

2025 Season Surges to Strongest Harvest in Nearly a Decade

-WFOA Staff

With the 2025 troll season entering its final stretch, U.S. West Coast albacore fishermen are seeing one of the most productive seasons in recent memory. As of late September, preliminary PacFIN data shows a total of 7,692 metric tons (16.96 million pounds) of round weight albacore landed across West Coast ports. That figure significantly surpasses the five-year average of 6,537 mt (14.4 million pounds) and represents the highest harvest volume since 2016.

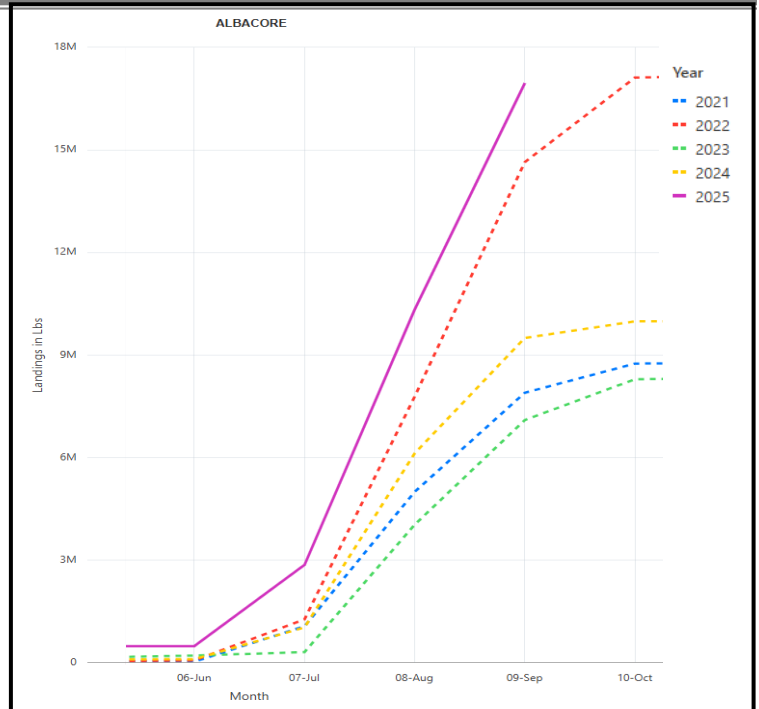
Looking back over the past decade, 2025 will be remembered as a standout year marking a welcome rebound from the last few seasons. Throughout the summer reports from members remained extremely positive. Starting strong with early season jig fishing and finishing with a return to the rack. The fleet took advantage of several factors, including beautiful water patterns, strong feed layers, ample surface sign, and fishable weather patterns.

“The best jig fishing I’ve seen in my career.” - WFOA member

Markets remained strong throughout the season leading to an ex-vessel net revenue of over \$33 million at the time of print. By comparison, this season’s total has already doubled the net revenue of the 2024 season (\$16mm) and tripled the total accounted for in 2023 (\$11mm). Both the brine and blast frozen markets remained active throughout the season. Fresh markets were also available but limited in part due to the record setting recreational catch rate. Additionally, some operators noted stiff competition and inability to access key export channels requiring additional certifications and inspections.

Taken in a broader context, the 2025 season is closer to a return to average for the West Coast fleet than a highwater mark. For decades the west coast fleet production surpassed the 10,000 mt threshold. Even with ongoing deliveries still being recorded, that level of production seems out of reach this season. The last time that the pole and troll fleet reached that milestone was the 2016 season. At the time, PacFin data showed 560 vessels participating. By comparison, through the middle of September a total of 343 vessels have made deliveries this year.

