

**THE OREGON 1999 COMMERCIAL FISHERY
FOR ALBACORE (*THUNNUS ALALUNGA*)**

Prepared by

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INTRODUCTION

Oregon has had a directed commercial fishery for albacore (*Thunnus alalunga*) since 1936. Albacore landings have been highly variable, ranging from under a half-million pounds to over 37 million pounds annually. In the last decade, catches have averaged about 5.5 million pounds per year.

Sampling of Oregon's albacore fishery is a cooperative effort between the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. This report documents the progress of the 1999 fishery off Oregon, and the associated sampling activities.

1999 FISHERY DEVELOPMENT

Landings of albacore into Oregon ports began in June and continued through early November with the peak occurring in August (Table 1, Figure 1). The preliminary total for 1999 commercial landings is 4,519,901 lb; this is a 57% decrease from 1998 (Table 2, Figure 2). Newport received the majority of the deliveries (46%), followed by Astoria at 40% and Charleston at about 7%. Nine other ports also received deliveries (Table 3, Figure 3).

Albacore markets held up better than in 1998 when buyers were scarce and the price was low. In 1999, ex-vessel price paid for frozen fish was about \$.80/lb until midway through the season when it dropped to \$.75/lb. Price paid for fresh fish was about \$.62 to \$.70/lb. Most fishermen selling off their vessels asked \$1.50/lb.

The 1999 albacore season was characterized by a weak offshore fishery until very late in the year. Fishing was found to be slow and inconsistent and fishermen commented on fish being scattered and not biting well. Somewhat better fishing was found along the west coast and especially south of San Francisco as the season progressed. The majority of the catch in 1999 was landed inside of 200 miles.

Approximately 342 vessels landed albacore into Oregon in 1999, which is a 18% decrease from 1998. The estimated number of trips landed into Oregon ports also decreased slightly from 873 in 1998 to 786 in 1999. The average landing was about 5800 lb and the average size of albacore delivered to Oregon buyers was in the 15 to 20 lb range.

During 1999, the recreational albacore fishery off Oregon contributed approximately 40,500 lb (less than 1%) to total albacore landings. This recreational catch estimate is not included in Table 2. The charter boat fishery accounted for about 50-60% of the recreational landings

with most of the effort occurring out of central coast ports. Private boats made up the remaining 40-50% of landings with effort spread out along the coast.

In 1999, fishermen were concerned with overcrowded fishing grounds and etiquette at sea. Most of this was directed at foreign vessels fishing in U.S. waters who apparently did not understand or abide by the "rules of the road". Comments were made regarding the U.S./Canada Treaty and controlling effort in the albacore fishery.

Again this year, questions and concerns were voiced regarding the possibility of limited entry and future management of the albacore fishery. The 1999 season was the first year of the mandatory logbook requirement for vessels fishing outside of 200 miles. However, most of the fishery in 1999 took place inside of 200 miles where logbooks are still voluntary. Compliance at the docks when fishermen were asked for voluntary logbook information seemed slightly below previous years.

A new committee, the Oregon Albacore Commission, was formed in 1999 with the first meeting held in late October. This commission will be involved in research, education and promotion of albacore.

Oregon albacore sampling in 1999 followed the same guidelines as in 1998, except funding cuts limited sampling to one port. In Newport, logbooks were distributed, completed logbooks were collected or interviews conducted, and length frequencies were obtained as often as possible throughout the season. The Oregon Albacore Summary form (attached as Appendix A) presents the data requested in Oregon's contractual agreement for albacore sampling funding. These are:

- a. number of logbooks issued by port.
- b. number of logbook collections attempted by port.
- c. number of interviews/transcriptions collected by port.
- d. number of logbooks collected by port.
- e. estimated total landings of albacore by port.
- f. estimated number of trips by port.
- g. estimated number of vessels by port.
- h. estimated landings (lb) by gear type.
- i. total landings for sampled trips.

Also included in the season summary are the number of trips sampled for length-frequency and the number of fish measured.

