

A Message From the Executive Director:

Only a few pages of the calendar remain in 2023. Never had much use for a calendar on the water. Few weeks into a trip it didn't matter if it was Monday or Thursday. The best marker of time was watching the fish hold fill up. If you were marking the days by bin-board then 2023 was a long year. Nevertheless, the time for reflection and celebration is upon us. In this newsletter, we reflect on the 2023 season, the members of our fishing family that we lost, and the future of the Canadian Treaty. We celebrate a commitment to service, organizational accomplishments, and the generous support of our members.



-The Wraith family

In my house we start celebrating early, donning our holiday apparel on December 1st. It's a time with family and friends, filled with frivolity and reverence. But holidays can be tough. When a disappointing season leads to fewer gifts and more stress. When one of your best friends won't be here to ring in the New Year. Cold dark days can be hard to shake. Personally, I'll be in the same boat missing a friend and second guessing. But I'll also be rejoicing, making a joyful noise, and being grateful. So, from my family to yours Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays. Cheers to the next year being better than the last.

P.S. If you can't seem to shake those holiday blues give me a call. I got cheer to spare and I'd love to hear from you.

Heikkila Honored at PFMC Banquet

-WFOA Staff

Wayne Heikkila was honored by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) during the November meeting held in Garden Grove, California. The annual banquet honors members of the Council and Advisory bodies that have recently retired or will be retiring. Mr. Heikkila spent 25 years representing the commercial troll fleet on the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) before retiring last year. When asked about the recent recognition from the Council, the former executive director of the WFOA conveyed that he, "appreciated the honors" and "those that said a few words on my behalf such as Phil Anderson, Christa Svensson, Mike Conroy, Susan Chambers, Ryan Wulf, and others."

Looking back on his time spent at the PFMC, Wayne shared some reflections about serving on the Subpanel. "I served on that committee since its founding and at a time when Highly Migratory Species were barely on the PFMC's radar. Over the years, as more state, federal, and international regulations were formulated on HMS species across the Pacific, the PFMC was drawn into the process and depended on the HMSAS and

HMSMT (Highly Migratory Species Management Team) for guidance. I believe all the players learned over time, and especially over the past few years, the importance of supporting U.S. fishermen who (unlike some other bad actors internationally) were already effectively managed."

During the banquet Wayne was referred to as a dedicated advocate who navigated personalities and politics while honorably representing the commercial troll fleet. Beloved by many, Wayne received a rousing reception as he accepted his award and said a few words. During his remarks, Wayne made sure to acknowledge his loving wife Carmen, and fellow representatives. He shared some of the history of the Subpanel, and encouraged the PFMC to continue to put the fishermen first.

"I believe my replacement as the albacore troll representative, Clayton Wraith, will do a great job in the future for all U.S. fishermen who most importantly, despite some bad seasons, need to stay in the game and involved," Wayne conveyed.



-Merrick Burden, Executive Director of the PFMC and Wayne Heikkila

Several other members of the PFMC family were honored during the banquet, including Dr. David Hanson, Dr. Caren Braby, Dr. Terrie Klinger, and Mr. Brett Wiedoff. Dr. Hanson spent 30 years as a Council Member as well as serving on the Pacific States Fisheries Marine Commission. Dr. Braby worked for 13 years as a Council Member-designee for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Dr. Klinger served 12 years on the Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel. Mr. Wiedoff worked for 10 years as Council staff.

Update From the American Fishermen's Research Foundation

-Ericka Carlson, AFRF

Research

In advancing the AFRF mission to bring together scientists and fishing industry professionals with the common goal of thriving and sustainable Pacific albacore stocks, AFRF is engaged in several key ongoing research projects. Our collaborative research plays a leading role in the understanding of Pacific albacore and informs sound management practices. The AFRF/NOAA Fisheries SWFSC project on biological sampling over albacore age classes has yielded interesting results on prey preference and feeding behavior relative to environmental conditions. Other projects including the tagging study, which many WFOA fishermen have participated in, have yielded more than 50 years of information on habitat, spatial distri-

bution, and stock structure that support stock assessments and increases understanding of how environment, habitat and prey interact to drive resource availability.

