

WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC FISHERIES COMMISSION MEETING III, DECEMBER 2006, APIA, SAMOA; WCPFC'S NORTHERN COMMITTEE MEETING TOKYO SEPTEMBER 2006; AND TECHNICAL AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE MEETING, OCTOBER, AUSTRALIA : These three meetings are of importance to WFOA member's interests in the North and South Pacific albacore fisheries. The second meeting of the Northern Committee will occur first, and will take on added importance if there is additional scientific evidence presented that the stock of North Pacific albacore is in a state of being over fished. If this is the situation, then the countries of the Northern Committee have obligated themselves by the resolution passed last year to take some action to reduce the pressure on the stock. The resolution read in part that the countries of the Northern Committee "shall work to maintain, and as necessary reduce, the level of fishing effort on North Pacific Albacore within the Convention Area."

The second meeting of the Technical and Compliance Committee (TCC) will occur next. There were many important issues left unresolved from last December's meeting. Some of these deal with when and where an enforcement vessel, of a flag other than that of the fishing vessel, can board and inspect, whether the boarding party can be armed, what language the boarding party should be able to communicate in, how long the boarding party should be able to delay a fishing vessel for inspection, what parts of the vessel should be open to inspection, the reporting, communication, training, and credentialing requirements for boarding officials, enforcement vessel markings, etc. AFRF will again be submitting a paper making its views on these issues known to the U.S. Delegation, (and if observer status is obtained, AFRF may submit its ideas as an observer Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)). AFRF believes boardings of fishing vessels should be limited to those suspected of conducting illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing. Boardings should not be conducted to determine such routine matters as whether the vessel has a license to be in the Treaty Area (this can be done more easily by checking the vessel's description against the Regional Vessel Registry which will be maintained by the WCPFC Secretariat, without the danger of language mis-communications turning a routine boarding into a deadly situation). Similarly, while that boarding officers probably need to be armed for their safety, it is believed this should be limited to side arms, and that adequate training, official identification, and ability to communicate in English are necessary components of any workable system. Further discussions are also necessary concerning the basis for, and parameters of, an observer system

At the third meeting of the Commission it will be important to see that a thorough review of the scientific basis for the New Zealand Resolution on South Pacific albacore is conducted so that there is a limited impact on the surface troll fishery. Additionally, it will be important to protect the fleets ability to tranship on the high seas within the Convention area.