Twenty-two logbooks were distributed to fishermen. Logbook collections attempted (contacts) numbered 198, a 24% decrease from 1998. These contacts resulted in the collection of 62 North Pacific Albacore Voluntary Logbooks and 63 logbook transcriptions, for a total of 125 trips from which data were collected; this is a 26% decrease from the total number collected in 1998. The decrease in sampling can be attributed to reduced funding of the albacore contract in 1999. Sampling personnel were stationed in only one port instead of three, as in previous years. During 1999, 77 trips were sampled for length frequency, and 5,776 fish were measured. The number of measured fish increased 98% from 1998. The funding cut did not affect length-frequency sampling in Newport.

SUMMARY

Oregon's albacore landings in 1999 totaled about 4.5 million lb, a 57% decrease from 1998 and under the 10 year average. Availability of albacore, especially offshore, was poor and most of the effort took place along the west coast. The recreational fishery contributed an estimated 40,500 lb in 1999.

The 1999 season saw the introduction of mandatory logbooks for vessels fishing outside of 200 miles and the establishment of the Oregon Albacore Commission. Funding cuts decreased sampler coverage in Oregon ports and as a result, logbook sampling rates decreased.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank the many albacore fishing vessel operators who cooperated during our sampling program. Some of these busy people gave significant amounts of their time during fishing trip interviews. The sampling help provided by Nancy McLean-Cooper was also greatly appreciated.

Table 1. Oregon commercial albacore landings by month, 1999.

Month	Pounds
June	262,533
July	1,080,508
August	2,163,737
September	787,086
October	219,835
November	21,475
December	20
Total	4,535,194

Table 2. Oregon commercial albacore landings by year, 1990-1999.

Year	Pounds
1990	2,079,312
1991	1,258,818
1992	3,888,515
1993	4,754,450
1994	4,698,223
1995	5,033,810
1996	8,948,355
1997	9,167,738
1998	10,600,614
1999	4,535,194

Table 3. Oregon commercial albacore landings by port, 1999.

Port	Pounds
Astoria	1,814,063
Garibaldi	149,139
Pacific City	1,395
Depoe Bay	4,436
Newport	2,096,270
Florence	36,200
Winchst. Bay	70,690
Charleston	338,210
Bandon	3,359
Port Orford	597
Gold Beach	3,141
Brookings	17,694
Total	4,535,194

