

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION: The IATTC meets in Korea in June 2006, which will be the first opportunity for it to review the North Pacific Albacore Resolution which called for a cap on “current effort” and requested information on catches be reported every 6 months. While it still appears unlikely that further “albacore specific” activity will take place at this next meeting, it will be important because the EU is expected to again push a resolution which would ban all high seas transshipment for all fisheries including the North Pacific albacore fishery. Last year WFOA/AFRF representatives were successful in defeating such an effort, but it is bound to be raised again. Additionally, both the NMFS and the PFMC seem to be concerned with defining the meaning of the Resolution’s language that states the “total level of fishing effort” for northern albacore in the Eastern Pacific should not be increased beyond “current levels”. More recently it has been realized that what should occur first is an update of the information on the composition of the U.S. fleet and its catch.

The PFMC HMS-MT meeting on May 8-9, has committed itself to refining the annual statistics on catch and effort by meeting with fishermen to learn of the factors which can impact effort such as low processor prices, bad weather, high fuel costs etc. so that any definition of current levels takes this information into consideration. Another development has been the HMS-MT’s agreement to work closely with the Southwest Fisheries Science Center in their efforts to formulate species specific biological reference points which can then be put forth by the U.S. delegations to the international regional fisheries organizations in an effort to gain some international agreement on what reference points make sense for HMS. There will be an important meeting of the General Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section of the IATTC in Long Beach on June 1, 2006 at the NMFS Southwest Region’s offices.