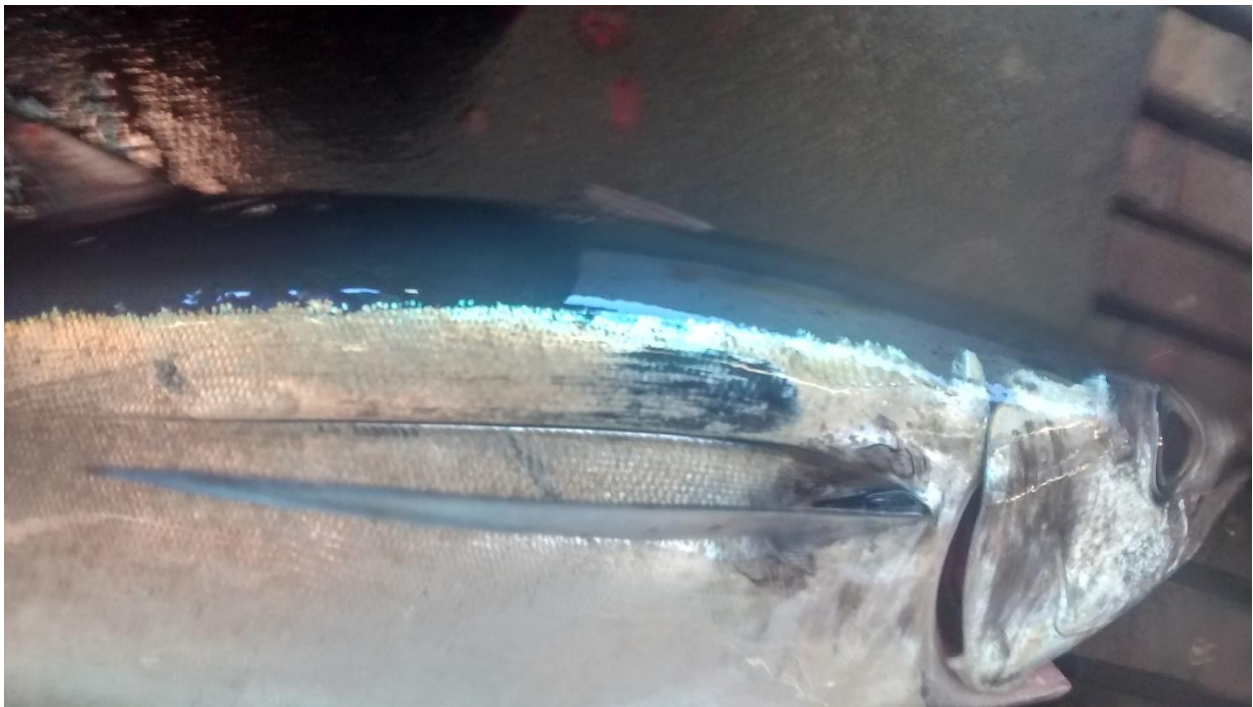




2019 report on North Pacific Albacore Troll season as “Scratchy”

OFAD / PATAI observed report by Cpt. John Harder, aboard F/V OCEAN JOY



Before the start of the 2019 season, Pacific Albacore Trollers Association International (PATAI) was formed in Port Angeles, WA. We had our 1st annual meeting in May, electing 9 board members representing 138 members from all along the West Coast, including Canada & all around the Pacific. PATAI was formed for representation of commercial fishers in both local & international fisheries commissions. To unite “offshore”, & all fishers, from all nations who show interest or participate in Trolling for Albacore Tuna. It was decided by the board, that AWARENESS of IUU driftnet activity & the declining catch rates of the vessels was needed. To notify USCG, NMFS & NOAA at the next Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting in San Diego in June.

Having already submitted a report to the WCPFC, last Dec., on the poor 2018 NP Albacore Troll season (www.wcpfc.int/node/33350), OFAD, with PATAI, passed on to the PFMC, over 20 pictures of driftnet marked albacore caught inside US & Canadian EEZ waters effecting our own **artesian** fisheries during 2018. The picture above is one of many showing proof that IUU driftnets still infringe on our benefits. With the help of Global Fishing Watch (GFW) & Marine Traffic web site, OFAD & PATAI brought to the attention of NOAA Law Enforcement & USCG of a large fleet of presumed squid boats fishing in the WCPFC area. OFAD asked if this fleet was inspected & or verified to be legit, because we suspect them 1st & foremost. USCG confirmed that some squid fishing vessels had been caught, in the past, using IUU driftnets & that they were turned over to their state law enforcement. That there was no way of knowing, in fact, if the same vessels were not out fishing again. That not one vessel caught, to their knowledge, was fishing with the legal length of gillnet conforming to the gillnet moratorium. To further note that many of these IUU vessels never make it to any IUU list. This is does not seem right!