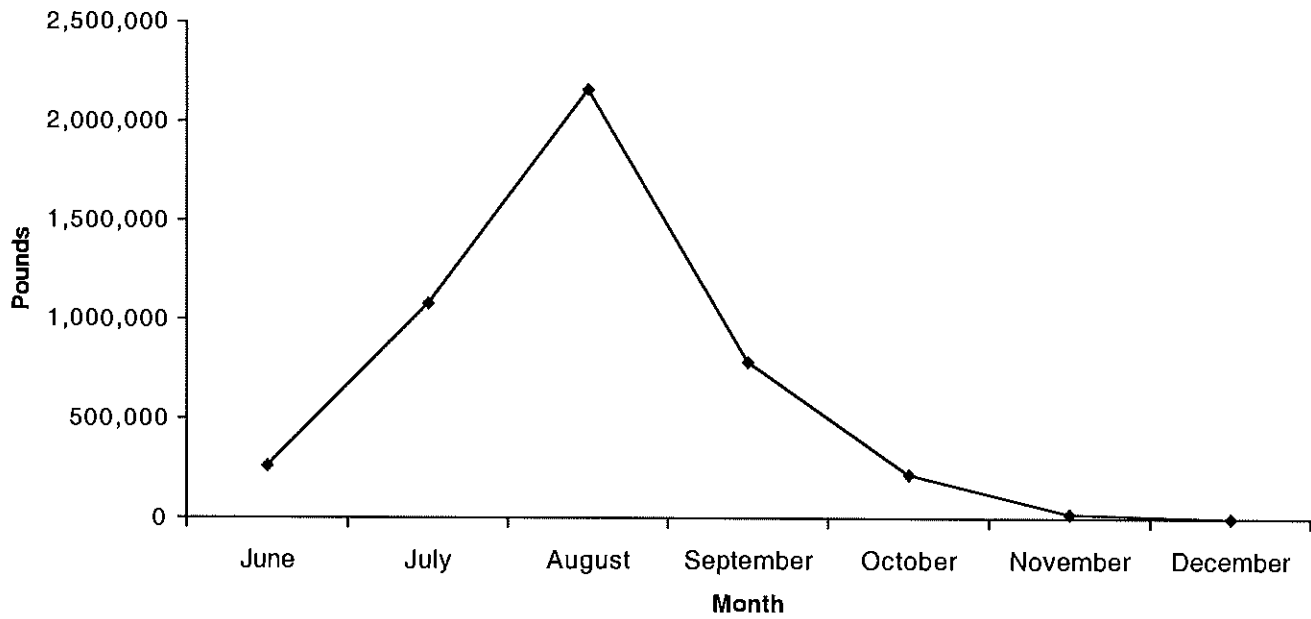


Figure 1. Oregon commercial albacore landings by month, 1999.

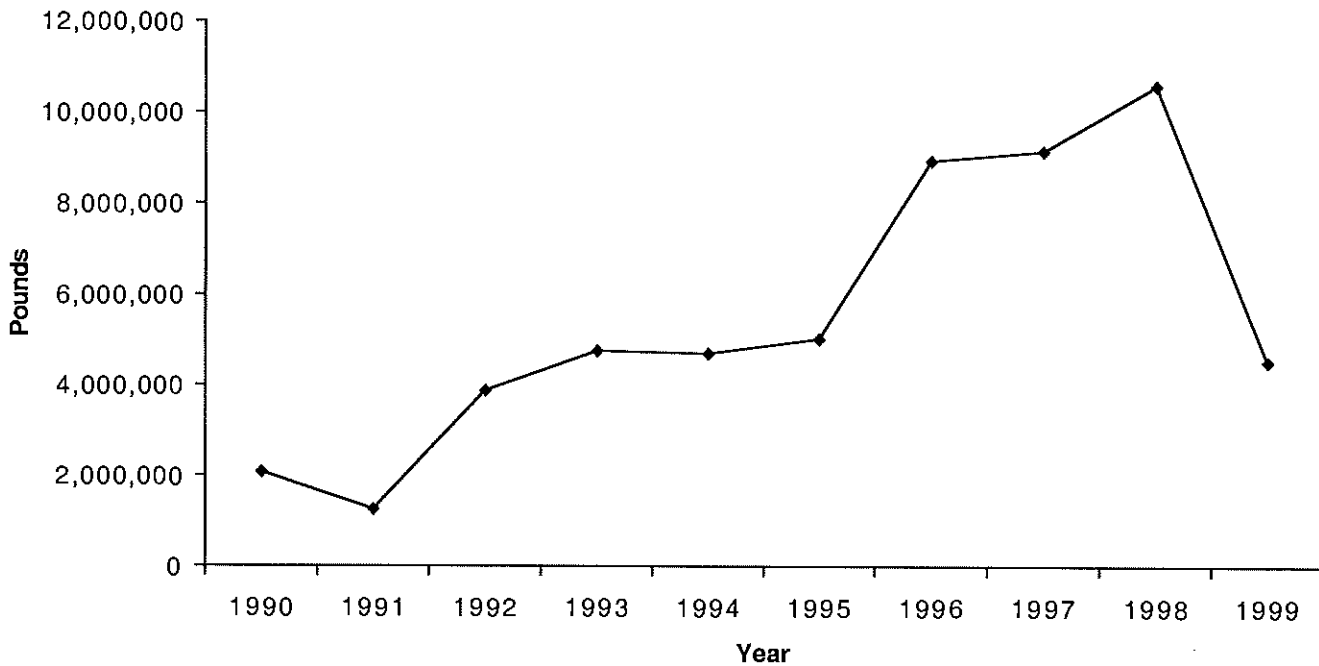


Figure 2. Oregon commercial albacore landings by year, 1990-1999.

