

### SAVE THE DATE

#### Southern District Meetings

- ♦ San Diego—April 5th
- ♦ Morro Bay—April 7th
- ♦ Moss Landing—April 8th
- ♦ Bodega Bay—April 9th

*Northern District dates will be held at the end of May. Details will be forthcoming.*

## Message From the Executive Director

Well, I'm heading back on the road and coming to a port town near you. As a wise man once told me, if you wanna talk with fishermen you better go down to the dock. Seems to me there is plenty to talk about. Here's hoping folks will come out and join me when I come into port.

Talking with a member the other day, I realized that I spend a lot of time in formal settings communicating with the measured language used to address important issues. That's all fine and good and appropriate for the Executive Director of the WFOA, but it isn't always the best way to have the type of conversations that can help secure the future of our fleet. We need arguments. We need stories about what has worked and what won't. We need an opportunity to sip slowly and enjoy some friendly competition where the stakes

aren't so dang high. A chance to articulate great ideas, aspirational goals, practical meaningful action and maybe even share some not-so-great plans. So here is my not-so-great plan: I'm driving to ports from San Diego to the San Juan Islands, finding friendly places to host our very informative meetings, providing an excellent opportunity for productive dialogue, and then trying to coax anybody who shows up into going bowling, playing some cards, or at least having a cold one with some decent tunes.

Can't make it? I understand, how about telling a friend. Not a member? No worries, come anyway and I'll give you a free pen and ten reasons why you should join. Got an ok'ish idea that might help the cause?

We're all ears.



## NOAA Seafood Inspection Program—Ready if You Are

-WFOA Staff

As the 2025 albacore season approaches, WFOA is alerting members of steps required to be eligible to export into the European Union (EU) market. Under regulations implemented in 2024, all vessels freezing albacore at sea are now classified as processors under EU law. As a result, boats that catch and deliver fish that will eventually reach the EU must be inspected and listed on the EU Export Listing Module (ELM) via the NOAA Seafood Inspection Program (SIP).

The WFOA can help vessels complete the several steps needed in order to be listed on the ELM:

1. Opening a billing account with NOAA SIP and completing a contract request form which requires a guarantee of payment.
2. Submitting a HACCP plan and

Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) documentation.

3. Passing an initial registration audit following criteria in Part 9 of the NOAA SIP Handbook.
4. Being approved through the FDA's Export Listing Module (ELM).
5. Completing an in-season inspection to ensure food safety plans are being followed.
6. Completing follow up inspections annually

The association is working with NOAA SIP to coordinate inspections and documentation support. Costs associated with this process will vary depending on the number and location of participating vessels. The more vessels being audited in one location, the more the cost per vessel will be reduced. Members should understand

that this process is achievable—but only with timely action and coordination.

In 2024 the WFOA received numerous in season inquiries regarding vessels eligibility to sell to the EU. Members interested in pursuing EU market access for 2025 should contact the WFOA office immediately. Inspections must be scheduled soon to ensure listing is completed before the season begins.



## MSC Certificate Sharing Agreement Update

-WFOA Staff

The WFOA and the American Albacore Fishermen's Association (AAFA) are working toward completing a Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certificate-sharing agreement for the North and South Pacific albacore pole-and-troll fisheries. As previously reported, the latest MSC evaluation criteria (MSC Fisheries Standard Version 2.3) requires joint certificate holders to outline a clear agreement on managing compliance and vessel eligibility, with a focus on maintaining an accurate and timely "List of Eligible Vessels."

Previous MSC versions allowed more flexibility for each association to manage their own Vessel List. While both associations are committed to compliance and cooperative management, notable differences have emerged concerning operational details. WFOA has generally advocated for more flexibility in determining which vessels qualify and when they need to be submitted to

the Vessel List, while AAFA has articulated a need for tighter control of those factors. Despite these differences, both organizations remain optimistic about finding common ground. The ongoing dialogue highlights a shared understanding that a unified certification can provide considerable advantages to the West Coast albacore fleet, including streamlining the certification processes, reducing costs for the associations, and creating consistency within the market.