AFRF participated in exciting new research this past season in a joint project with The Pacific Community. The Pacific Community is testing an emerging research method known as Close Kin Mark Recapture on South Pacific stocks. The primary goal of this research is estimating population abundance and structure. AFRF conducted in-port sampling on North Pacific albacore to create a library of samples for later analysis. Research is conducted using a specialized tool (see photo below) to extract the sample from just



-NPA Sampling Tool

[A Brief History]

- AFRF was organized in 1971 with the goal of facilitating cooperative research between the fishing industry and scientists
- Historically WFOA collected fees on behalf of AFRF
- The Board consisted of half seafood processors and half fishermen representatives
- As of 2022, WFOA and AFRF are no longer financially connected
- Today, WFOA Directors hold multiple seats on the AFRF Board
- WFOA continues to support AFRF's mission

below the skin.

With increased consumer concern regarding microplastics, upcoming research will assess microplastic particle levels in albacore.

Join Us!

Is there an albacore related research topic that you're interested in? Pitch it to us. As fishermen you have a front row seat to changes on the water including resource availability and changing ocean conditions. What scientific questions do you have that you'd like answered? We'd love to hear from you.

To add your boat to the list of vessels interested in conducting on the water research, or to join our e-newsletter list and be the first to learn about new projects send your contact information to erickac@afrf.org.

Recruiting Directors

Are you interested in science and how it informs stock management? Do you want to learn more about fisheries management? AFRF is actively recruiting fishermen and processor/buyer directors who would like to play more of a role in strengthening our industry for the future. For more information, contact erickac@afrf.org.

US/Canada Hold Bilateral Meetings in Vancouver

-WFOA Staff

The negotiations between the United States and Canada for a 2024 treaty regime began in earnest on November 28th. Following a failure to agree on a fishing and port access regime in 2023, the Canadian delegation hosted bilateral meetings in Vancouver. An agenda was provided by the Canadians that included a recap of the prior negotiations, the exchange of some preliminary data, and a discussion of terms and other formalities. Originally scheduled to last two days, the second day of the meeting was canceled when it became clear that further conversation at this time would not lead to a resolution. Although the position of each country had not changed since the prior meeting, both sides acknowledged that the meeting was productive and created momentum for further collaboration.

During the meeting an agreement was made to immediately begin work on standardizing how each country measures fishing effort. Interpretation of statistical information has been a persistent issue in these dialogues, with each country contending that the other is misinterpreting the available data. An example arose during the most recent meeting as Canada repeatedly

stated they were looking for a more equitable agreement. Eventually, the US pointed out that Canada was actually receiving the majority of the benefit from the agreement when comparing days of access to each EEZ. As evidence the US delegation pointed out that the Canadians had more days in the US EEZ than the US fishermen have had in the Canadian EEZ. The Canadian delegation disagreed with the US delegations characterizations. The two countries hope that clarifying the benefits each country received from the prior regime will facilitate movement towards an agreement.

A partial data exchange took place during the meeting. Each country shared the early results of the 2023 season while acknowledging the joint working group would finalize the information in early 2024. Canada provided that their fleet caught 1000 m/t in 2023 down from an average of 1700-2000 m/t. While the US delegation reported 2,657.18 m/t down from over 7000 m/t in recent years.

A significant amount of dialogue centered on what would happen if an agreement was reached. For example, the two countries stated that if

they do agree on a regime, port access would begin earlier than the traditional start of the treaty. Additionally, both parties agreed to start formalizing verbiage on the replacement vessel provision that the US proposed last year. No concessions were made by either side during these talks but both countries pledged to keep a watchful eye on the calendar to avoid the confusion of 2023. The WFOA continues to be in direct contact with the State Department and working closely with the US delegation on this issue. WFOA staff will be asking for input from members and will provide updates as they are made available.



Disaster Albacore Season Leads to Historic Reduction in Revenue

-WFOA Staff

Available data compiled by the Pacific Fisheries Information Network (PacFIN) shows that 2023 will go down as the worst North Pacific West Coast Albacore Season in over 30 years. While some tonnage is still trickling in, the total Landed Weight in 2023 as of printing is 2,673.14 m/t, down from over 7,195 m/t in 2022. The true level of the catastrophe can be seen in the revenue numbers for the West Coast Albacore totals. Prior to 2023, the fishery as a whole averaged around \$25,427,961 over the past five seasons. When adjusted for inflation that number increases to \$26,844,640. So far this year, the revenue generated by the

fleet is about \$7,762,885. A disastrous reduction of over 70%. Those alarming numbers do not represent the full picture of the financial difficulties faced by the fleet. Historically high fuel prices and inflationary cost of goods and services all combined to create a nightmare scenario for fishing families.