2019 NP Albacore Troll season observed aboard F/V Ocean Joy

F/V Ocean joy departed Westport WA on July 1st for fishing. There had been little to no fish caught early in the month of June. Cold water was along the coast still. It was not until July 11th that we found a productive area of fish. Around 200 miles West of the Columbia River, we started catching over 1-2 ton per day. This only lasted a few days as this small run of fish continued moving closer to the Coast. By the 17th of July, our production dropped below 100 fish per day, but the boats to the East of us were getting more & more sign. Our season was finally under way.

On July 23rd, Ocean Joy settled around 45:00N x 127:00W averaging a ton a day for about 1 week. As more boats showed up in the area, the fishing became spotty. The run of fish did not appear to be verry big as the catch rate was not even among the vessels. The fish acted flighty & moved around a lot. One positive aspect was that no driftnet marked fish had been detected.

On July 29th, Ocean Joy was 46:40N x 127:34W, where we caught our 1st driftnet marked Albacore. 1 out of 34 fish caught had been scathed. The following day, we moved North to 47:21N x 127:52W, inside Canadian EEZ, to find more driftnet marked Albacore. 7 out of 200 fish caught had scratches made from driftnets. As more fish migrated to the Coast, more driftnet marked fish were detected. On August 1st, at 46:44N x 126:19W, Ocean Joy detected 3 out of 38 fish, landed, to have been marked by driftnets.





1st driftnet marked fish detected in 2019 close to US/Canadian border.



08/02/19 net-marked Albacore at 47:19 x 126:37W.



08/03/19 Net marked Albacore taken at 47:15N x 127:33W.

On August 4th, Ocean Joy headed towards Westport, WA for clearance, then onto Victoria, BC for unloading on the 8th. We made notes in our logbook & sent them on to NMFS. We departed for fishing shortly after, and by the 10th of August we were back into a productive area.





On 08/10/19 at 45:00N x 126:36W, 10% – 20% of Albacore caught had driftnet scratches. We catch net marked fish every day now. Fish average weight is 12 lbs. (10 lb. – 13 lb.)



This picture was taken on August 14th at 43:34N x 125:17W. According to Global fishing watch, there has been a large fleet of Chinese fishing vessels centered around 40:00N x 174:30W. They have been in that area for 2 months. This was reported to USCG & NOAA Law Enforcement.



These fish were caught on 08/15/19 at 44:57N x 125:29N. 1 out of 10 fish show net marks. Scores of fish being caught are falling off to 50 fish per day & less. We are not being productive.



This fish caught on August 23rd around 52:11N x 132:39W is only lightly scratched. As you can see, it could easily be missed like so many are. This is common in the smaller fish.



This fish was caught on 08/24/19 around 50:50N x 130:44W in Canadian waters. You can see how the faint scratches start at the gill plates with little squiggles where they wiggled loose.



Net marked Albacore caught on 08/27/19 at 47:05 x 125:17W in US EEZ waters.



This gillnet scratched Albacore was caught on 08/29/19 just west of Westport WA. at 47:10N x 125:17N. Fish averaged 12 lbs. & is 1 out of 10 fish caught having scratch marks do to IUU driftnet vessels in the North Pacific.



F/V Ocean Joy ran into the mouth of the Colombia River to get phone service so we could text these pictures to Jack Vantress, owner of the F/V “Seawind” & fellow fisherman & friend, who is going to represent PATAI & OFAD in the upcoming WCPFC Northern Committee meeting to be held in Portland OR. This is the 1st time this meeting will be held in the USA. We are so grateful that Jack is taking the time to attend the meeting & pass on our concerns.





This picture was taken on 09/03/19 at 45:45N x 125:38W. 1 out of 10 fish had net marks.



This fish was caught at 46:34 x 125:19 on 09/07/19. We went in closer to the beach where baitboats(pole & line) were catching bigger fish. They are scratched also.



On 09/10/19, we caught these fish at 51:18N x 131:02. We are now back in Canadian waters. We continue to average less than 1 ton per day. Boats are scattered & going every which way to find somewhere that will hold up to more than 1 – 2 days of production. It is not happening.



This fish was caught on 09/16/19 at 50:57N x 131:24W. It was a 12 lb. fish & 1 of 10% of the fish being caught that are driftnet scratched.



This fish was caught on 09/19/19 at 50:55N x 131:17W. We are still inside Canadian waters. We hope to fish for another day before going into Vancouver for unloading. There is a big storm coming so this will be our last trip. We managed to scrape just over 55 ton for the season, which is a little better than last year, but still only $\frac{1}{2}$ of what we normally catch. I would like to think we are average for the fleet, but I hear a lot of complaining going around. I, like many, do not know how we are going to make it through the winter with all the boat work needed.

I bid you all fair well, Captain John Harder- F/V Ocean Joy



Special thanks (Vinaka) to our crew! Without them, there would be no pictures, or fish.