Despite disagreements, the certificate-sharing agreement will require vessels on the MSC List of Eligible Vessels to be current members of one of the two associations. The expansion of MSC requirements and the risk of certification revocation for non-compliance have influenced this decision. Membership ensures accountability, oversight, and communication, which are essential for maintaining

### Key Takeaways:

- To be on the approved Vessel List, vessels must be members of WFOA or AAFA and fully comply with MSC Chain of Custody regulations, legal standards, licensing, and permits.
- The Vessel List must be submitted annually before the season, with a proposed provision allowing late entries if they meet all requirements before joining the MSC Certification Chain-of-Custody.
- All current WFOA members with up-to-date dues and documents will be listed. The list is available on the WFOA website: [MSC Certification – Western Fishboat Owners Association](#)
- Non-members should discuss certification benefits with their buyers and consider joining WFOA before the season to secure eligibility.

MSC certification. Numerous industry participants oppose this requirement, arguing that vessels meeting individual MSC criteria should be included regardless of membership.

## Congratulations to our 2024 Bob Insinger Award Recipient: Doug Fricke

-WFOA Staff

The WFOA has recognized Doug Fricke as the 2024 Bob Insinger Award winner for outstanding service and commitment to the WFOA. Mr. Fricke demonstrated persistent dedication to the albacore fleet by committing countless hours to advocating for fishing communities by serving on several important boards and committees.

Over the course of his career Doug was a board member of the Western Fishboat Owners Association (WFOA), a board member of the Albacore Research Foundation (ARF), a member of the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS), a US delegate to the Western Central Pacific Fishery Commission (WCPFC) and a past President of the Washington Trollers Association.

ation.

Beyond being politically active, Doug has consistently encouraged the next generation of harvesters in the industry. Whether he is walking the docks or phoning up folks across the fleet, Doug has stayed involved even after retiring from active fishing. His nomination included several testimonials from fisherman who were prompted to get involved after being prodded by a guy in a blue Washington Trollers hat.

"I wouldn't be involved with the WFOA if it wasn't for Doug," said Executive Director Clayton Wraith. "He pulled me aside at a PFMC meeting and said the industry needs guys like me to step up and here I am. I think he's well deserving of the award."



--Doug Fricke

The Bob Insinger award is named after the WFOA's first manager who originally took the position in 1967. Nominees are taken every year after the North Pacific Albacore season. Winners of the award are memorialized on the Bob Insinger plaque and receive a special gift from the WFOA Board of Directors. Submissions can be sent to the WFOA office.



## CAPTAIN'S CORNER

### Remembering Paul Hawkins

Written by Fred Patti

On February 27th, 2025, the West Coast fishing community lost a legend—and, in my opinion, one of the greatest albacore fishermen and one of the best men to ever walk this earth. Paul Hawkins, known to many as Paulie or Zulu, was not just my mentor; more importantly, he was my best friend.

Paulie was a longtime resident of San Diego, where he began his journey in commercial fishing alongside his father, Paul Hawkins Sr., and older brother Terry. Before their fishing careers, the Hawkins family worked as machinists at a San Diego-based company called Con-vair. They initially purchased a small boat named the Sputnik, which they used for albacore fishing in the summer and rock cod fishing in the winter. Their early success in the industry allowed them to upgrade their fleet with boats like the Three Hawks, the Nina, and the wood-hulled Sea Chase. Eventually, they built their dream boats: the steel-hulled Jan Lin and Sea Chase.

Their continued success, which every fisherman knows is almost unattainable, ultimately led to the Hawkins family becoming a four-generation commercial fishing family: Paulie's father, Paul Sr., Paulie himself, Paulie's sons Darren and Scott Hawkins (F/V Jody H), and Paulie's two grandsons, Wyatt and Colton. In my eyes, the Hawkins family is a rare breed, having accomplished something most could only dream of.

My relationship with the Hawkins family began in 1975 when I brought the F/V Elusive from Moss Landing to San Diego. Paulie's father was curious about who this newcomer was, migrating from the sport docks to the commercial fishing basin. From that moment, my friendship with Paulie blossomed. From day one, Paulie generously shared tips on

albacore fishing and always checked in during the season. I'm sure, in part, Paulie was doing what he loved—fishing—but for information on schools, weather, and our catch. However, the knowledge I gained from him about fishing and life far outweighed anything I could ever share with him.

Paulie was always ready to help fellow fishermen with mechanical issues and had an answer for nearly every question a fisherman may face. His generosity and willingness to help others were among the many qualities that made him a true legend.

To say I am saddened by Paulie's passing would be an understatement. While Paulie may no longer be with us, his memory lives on through his family, with whom I am grateful to have

developed deep relationships with over the last 40 years. I'm thankful for his wife of over 60 years, Rita Hawkins, and for his son Scott and his wonderful family.