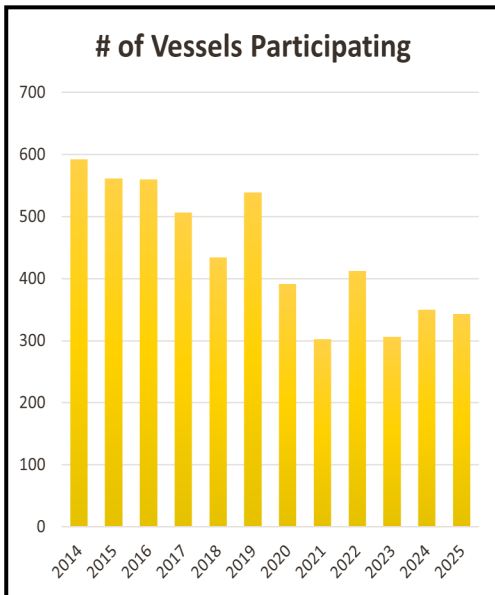
Unlike some past years, 2025 saw no reciprocal access to Canadian waters under the U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty. The treaty remained inactive follow-



Albacore Landings in Lbs.

ing stalled bilateral negotiations. The US fleet posted strong numbers, fishing entirely within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone and international waters. Multiple blocks of strong fishing gave numerous groups of vessels opportunity to work along the coast and further offshore.

While complex issues impacting the future of the industry remain, the 2025 season is a welcomed step in the right direction and a reminder of the fisheries potential. “So far the 2025 season has delivered some real hope and enthusiasm to the albacore fishing families along the coast. The landings and overall numbers demonstrate what’s possible when the fish are available and our fleet can do what it does best. It’s another strong reminder of the positive impact our fishery can have on the coastal communities,” said the WFOA Executive Director.





Pacific Fisheries Management Council Recap

-WFOA Staff

The 283rd meeting of the Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC) weighed in on international activity impacting Albacore and debated the best way to respond to the recent executive orders that are intended to improve commercial fishing in America. Held in Spokane Washington from September 17th-24th, the sessions covered several fisheries issues related to groundfish, Pacific Halibut, habitat, salmon, and highly migratory species. Members of the WFOA served on the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) providing guidance to issues directly impacting the West Coast Albacore fleet.

The HMSAS submitted multiple reports emphasizing the need for flexibility, innovation, and international engagement as foundational components of a competitive and sustainable HMS sector. In particular, HMSAS members voiced strong support for continued advocacy in international forums, including the Regional Fishery Management Organizations, and called attention to opportunities arising from Executive Order 14276: Restoring America's Seafood Competitiveness and Competitiveness in Seafood-Dependent Communities (EO).

The EO specifically requested all US Fishery Councils to work with stakeholders to identify opportunities to reduce regulations in order to make US fisheries more competitive globally. The Council staff presented advisory bodies with a draft of the PFMC's response to the EO seeking input from stakeholders. In addition to the direct response to the EO outlining a matrix of regulations that could be reviewed, the PFMC also proposed an addendum letter outlying other actions the federal government could take to bolster the US commercial fishing industry.

The HMSAS provided recommendations of regulations that could be elimi-

nated and strongly supported the Council in submitting this additional addendum. WFOA members on the advisory body emphasized that there are a number of other activities beyond deregulation that would significantly improve U.S. seafood competitiveness. Some of the recommendations submitted by the HMSAS included marketing support mechanisms, support for domestic waterfront infrastructure, requiring fishery representatives in any offshore energy production decision making, continued commitment to international advocacy, and expanding scientific data collection to include more information obtained directly by commercial and charter vessels.

Discussion on the council floor led to pushback as to whether the addendum

letter should be submitted at all. Some council members opposed the letter, arguing that it was not within the scope of the executive order and covered issues beyond the role of the council. Council discussion on the matter ultimately led to a vote in favor of submitting the addendum. Some members in support of submitting the addendum pointed to a briefing they had previously received from the Council's regulatory affairs representative. The briefing had explained the intent of the EO was to come up with solutions and would welcome input from all stakeholders. The final draft of the Council's Addendum letter and response to the EO will be available on the [PFMC website](#). Public comment on EO 14276 will be open until October 14th.

MID SEASON SURVEY

The WFOA is asking all members to take a few minutes to complete our 2025 mid-season survey. Your feedback is essential—it helps us understand what's happening on the water and in port, and it directly guides our work on your behalf.

By participating, you'll help us track:

- Market conditions
- Operational challenges at sea and onshore
- Fish behavior and catch trends
- Crew issues and other concerns

The more responses we receive, the stronger and more accurate our representation will be when advocating for the fishery.