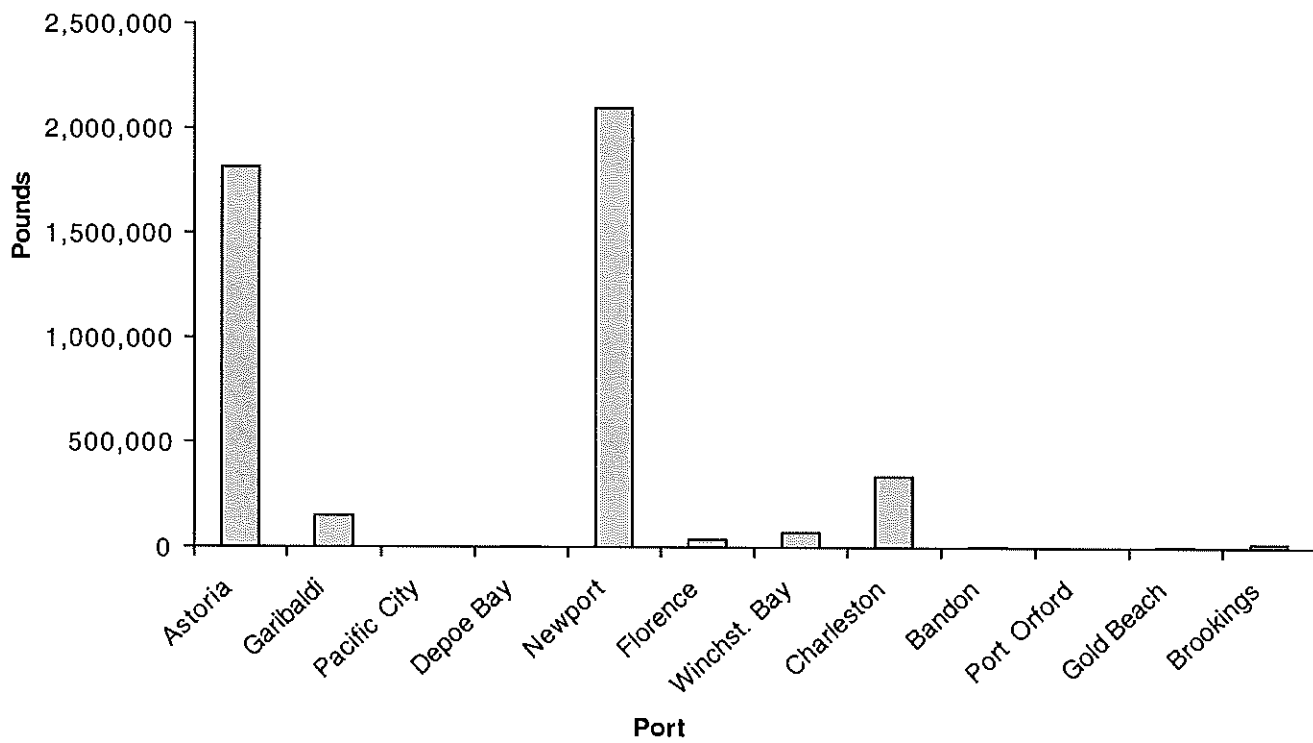


Figure 3. Oregon commercial albacore landings by port, 1999.

Appendix A. Oregon Albacore Summary for 1999

PORT CODE OR NAME	ASTORIA	NEWPORT	CHARLESTON	TOTAL COAST
No. of Logbooks Issued	1	21	0	22
No. of Collections of Logbook Data Attempted	0	195	2	197
No. of Interviews/Transcriptions Collected	0	63	0	63
No. of Logbooks Collected	0	59	2	61
Landings from Logbook-Sampled Trips (lb) *	0	1,718,730	6,100	1,724,830
No. of Trips Sampled for Length-Frequency	0	78	0	78
No. of Fish Measured	0	5,849	0	5,849
Estimated Total No. of Trips **	139	401	88	786
Estimated Total No. of Vessels	86	149	41	305
Estimated Total Jig Landings (lb)	1,814,063	2,096,270	338,210	4,535,194
Estimated Total Bait Landings (lb)	0	0	0	0
Estimated Total Jig & Bait Landings (lb)	0	0	0	0
Estimated Total Gillnet Landings (lb)	0	0	0	0
Estimated Total Landings/Other Gear Types (lb)	0	0	0	0
Estimated Sport Total Landings (lb)				40,500
Estimated Total Landings (lb)				4,575,694

* Includes landings from all collection attempts, whether successful or not, except for trips where landing weight was unavailable. Landings from logbook-sampled trips may exceed total landings because some logbooks/interviews were collected from vessels which delivered to other states.

** May be an overestimate as often a trip had multiple fish tickets associated with it, though an effort was made to combine such tickets into one trip.

*** Some vessels landed in more than one port during the season.