I am truly honored and privileged to have known Paulie, and I'm sure anyone who had the pleasure of knowing him would say the same.

Goodbye, my friend. You will be greatly missed by my family and I, but never forgotten.

*Editors Note- The WFOA works hard to amplify the voices of the fleet. This column is reserved for members to share their thoughts and opinions. Have something to contribute? Send it to the staff for publication.*



## Federal Impacts on Our Fleet

-WFOA Staff

Following the inauguration of a new administration, several changes in the federal government have taken place. While our neighbors may only hear about these changes on the news, the commercial fishing fleet is being directly impacted in several ways. Many federal agencies that impact the fisheries have received memos and new directives that have created uncertainty about the next steps and the future of specific programs and departments. Reduction in work force have already led to delays and will likely result in additional disruptions. These conditions require the fleet to be proactive in monitoring changes that those delays and policies may have on the upcoming season. The following is a brief overview of issues we're monitoring.

### US/Canada Treaty Negotiations

Recent directives from the State Department has resulted in a pause of all international treaty negotiations. The head of the US/Canada Treaty Delegation has petitioned that the Albacore Treaty should be exempt due to its voluntary nature and immediate practical implications. A final decision has not been reached. The delay impacts reciprocal fishing access, and Canadian authorities have postponed port access approvals for U.S. vessels until further clarity emerges. Vessels relying on Canadian port access should be prepared for disruptions. As of publishing time, the Treaty Working Group has tentatively agreed to meet on April 24th for the annual data exchange. This exchange is normally a precursor to significant delegation discussions.

### Offshore Wind

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) has recently postponed its planned Virtual Public Meetings on the draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS). This decision aligns with the Administration's Presidential Memorandum temporarily halting offshore wind leasing on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). The memorandum also pauses new or renewed approvals, rights-of-way, permits, leases, or loans for offshore wind projects pending a review of federal wind leasing and permitting practices.

### Harvest Control Rules

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced the postponement of its scheduled North Pacific albacore (NPALB) management meeting. Originally set for February 20, 2025, this meeting was intended to address important discussions on the Harvest Control Rule (HCR) and potential updates under the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) guidelines, which directly impact West Coast albacore fisheries. NMFS communicated the postponement on February 7, 2025, without specifying a new date. NOAA officials confirmed they intend to reschedule the workshop as soon as possible. Meanwhile US delegates are participating in RFMO discussions in an informal capacity.

### Immigration and Foreign Crew

Immigration issues have been a major point of emphasis of the current administration. It is unclear at this point what impact changes in policy will have on the issue of foreign crew on American flagged vessels. Historically, foreign crew have boarded vessels in either Mexico or Canada. As of the time of this newsletter, multiple reports from WFOA members confirm that no visas had been issued for crew coming into Canada. Advocates for changes in the US policy hope that revamping of immigration policies could lead to options to bring fishing crews into the US.



### Grants & Tariffs

A number of grants and federal funding programs have been eliminated during the first few months of the new administration. Questions are being raised about constraints on grant funding used for fishery related projects in the future. Also causing uncertainty has been the emphasis on tariffs. At this time seafood products have not been included in the tariff trade tactics, but both boats and buyers are raising concerns. Multiple buyers have communicated to the WFOA that the markets will be impacted dramatically if the export cost goes up due to reciprocal tariffs. Some hope that tariffs on foreign imports of seafood could help build domestic markets and increase US demand for locally harvested fish.

### Disaster Relief

Although the tri-state fishery disaster request for the 2023 albacore season has been formally submitted to the Secretary of Commerce, the timeline for approval and funding remains uncertain due to ongoing leadership transitions within NOAA Fisheries and the Department of Commerce.

Despite clear documentation of economic harm and coordinated state support, no determination has been made. WFOA has continued engaging directly with federal and state officials to advocate for timely action, but members should be aware that delays at the federal level may impact both the timing and availability of relief funds.