🔗 **Complete the survey here:** <https://forms.office.com/r/EYWuYz7yjQ>

If you'd prefer a paper survey, just contact the WFOA office and we'll mail one to you. Thank you for lending your voice to keep our fishery strong!

SCAN ME!



RFMO Updates

-WFOA Staff



Major RFMO meetings occurred this summer impacting harvest strategy developments for North and South Pacific Albacore. The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) met in September in Panama City. In July, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) [Northern Committee](#) convened in Fukuoka, Japan, and the [first South Pacific Albacore Management Workshop](#) was held online. These meetings continued the development of harvest strategies impacting WFOA members.

On the WCPFC side, the 2025 meeting of the Northern Committee worked towards implementation and alignment on North Pacific Albacore (NPA) management, discussing how to improve monitoring strategies, handle technical uncertainties, and ensure that WCPFC and IATTC do not diverge on key metrics. While no formal revisions to the harvest strategy were proposed this year, NMFS encouraged further work on bridging frameworks and long-term monitoring protocols - including how to measure effort levels for the US fleet.

While catch or effort constraints for NPA have not yet been implemented, the Northern Committee committed to finalizing a strategy by 2027, following a clear roadmap of technical refinements and stakeholder input. The U.S. delegation reiterated that NPA remains not overfished and not subject to overfishing, but emphasized the need for long-term predictability, particularly for coastal fleets with high selectivity and low bycatch. WFOA and the HMS Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) have stressed that precautionary rules must be practical, flexible, and protective of historical access.

Meanwhile, the South Pacific Albacore (SPA) fishery remains a subject of intense debate. Discussions during the SPA management workshop included debates on allocation mechanisms in light of increasing longline effort. While the U.S. troll fleet is currently not a ma-

major participant in the South Pacific, several WFOA members do make the annual trip. Historically the fishery has been very productive for WFOA members, and the potential remains for increased effort. Proposed changes to access or catch limits could limit future US effort in the South Pacific.

So far the U.S. representatives have managed to maintain the option for a special provision for SPA troll catch, which would treat catch as a constant “external catch” set at 2000-2004 average troll levels. 2000-2004 represents the highest SPA troll harvest for the U.S. in recent history with about 1,850 mt caught on average by U.S. trollers. For comparison, the 2nd highest period of catch in recent years was 2020-2022 where 1,300 mt were caught by the U.S. troll fleet. However, the recent negotiation process left US delegates unsure whether other countries are likely to go along with their proposal when the measure is taken up for adoption at the WCPFC meeting in December.

In a September 2025 report to the PFMC, the HMSAS warned that “allocation-based management and harvest control rules may unintentionally restrict access to historical participants.” The Subpanel urged NOAA to advocate for the unique sustainability profile of the U.S. troll fishery. The argument is based on the di minimis impact that the US surface troll fleet has on the stock. Looking ahead, the [WCPFC full Commission](#) will meet in December 2025, where SPA will be a major topic on the agenda. In preparation for that meeting there is a 2nd workshop tentatively scheduled for November 5th where stakeholders will have a chance to weigh in. If you are interested in attending that workshop, please email the NMFS Pacific Islands office at nmfs.pir.ifd@noaa.gov. WFOA will continue tracking developments and advocating for science-based, flexible management frameworks that ensure continued access for the U.S. fleet.

Dave Hogan Retires

-WFOA Staff

After decades of committed service, Dave F. Hogan, currently of the U.S. Department of State's Office of Marine Conservation, has officially stepped down as the State Department's representative to the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC). His retirement marks the end of an era for U.S. leadership in highly migratory species (HMS) diplomacy.

Hogan's legacy includes his role as head of the U.S. delegation on the Reciprocal Access Treaty Albacore treaty between the US and Canada. Hogan navigated complex negotiations to balance foreign access with domestic fisheries protections. He demonstrated a strong understanding of the issues impacting stakeholders and was intentional about seeking recommendations from the WFOA. Hogan's own retirement letter to PFMC underscores his gratitude for working relationships and stakeholder collaboration over the years.

In a formal letter to PFMC Executive Director Merrick Burden, Rachel Ryan of the State Department announced that Colin Brinkman will take on the role moving forward. Brinkman, described as the State Department's lead officer for West Coast and Eastern Pacific fishing issues, will assume responsibilities over Council coordination, IATTC engagement, and implementation of treaty commitments.