State by state results are still being finalized, but early data is staggering. Preliminary calculations prepared by WFOA staff using raw PacFIN data shows Washington revenues being reduced by over 70% when compared to the previous five-year average. Using the same metrics, Oregon saw a reduc-

tion of close to 65%, while California's revenues were reduced by close to 40%. According to the WFOA Executive Director, the organization is communicating with officials from each state to obtain official calculations from the Department of Fish and Game. "We owe it to our members and the entire albacore fleet to pursue whatever relief may be available. These are hardworking families. Businesses that are essential to their communities. I recognize there are several factors that led to this, and a lot more data we have to look into, but bottom line, people are hurting, and we are going to try and help."

YEAR IN REVIEW

2023 was a year of transition for the WFOA. After nearly 30 years, Wayne Heikkila stepped down as Executive Director. The new staff had big shoes to fill, so we put on our boots and got to work. Everything was done with a singular focus of benefiting the people that make up this unique community. We are proud of what we were able to get done in 2023 and despite a disappointing season, we are excited about the future. Here are some highlights that we hope are just the beginning of a new chapter in the story of the WFOA.

ADVOCACY

- The Executive Director was appointed to positions in several organizations that will enable the WFOA to advise and advocate for the West Coast Albacore Fleet.
 - ⇒ Permanent Advisory Committee (PAC): Appointed as an advisor to the American Delegation on International Tuna Measures.
 - ⇒ Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC): Appointed to the Commercial Troll seat of the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS).
 - ⇒ The United States of America Delegation: Invited to be a member of the US delegation representing stakeholders in negotiations with Canada on the Fishing and port Access Treaty regime.
- Several actions were taken to represent members interest and concerns about off-shore wind . The WFOA met with the Bureau of Offshore Energy (BOEM) in person, submitted a comment letter opposing the current Oregon Call Areas, and acted as a communication hub for lease holders off California.
- WFOA advocated on behalf of the fleet to minimize the negative impacts of impending International Harvest Control Rules.

SUSTAINABILITY

- Efforts were made to revamp the nonprofits organizational structure. The goal was to set the WFOA up for the future. Changes included establishing new systems in accounting, reorganizing and streamlining membership files, and bringing the organization into compliance with bylaws.
- The WFOA worked in conjunction with AAFA and our fisheries consultant, Mike Conroy, to reestablish the North Pacific and South Pacific Albacore stock as Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified.

EDUCATION

- WFOA staff created specific step by step walkthroughs for fishermen navigating bureaucratic websites and filings.
- The newsletter was revamped to better serve our membership and provide easy to digest summaries of complicated issues that directly impacted the fleet.
- The annual members meeting included presentations from prominent members of the scientific community, industry, and supporting partners. For the first time a recording was made available online.

SUPPORT

- The WFOA played an important role in facilitating communication between buyers, coastal businesses, government agencies, and the albacore fleet. The association replaced Wayne's weekly Friday fleet net with Clay's Monday Marketing Report. The report provided regular updates on catch rates, weather trends, dock prices, and personal reports from the folks on the water.
- In response to new European freezer boat definitions, the WFOA collaborated with the FDA and the NOAA SIP program to keep potential European markets open.
- The association revamped its website to provide easier access to information, important regulations, archives, and real-time updates. This project is ongoing, with some exciting additions and new content planned for 2024!
- To increase efficiency, staff streamlined phone and email communication and redesigned all forms and contracts to create consistent and easily digitized documents that will benefit future members and staff. The staff also established important points of contact within the industry and adjacent fields to pursue funding for programs that directly impact the day-to-day operations of the fleet.

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR 2024

- Continued focus on improving and expanding essential functions of the organization
- Establish an Offshore Wind Committee comprised of active WFOA members from all ports impacted by offshore wind developments
- Upcoming in-person regional meetings focused on strengthening communication with WFOA members and members of the fishing community
- Increased advocacy on essential issues in consequential forums (ex. PFMC, PAC, US Delegation, IATTC)
- Evaluating expansion of WFOA marketing opportunities
- Focus on member priorities as communicated *by members for members*
- And more!



2024

MEMBER PRIORITIES

Member priority surveys were sent out to all members and the results are pouring in. If you haven't received yours yet please reach out to us! After all feedback has been received, the WFOA will report and distribute the final results.