## Member Highlight: Ready to Rally for Albacore's Future

-WFOA Staff

**Name:** Erik Johnson

**District:** Westport WA

If you're trying to track down Washington based member Erik Johnson, keep a look out for the self-proclaimed "ugliest boat in the fleet." The rusty steamer may be a little sore on the eyes, but mechanically it gets the job done and Erik has bigger priorities than aesthetics. Erik was recently appointed to the Pacific Fisheries Management Council, an assignment that he didn't necessarily seek out, but one that he takes seriously. "I said, if I get appointed I'm going to put in 110% here to make a difference." Once he got involved in the process and saw the dramatic impact even an administration change could have on the fisheries, he knew he was putting his energy into something that mattered.

***"If there's ever a time to unite a voice for American fishermen, now's the time."***

Erik has been at this for a while. As the son of a first-generation Bering Sea crab fisherman, he decided pretty early on that he didn't want to go to college and wanted get out on the ocean instead. After one semester at Sac State, he was shipped off to the Bering Sea and he's been involved in a lot of different fisheries ever since. In addition to being drawn to the water, he's always enjoyed the hard work and planning aspects of fishing. "I like the constant change in decision making that goes on from hour to hour and day to day. Weather patterns, where are we going to go, there are too many boats here, we gotta find new fish... I've always enjoyed the hunting aspect of fishing." But he recognizes that the lifestyle does take sacrifice, and being able to survive in this profession and raise a family has become increasingly difficult.

With three kids ages 3-8, Erik is



-Erik & family

highly motivated to problem solve and help where he can to protect the fisheries. He enjoys taking his kids out on the water with him and appreciates how the schedule of a commercial fisherman can provide opportunity for intentional family time. "I like being able to have the time off when I'm done fishing and get to spend really good, quality time with the family. That's really important." When he's not sport fishing with the kids he's busy with his hard working wife, Jennifer, on their 27 acre hobby farm where she grows vegetable starts.

Erik views these next few years as a deciding moment for the fleet. One where we have to decide where we go, and how we go, together. Aging fleet members can teach us a lot and we can use that insight to adapt to the new challenges that have developed. Out on the water, Erik knows that everyone isn't always copacetic. But even with the occasional drama, fishermen will go out of their way to help each other in times of need. So when it comes to pushing important agendas forward, he wants folks to know that we need that camaraderie and a united voice. "I'm all ears. I'm willing to hear everybody out. This isn't about me and my little



business, this is to ensure future generations will be able to fish for albacore tuna." If you've got input, we want to hear from you. Like Erik says, "There's no other way to think we're gonna advance things without participation. It's time to rally the troops."

## South Pacific Season Update

-WFOA Staff

The 2025 South Pacific albacore fishing season is wrapping up, and despite challenging conditions, participating vessels have reported overall positive results. WFOA members participating in the fishery characterized the campaign as a season of intermittent success, punctuated by periods of rough weather and limited fleet coverage, which hindered sustained fishing.

Weather proved to be a significant factor throughout the season. The fleet faced multiple severe storms, which repeatedly disrupted fishing activities. Initial good fishing conditions were quickly overshadowed by adverse weather, causing vessels to experience prolonged periods of drifting and inactivity. Additional storms in mid-February further impacted the fleet, pushing them eastward from their original fishing areas.

Despite these weather challenges, overall production for the season was commendable. Vessels Marina (captained by Bill Rangel), Maverick (Pat Arnold), and Wendy Seaa (Mike Salisbury) began their fishing efforts around January 1, achieving catches of 100-300 fish daily during initial favorable conditions. A significant highlight was a day in late January when the fleet recorded an exceptional catch of 688 large fish. Later in the season, a strategic move east resulted in consistent daily catches ranging between 200-800 fish over a span of approximately ten days.

An interesting aspect of this season was the consistently larger size of albacore, averaging about 16 pounds, with very few smaller "peanut" sized fish. Fishermen also noted abundant bird



-Slender Tuna

activity and sightings of various exotic species, including shortbill spearfish, marlin, bluefin, bigeye, yellowfin, and slender tunas. Sea temperatures throughout the season predominantly ranged between 62-63°F, contributing to these diverse observations.

However, limited fleet coverage presented ongoing difficulties. With only three boats participating, locating and maintaining consistent productive fishing areas proved challenging, particularly early in the season when storms disrupted established bait and water structures.

"Considering we had only three boats out there, what we achieved this season feels miraculous," commented Mike Salisbury from the Wendy Seaa. "This has certainly been our best season since 2021, despite tough conditions and storms altering the fishing grounds significantly."