Notably, Ryan's letter specifies that she, “will continue to serve as the point of contact for issues relating to the Pacific Albacore Treaty.” For WFOA members, the transition is significant. Hogan's institutional memory and diplomatic relationships have been vital in securing U.S. influence in international HMS decisions.

The WFOA extends our best wishes to Dave Hogan on his well-earned retirement.



CAPTAIN'S CORNER

Remembering Joel Kawahara

Written by Jeremy Brown

When Joel joined me for the 1996 South Pacific season in Seattle, he brought an interesting selection of reading material.

Amongst lighter fair, there was James Clerk Maxwell's "Dynamical Theory of the Electromagnetic Field", a translation of Einstein's 'Annus Mirabilis papers' and others too obscure to remember.

"I need to refresh" he said.

No, he wasn't sandbagging, Joel Kawahara was that smart. And that interested in everything.

He gave up a very promising career at Boeing to go fishing.

In the early morning hours of August the ninth, just after rounding Cape Flattery and setting the pilot for the Compass Rose, Joel slipped. His immaculate wooden troller "Karolee" kept going.

Joel didn't.

Proud to be a grumpy old bachelor troller, Joel preferred to fish alone. He knew the risks, but he also knew the delights and adventure that it gave him.

Joel was one of the best.

His boat was spotless, his catch immaculate. He volunteered thousands of hours for the good of his fisheries, the resource, and his community.

He sat on the boards of the Alaska Trollers, The Washington Trollers, and Coastal Trollers Associations, the PFMC habitat committee, PCFFA, and the Save Our wild Salmon coalition.

Frequently he cut trips short or missed fishing altogether to be the calm, considered voice for fisheries.

He had time for everyone, helped many a youngster with tips and encouragement. He might sigh patiently, but he heard us all out. But he had that annoying habit of being right, modestly, almost every time.

In our last conversation we had discussed the proposition; Was Sisyphus happy?

Joel agreed with Camus that he would have been.

Several days later, Joel's body washed up near Cape Alava.

I believe Joel is too.



-Two Ono (photo courtesy of Jeremy Brown)

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.



CAPTAIN'S CORNER

Remembering Doug Dirske

Written by Clay Archambault

Today we remember and honor a man who meant a great deal to many of us — my dear friend, Doug. aka : Whitey, Flash, Olinka Doug.

Doug was one of a kind. A true original. He lived his life with the kind of grit and heart that you don't see every day — the kind of man who made his living on the water, crabbing, jigging or bait poling albacore. Trolling salmon, drop loop for swordfish, and diving for cucumber or sea urchins in the cold, shark-infested waters off the Farallon Islands to the Channel Islands.

That takes a special kind of courage.

Not the loud kind. Not bravado. But real, honest courage - the kind that coexists with fear, but moves forward anyway. That was Doug.

I met Doug when I was just 18 years old - impressionable, still trying to figure out who I was and what kind of man I wanted to be. And Doug, well... Doug just was himself. Always. He didn't try to impress anyone. He didn't need to. His sincerity, his strength, and his quiet integrity spoke louder than words ever could. And from the moment we met, I looked up to him. Over the 30-plus years of our friendship, Doug became more than a mentor, more than a friend — he became my Amigo. That's what he always called me. And that's what he was to me too. My Amigo. Through the highs and the lows, the calm seas and the storms, he was steady. Real. Someone I could always count on.

Doug left us too soon. There's no way around that. It hurts. It's unfair. But even in this grief, I feel deeply grateful. Grateful for the time we had. For the memories. For the lessons. For the laughter. And above all, for his friendship - which will stay with me always.

Doug lived by his own compass. He followed his heart, and the sea, and he did it all with honor. He was the kind of man who didn't just ride out the waves - he dove into them.

I will miss him every day. But I will carry him with me - in my heart, in my stories, and in the way I try to live my life. A little braver. A little more sincere.

Rest easy, Doug. You were - and always will be - deeply loved.

Cheers Amigo!



