the larger picture of expanded and higher value markets for our fish, improving quality on board vessels, and continued access to the ocean for albacore trollers.

WFOA's members own and operate vessels from 30 -125 feet in length. The members of the board of directors own vessels with a range from 42 -76 feet. Some are brine, some are blast, and

a couple are ice vessels. The diversity of our board reflects the entire membership, in both size of the boats and in the other fisheries that many are involved in. We pride ourselves in not being an exclusive organization.

WFOA is very diverse and it is impossible to satisfy all segments of the membership 100 percent of the time. But, by being diverse, we have certain strengths that others don't -- especially in political representation, credibility, and recognition. If albacore is declared overfished like bigeye tuna is now, the federal government may be required under the Magnuson-Stevens Act to take measures on U.S. fishermen to correct this, even if the problem does not exist in the eastern Pacific! You as a fisherman need representation and that can only come and be recognized through an established organization such as WFOA and its research arm AFRF.

It is easy to ignore issues and politics out at sea and voice your opinion on the radio about what should be done or not done, but out at sea is not where the NGOs and government agencies will determine your future! Where it happens is in the endless meetings with those who have agendas not favorable to your needs. This representation takes money, time, and cooperation among commercial albacore fishermen. WFOA will continue to be advocates for commercial fishing interests in general, but for WFOA member vessels first and foremost. Individual fishermen do not have the time to attend these forums and meetings and speak in their interests, but with your help WFOA can continue to do this for you and the albacore fleet.

Fishermen tend to want to be left alone to catch fish, and sell it for a good price. This is only possible, though, with a large organized group -- many small groups with specific interests is simply not as effective. The more members and funds we have, the better able we are to effect change and maintain our rights and the market for our harvest. Without a strong unified group, your access to the fishing grounds and your access to higher prices will certainly be at risk. We have many views, but we also must work together on issues while focusing on the larger picture.

WFOA also manages the American Fishermen's Research Foundation (AFRF), a non-profit comprising WFOA members, buyers and processors of troll albacore, and government agencies for the purpose of researching albacore and conducting educational projects within its charter. AFRF is also registered as a scientific ENGO. AFRF is funded by processors (per-ton contributions), buyers, and fishermen, and has been serving the albacore industry since 1971. The following list of processors support AFRF and its research and education:

- |                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Arrowac Fisheries                | Pacific Seafood Group        |
| Bluewater Fisheries              | Papa George Gourmet Albacore |
| Bornstein Seafoods Inc.          | Pelican Packers Inc.         |
| Bumble Bee Seafoods              | Seafood Producers Co op      |
| Chicken of the Sea International | Shamrock Fisheries           |
| Driscoll's Wharf                 | Star Kist Seafoods           |
| Interocean Fisheries             | Starvin Marvin Seafoods      |
| Island Trollers Inc.             | Trident Seafoods             |
| Jessie's Ilwaco Fish Company     | Tri Marine International     |
| Ilwaco Landing LLC               | Whole Foods Select Fish      |
| Mary Lu Seafoods                 | Wild Planet Inc              |
| New Day Fisheries                |                              |

If you are a fisherman who lands even a small quantity of albacore in any season, WFOA would welcome your support as a member. When you contribute dues, you will be placed on all mailing

and e-mail lists, and can attend district and annual membership meetings where you will have a voice as a commercial fisherman. WFOA supports all legal fisheries and keep a watchful eye on happening in other fisheries as all issues will eventually affect all fisheries as well as albacore.

Annual membership dues are based on landings in the previous season. Landings of less than 10 tons equates to \$125 in annual dues. Landings between 10 and 100 tons is \$300, and more than 100 tons is \$375. You can request an application by contacting me or checking our website at [wfoa-tuna.org](http://wfoa-tuna.org)

*Please feel free to contact me with any questions.*

We appreciate any support you can offer, and promise ours in return.

Sincerely,



/s/ Wayne Heikkila  
WFOA Executive Director

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