So far, members have voted the following issues as the top five high priorities facing the fleet:

- 1** OFFSHORE WIND
- DEVELOPING NEW MARKETS **2**
- 3** US/CANADA TREATY
- ILLEGAL & UNAUTHORIZED FISHING **4**
- 5** HARVEST CONTROL RULES

Member Highlight: For Joshua Moore, Fishing is a Family Affair

-WFOA Staff

Name: Joshua Moore

District: Puget Sound District (Alaska)

WFOA Member since: 2004

For Joshua Moore life has come full circle. In 1992 at 17 yrs. old, Josh was running his first boat. Before long he was in the South Pacific fishing for Albacore. In 2004 he bought the Castaway and since then he has been taking part in multiple fisheries all the way from Alaska to Southern California.

This year his 17 yr. old son Alex earned a crew share. "Every year on a halibut boat the crew votes on whether the greenhorn will get a share. I stayed out of it, and they voted him a share. He worked hard and he earned it. It's a big deal for a S.K., a Skippers Kid," Josh explained, his voice filled with pride.

Josh knows all too well the life of an S.K. Growing up, both Josh and his younger brother Jonathan worked on his father's boat, the Aljac. "My father had a huge influence on my career. Some of my favorite memories are out on the water with my dad." Now he's making memories with his own son.

There is no doubt that for Josh fishing is a family affair and he is quick to point out that he couldn't do it alone. "My wife Victoria is a total bad-A**." Our son has Autism which makes it even harder to leave. I couldn't have done this without her." A 'hardcore roller derby girl,' Victoria has always been able to stand toe to toe with the snow-



-Josh and Victoria in front of their boat, F/V Castaway



-Young Josh

mobile racing, metal-head Captain Moore. "I needed someone who could keep me in line. She could totally knock me out. She is an amazing Mom and an awesome partner."

Despite the challenges facing fishermen and the time away from loved ones, Josh couldn't see himself doing anything else. Even when he's not on the water Josh can be found hunting or fishing. "I love the challenge of finding fish." Growing up Josh knew he



-Alex on the back deck

wanted to own a boat of his own. "I remember as a teenager telling Bob Becker I wanted to own a boat, so he gave me a manual for the engine of the Seven Daughters and said I better start learning this. So, I took it and read the whole thing." Josh has always taken words of advice from experienced fisherman, including father-in-law, Wayne Alex. "Lifelong fishermen have taught me a lot about what it takes to be successful." When asked what advice he had to pass along to the next generation, he relayed that to be successful you have to, "put your head down and work."

It's that work ethic that he learned from his father and passed down to his son. Work hard and you'll be rewarded. So his son earning a share made for a proud dad moment, even if he wasn't overly excited about what Alex spent his check on. "I wasn't thrilled that he went out and spent the money on a new big screen T.V." Alex isn't the first young fisherman to blow money on an over-the-top purchase. Someday he'll have to ask his dad if he ever got a little carried away after a big season. Alex might be surprised by the answer. As the saying goes, like father like son.



-Josh, Victoria, and Alex

Thank You to Our 2023 Supporting Members

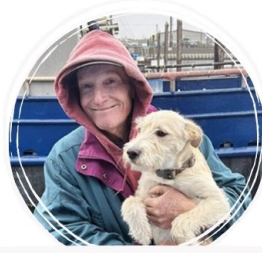
Since 1967 the WFOA has been fighting for the future of the fleet. That commitment to the commercial fishing community would not be possible without the generous contributions of our Supporting Members. Thank you for partnering with us!



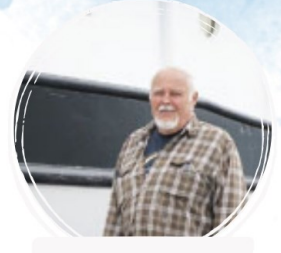
In Memoriam



Roy Schiewe



Mike (Mick) Diamond
~Lost at Sea~



Gino Law



Billy Meng

Our community is filled with hard-working, good-hearted people who have dedicated their time and treasures providing for others. We lost some of those folks this year. The individuals on this page have had an outsized impact on their communities. These folks mean a lot to a lot of people and will be dearly missed by the friends and family they leave behind.



Robert (Bob) Wall



Thomas Pfister

Fishermen are selfless, often avoiding recognition while giving credit to others. The WFOA feels it is incredibly important to remember them. We encourage members to reach out if there are others that passed this year that you would like to see memorialized.

Peace be with them.
Fair winds and following seas.



Mike McCorkle



Dennis Burke



Bryson Fitch
~Lost at Sea~



Richard Hagel

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