-Doug Dirske (photo courtesy of Clay Archambault)

NOAA Announces Changes to Seafood Import Program

-WFOA Staff

NOAA Fisheries is taking steps intended to level the playing field for American fishermen and strengthen the integrity of the U.S. seafood supply chain. Recent rule changes to the NOAA Seafood Inspection Program combined with mechanisms created in the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) could positively impact market opportunity for U.S. fleets on the West Coast.

The MMPA Import Provisions Final Rule requires foreign fleets to demonstrate bycatch mitigation measures comparable in effectiveness to those imposed on U.S. fleets. In a major implementation milestone, NOAA Fisheries has formally denied “comparability findings” for dozens of foreign fisheries, effectively blocking their seafood exports to the United States unless they meet U.S. marine mammal bycatch standards.

While US vessels have long operated under strict bycatch mitigation mandates, many foreign fleets aren’t held to the same standard. The WFOA has consistently advocated for actions to be taken that would recognize the discrepancy and hold all market participants to the same standards. “My understanding is

this is the first time NOAA has fully enforced import bans under the MMPA’s 2016 rule,” said the WFOA Executive Director. “Hopefully it’s a solid step toward protecting responsible U.S. fleets like ours and ensuring foreign seafood is held to the same standard. I have plenty of concerns and questions about how this will be enforced, but I’m optimistic that efforts are being made to address a critical issue.”

The first announcement came as NOAA finalized a sweeping new rule to enhance its Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP). Starting in 2026, the updated rule will expand monitoring requirements to nearly 1,100 additional species, including tuna caught outside U.S. waters, and will strengthen chain-of-custody standards across the board. This new rule is intended to keep illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) seafood out of U.S. markets. A recent NOAA decision memo stated, “(t)his action is a critical step in the full implementation of the MMPA Import Provisions following the end of the five-year exemption period.”

According to NOAA, billions of dollars worth of IUU seafood enters the

U.S. market each year, distorting prices and undermining responsible harvesters. The goal of the rule change is to create accountability for imported seafood by requiring that the fish meet harvest criteria comparable to the US standards. By increasing traceability, the new rules will try to help ensure that U.S.-harvested tuna competes fairly in global and domestic markets and potentially provide better marketing opportunities for West Coast Albacore fishermen.

The decisions—released in August and set to take effect January 1, 2026—impact 46 nations in total:

- Twelve countries were denied comparability across all fisheries, including Russia, Venezuela, Iran, Namibia, Haiti, Saint Lucia, and Gambia.
- Thirty-four countries, including Mexico, China, Ecuador, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, were denied comparability for specific fisheries.

Several of the banned fisheries include industrial tuna fleets using driftnets, gillnets, surface purse seines, and lift nets—gear types known to have high marine mammal bycatch. For example:

- Ecuador and Indonesia’s tuna fisheries were denied for their gillnet and purse seine sectors.
- Chinese bonito lift-net operations in designated zones failed to meet comparability standards.

These decisions mean that fish and fish products from the affected fisheries—whether tuna or otherwise—will no longer be eligible for import into the U.S. unless the countries reapply and successfully demonstrate compliance. Continued action against IUU fishing was considered a priority by WFOA members responding to previous membership surveys. Hopefully these enforcement developments will be a step in the right direction.

It’s Time for Bob Insinger Nominations

-WFOA Staff

In 1967 the WFOA was founded to promote the interests of the hook and line albacore fishery and other small boat pelagic fisheries. Upon its formation, the organization enacted by-laws which authorized a Manager to take charge of the, “business of the Association under the direction of the Board of Directors.” The first man to ever hold that position was Bob Insinger. He performed his duties with integrity and dedication to the fleet, helping establish the WFOA as an important voice for members up and down the coast. Today, the “Bob Insinger Award” is given annually to a member or supporting member who embodies the spirit of Mr. Insinger’s service and commitment to the WFOA.

The nomination process for this award is open to all members, board members, and supporting members. Nominations can be sent via email to info@wfoa-tuna.org. Nominees will be accepted through December 31st with the winner being announced in the spring newsletter.

Member Highlight: Diving into a Life at Sea

-WFOA Staff

Tim Mulcahy's journey to commercial fishing started with his love for diving. Born in Pasadena, CA, Tim became a certified scuba diver at 12 years old and developed a deep connection to the sea. Spending time in the ocean was so important to young Tim, he worked at the local YMCA camp in Catalina just so he could dive. After high school he moved to Santa Barbara where he went to college. Despite not having any fishing family or commercial fishing experience, his connection to the ocean led him to a lifelong career.