Overall, the 2025 South Pacific albacore season was defined by resilience and adaptability in the face of substantial environmental challenges. Special recognition is due to Mike and Paulette Brown and their family for their unwavering support and initiative in sending vessels south for another adventurous fishing season. The experiences of their participating vessels underscore the dedication and perseverance essential to sustaining this important fishery.

## Albacore Research Foundation Update

-Ericka Carlson, ARF

### Website

ARF invites you to explore our new website at [www.albacorersearch.org](http://www.albacorersearch.org). Since 1971, fishermen, research scientists and buyers/processors have worked together to keep U.S. Wild-Caught Pacific Albacore Tuna stocks healthy and sustainable. Review key research studies from over the years, view albacore movement tracks and videos, and learn more about changes in albacore diet and foraging ecology.

### Contribute

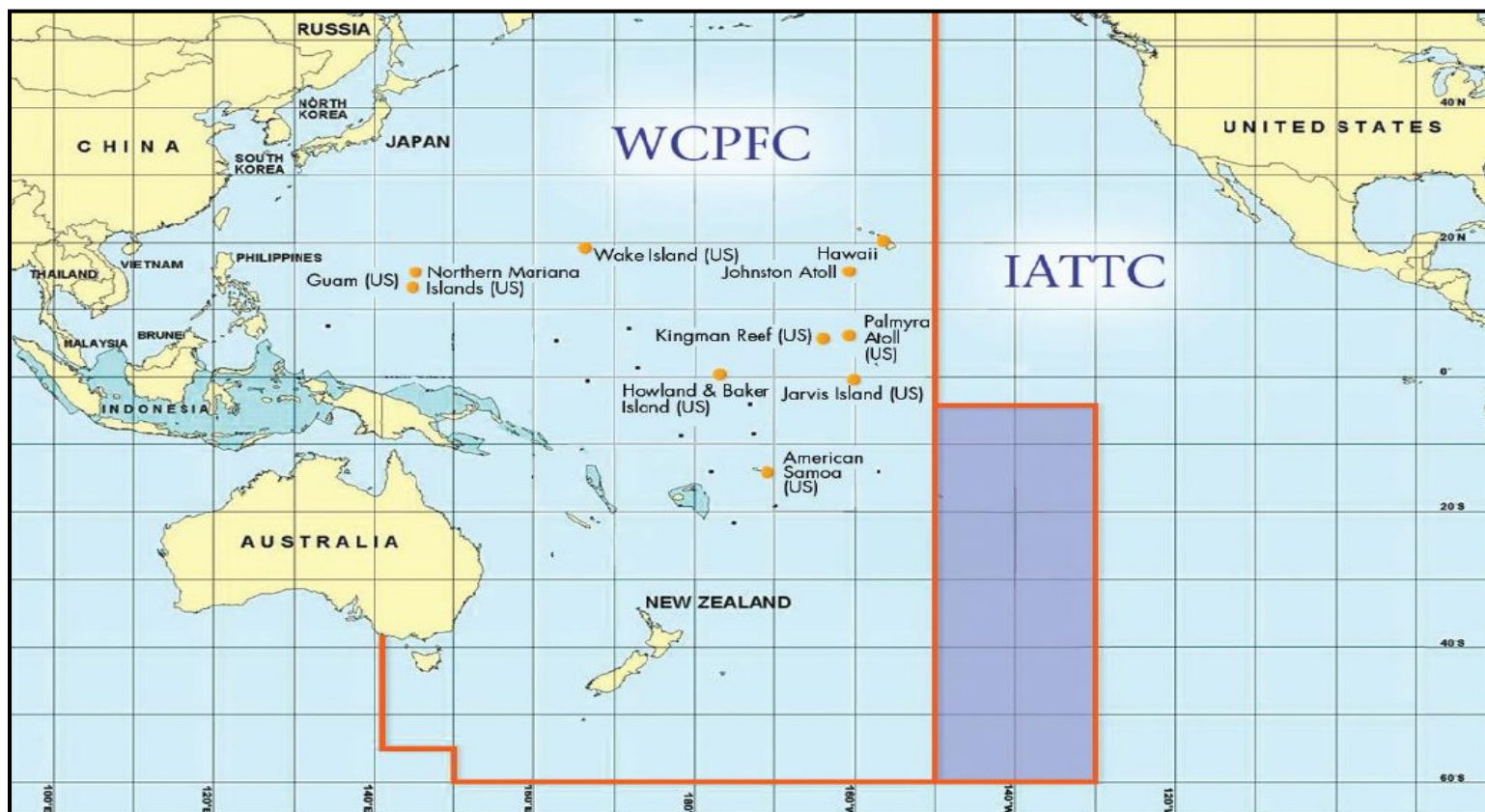
Do you have questions about what you're seeing on the water? Know re-

searchers who are working on albacore projects? Share questions or information and join our community in supporting thriving and sustainable Pacific Albacore Tuna stocks. Our collaborative research plays a leading role in the understanding of Pacific Albacore Tuna and informs sound management practices.