In November of 1971, at 23 years old, Tim and a friend teamed up to start diving for urchins with a little 19ft boat. Sea urchins were in high demand at the time and gradually the duo were able to buy bigger and bigger boats. When his buddy married and moved to Mexico, Tim bought him out and continued to dive for urchins until 1979. After that he bought a 36ft Radon, turned it in to a bowpicker, and started gill-netting. When the price of urchins skyrocketed in the 90's, he sold his boat and went back to diving.

As Tim's 50th birthday approached he bought his current boat, the Calogera, and started fishing full time. After crewing on a few Albacore trips, he'd caught the bug. "I just love Albacore fishing. It's such a simple fishery." He started out taking crew, but now he's got a system that enables him to go solo. He fishes with other captains who work alone, and they watch over each other.

When it comes to the current state of our fisheries, Tim says it bears repeating and reinforcing – "Our fisheries are sustainable. The public hears about overfishing and we need to educate them about what we do." He always appreciates the efforts of local groups, like the Dock Walks put on by Local Ocean in Newport for example. He's happy to wave folks down, show them how they catch the fish, and explain the sustainability of American fisheries. If people want to know what his days are like on the water he'll tell them, "Every day is a learning experience. For me, it keeps my brain active and gives me purpose in life." The adventure can be intriguing to folks, but nothing beats knowing you're making a difference. "When I look in the mirror I can say to myself, I've fed a million people. That gives a feeling of self-worth that you're actually doing something for other people. The Bible says to help those less fortunate, and I can translate that into helping people who can't catch their own fish get access to some of the best food on the planet."



-Tim (R) & friend John (L) in Newport, OR



-Tim & Debra on vacation at Niagara Falls

These days he lives with his wife Debra in Utah where they enjoy some of their other passions, snowboarding and skiing. They also love to travel, where Tim's love of languages comes in handy (he's fluent in French and pretty good in Spanish!). When it's time to go fishing he hops on a 45 min flight to get to the coast. "At this point I finally have my mortgage paid off, the boat is dialed in, and I'm finally having fun! I look forward to the fishing season beginning and I look forward to coming home. It's a wonderful thing."

How much longer will he keep it up? He's got more left in him, but he acknowledges the fishing fleet is aging out. He hopes the younger generations will give it a chance. "It's expensive to fish, but if you can be multifaceted – fish for crab, tuna, salmon or lobster – you can have a little portfolio." Tim has kept himself busy by participating in a rotation of fisheries throughout the year. It's hard work, but the benefits can be huge. "You are your own boss, you can't get fired. If you fail at fishing at some point, your perseverance will kick in and you can try, try again. It builds character and makes you who you are." As he likes to say, "Fishing might be tough, but working for a boss who's a jerk is tougher."

2025 Photo Contest

THEME:
VIEW FROM THE OFFICE



-photo credit: Kale Pixey

The WFOA seeks more entrants for the 2025 photo contest. This year's theme is, "View From the Office" and based on the photos submitted so far, it's quite the view. WFOA members submitting entries have demonstrated an excellent eye and impressive photography skills. A picture is worth a thousand words and getting good pictures isn't as easy you might think. No one can capture life on the water like our members. The WFOA staff loves that members are sharing their talents to help tell the story of the Albacore fleet.

Submissions have been great so far and are really going to help out our organization. We will be accepting more pictures through the end of October. The finalist will be chosen by the WFOA staff with the top entries being voted on by the membership. The winners are in line to receive prizes along with special recognition throughout the year. The WFOA will use all photos to promote the fleet's effort, encourage appreciation for our unique fishery, and educate consumers. We hope to build up goodwill and encourage more of your contributions in the future. Submissions should include the name of the photographer and a caption/tag line. Please send submissions to info@wfoa-tuna.org.

**Western Fishboat
Owners Association**
2108 N ST, STE #8469
Sacramento, CA 95816

Phone: (530) 229-1097
Email: info@wfoa-tuna.org
WWW.WFOA-TUNA.ORG