### Join Us

ARF seeks new board members who want to contribute to keeping this resource thriving for the next 50 years. Interested fishermen or buyer/processor members can e-mail [Ericka@arfr.org](mailto:Ericka@arfr.org) for qualifications.





-Map of the Pacific Ocean divided by jurisdictional RFMO lines. The darker blue area is under both WCPFC and IATTC jurisdiction. Orange dots represent jurisdiction of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (Credit: NOAA Science Blog)

## New Joint Working Group to Tackle South Pacific Albacore Management

-WFOA Staff

A major step toward enhanced coordination of South Pacific albacore (SPA) tuna management is underway. Two major Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs) have moved to establish a formal Joint Working Group (JWG) between the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

Following the 2024 WCPFC meeting, both groups expressed a commitment to improved collaboration on SPA, a key species harvested by fleets in both management areas. The draft Terms of Reference for the JWG, circulated by IATTC Chair Andres Arens in March 2025, lay out the framework for the group's structure, goals, and procedures.

If adopted, the new JWG will provide a platform for coordinated conservation and management of SPA across both convention areas. The group's mandate includes:

- Developing a common approach to harvest strategies;
- Aligning catch and effort limits;
- Improving monitoring and data exchange;
- Facilitating joint scientific research.

The draft terms call for participation from members of both groups, as well as engagement with stakeholders. Meetings will be co-chaired and coordinated by both RFMOs. Efforts will be made to operate by consensus, with


recommendations feeding into the scientific bodies and decision-making structures of both RFMOs.

The push for collaboration comes as concern mounts over rising longline effort in the South Pacific. Pole-and-troll fleets—like those represented by WFOA—could benefit from a unified management framework that could offer greater protections for the stocks, preserve access to the fishery, and ensure longline restrictions don't impact the West Coast fleet.

A first informal meeting of the JWG is expected during the first half of 2025, with formal adoption of the Terms of Reference slated for WCPFC's annual meeting later this year. The IATTC is expected to review the draft during its September session.

### OFFICE HOURS

EVERY 4TH MONDAY

06.00 AM - 08.00 AM 

Join us for monthly office hours! Open discussion for all members. Ask questions and discuss what you like in a casual setting.

Meeting links are sent to member emails.

## We Want You! Directors Needed

-WFOA Staff

The WFOA is calling on members to step up and serve on the Board of Directors. This is a critical time for the fleet, with major regulatory decisions, market challenges, and access issues shaping the future of North & South Pacific albacore. It can be easy to sit back and assume others will do the job, but we need people to stand up. WFOA's strength depends on engaged leadership, and now is the time to ensure the voice of the fleet is heard where it matters most.

### Who Can Serve?

Under WFOA bylaws, Board members must be regular, associate, or retired members who are in good standing with dues and fees up-to-date. Directors are elected between January 1 and June 15, with district meetings used to facilitate nominations. If a dis-

trict does not have enough attendance for a meeting, mail-in or email ballots may be used to ensure representation.

### What are the Expectations?

Directors are expected to actively participate in regular calls and voting activities. They are also the point of contact for members in their District and are expected to communicate member feedback and concerns to the Board. Suits and ties are not required, but a willingness to work with your fellow fishermen (even if you don't agree with them) is a must.

If you or someone you know would be a good fit for the Board, now is the time to step up. For more information or to submit a nomination, contact the office. Your voice matters, and the future of the fishery depends on strong leadership.

# 2025 Photo Contest

THEME:

VIEW FROM THE OFFICE



- We want to capture what a day at the office looks like for you! Send us your photos from the back deck, wheelhouse, unloading dock, or wherever you consider your "office"
- Prizes will be awarded for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place
- All members, supporting members, and crew are eligible to enter. Cutoff for submission is 10/31/25

\*By submitting you agree that all photos may be used in print and digital marketing and publications related to the Association\*

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