

**THE 2002 OREGON COMMERCIAL FISHERY  
FOR ALBACORE (*THUNNUS ALALUNGA*)**

Prepared by

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**ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT**  
**ALBACORE PORT SAMPLING PROGRAM**  
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**INTRODUCTION**

Albacore is a highly migratory species found in all the world's oceans. Albacore caught off Oregon belong to the North Pacific stock and are generally juvenile fish that have not spawned. During their trans-oceanic migrations, albacore are targeted by fisheries off several nations including the United States, Canada, and Japan at different times of the year. The United States West Coast fishery harvests this stock during summer and fall months.

Albacore has been fished commercially off of Oregon since the mid-1930s when the fishery expanded north from the traditional grounds off southern California. For many years, both baitboats and jigboats fished for albacore off Oregon, but in recent years predominantly jig-caught (troll-caught) fish have been landed. The current fleet consists primarily of small to medium (20 ft. to 60 ft.) "combination" boats which may fish crab, salmon, or bottomfish at other times of the year, and large freezer boats (most longer than 60 ft.) that travel the north and south Pacific, fishing principally albacore.

Oregon albacore landings have been highly variable through the years, ranging from a low of 27,600 pounds in 1936 to a high of almost 38 million pounds in 1968. In the last decade, landings in Oregon have averaged almost 7 million pounds.

Sampling of Oregon's albacore fishery is a cooperative effort between the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC). This report documents the progress of the 2002 fishery off Oregon and the associated sampling activities.

**2002 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 2002 commercial landings is 4,316,500 lbs.; this is a 50% decrease from 2001 landings of 8,957,549 lbs. (Table 2, Figure 2). Reasons, cited by fishermen, for the decrease included: low price offered by plants, no persistent warm water areas, sloppy ocean conditions and preferable conditions for salmon fishing. Newport received the majority of Oregon deliveries at 45%, followed by Astoria at 31% and Charleston at about 15%. Eight other ports also received deliveries (Table 3, Figure 3).

Albacore markets remained fairly stable during the 2002 season with fish going to European, Asian and other alternate markets as well as the traditional cannery markets. The ex-vessel price paid for cannery grade fish at Oregon buying stations was about \$0.65/lb. Frozen fish going to blast/bled or other alternate markets received from \$0.70 to \$1.30/lb. and fresh fish

ranged from about \$0.55 to \$.75/lb. Most fishermen selling from their vessels to the public asked for \$1.50 to \$1.75/lb., however there were a few reports of \$1.00 and \$1.25/lb.

In 2002 the number of vessels landing albacore in Oregon was 265, down from 471 vessels in 2001. Landings peaked in August (1,815,129 lbs.) followed by September (1,105,418 lbs.) and July (962,056 lbs.). Only 8 Canadian vessels landed albacore in Oregon in 2002, accounting for 3% of the total number of vessels and 2% of the total pounds landed, compared 2001 figures of 39 Canadian vessels, 9% of total vessels and 12% of the total pounds landed.

The estimated number of trips landed into Oregon ports decreased from 1,261 in 2001 to 753 in 2002. In 2002 the average landing was about 5,700 lbs. (6,500 in 2001) and the average size of albacore delivered to Oregon buyers was again variable, ranging from 10 to 20+ lbs. Most of the fish landed were three and four year old fish.

During 2002, the recreational albacore fishery off Oregon contributed approximately 49,000 lbs. (less than 2%) to total albacore landings. Charter boats accounted for 60% of the total recreational landings from Garibaldi to Brookings and private boats made up the remaining 40%.

In the fall of 2002 the Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC) adopted the Highly Migratory Species Fisheries Management Plan (HMSFMP). The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is expected to approve or reject the plan sometime in 2003.

## **2002 SAMPLING ACTIVITIES**

Sampling was conducted in Astoria, Newport and Charleston. Activities included distribution of new logbooks, collection of completed logbooks, conducting interviews to transcribe logbooks, and measuring fish to obtain length frequencies of catch. Albacore sampling was conducted on a full-time basis in Newport from July 1<sup>st</sup> through September 30<sup>th</sup> and part-time in Astoria and Charleston from June 1<sup>st</sup> through October 31<sup>st</sup>. 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 (lbs,) 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.

In 2002, forty-seven logbooks were distributed to fishermen; the same number as in 2001. Logbook collections attempted (contacts) in 2002 numbered 274, a 9% decrease from 2001.

These contacts resulted in the collection of 86 North Pacific Albacore Voluntary Logbooks and 55 logbook transcriptions, for a total of 141 trips from which data were collected; this is a 34% decrease from the total number collected in 2001. During 2002, 93 trips were sampled for length frequency, and 8,018 fish were measured, an increase over the 2001 figures of 87 trips and 6,571 fish sampled.

## **SUMMARY**

Oregon's albacore landings in 2002 totaled about 4.3 million lbs., a 50% decrease from 2001 and well below the 10 year average. The recreational fishery contributed an estimated 49,000 lbs. in 2002. Albacore sampling was conducted full-time in Newport from July 1<sup>st</sup> through September 30<sup>th</sup> and part-time in Astoria and Charleston from June 1<sup>st</sup> through October 31<sup>st</sup>.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Thanks to the many albacore fishing vessel operators who cooperated by providing logbook or fishing information during our sampling program and to the managers and staff of the fish plants that allow us opportunities to measure fish on their premises. Also, thanks to port samplers Jill Smith, Larry Coryell and Doris Smith for their hard work in collecting data and to Carrie White for providing assistance with the recreational data component of the sampling program.

Table 1. Oregon commercial albacore landings by month, 2002.

| Month        | Pounds             |
|--------------|--------------------|
| June         | 548                |
| July         | 961,076            |
| August       | 1,817,283          |
| September    | 1,107,030          |
| October      | 363,321            |
| November     | 67,242             |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>4,316,500 *</b> |

Table 2. Oregon commercial albacore landings by year, 1992-2002.

| Year | Pounds      |
|------|-------------|
| 1992 | 3,895,618   |
| 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 | 4,550,635   |
| 2000 | 8,755,659   |
| 2001 | 8,957,549   |
| 2002 | 4,316,500 * |

Table 3. Oregon commercial albacore landings by port, 2002.

| Port         | Pounds             | Percent Total Catch |
|--------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Astoria      | 1,313,458          | 30%                 |
| Garibaldi    | 176,533            | 4%                  |
| Pacific City | 754                | 0%                  |
| Depoe Bay    | 4,930              | 0%                  |
| Newport      | 1,943,244          | 45%                 |
| Florence     | 39,514             | 1%                  |
| Winchst. Bay | 123,373            | 3%                  |
| Charleston   | 665,935            | 15%                 |
| Bandon       | 2,709              | 0%                  |
| Port Orford  | 15,409             | 0%                  |
| Brookings    | 30,641             | 1%                  |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>4,316,500 *</b> |                     |

\* Preliminary

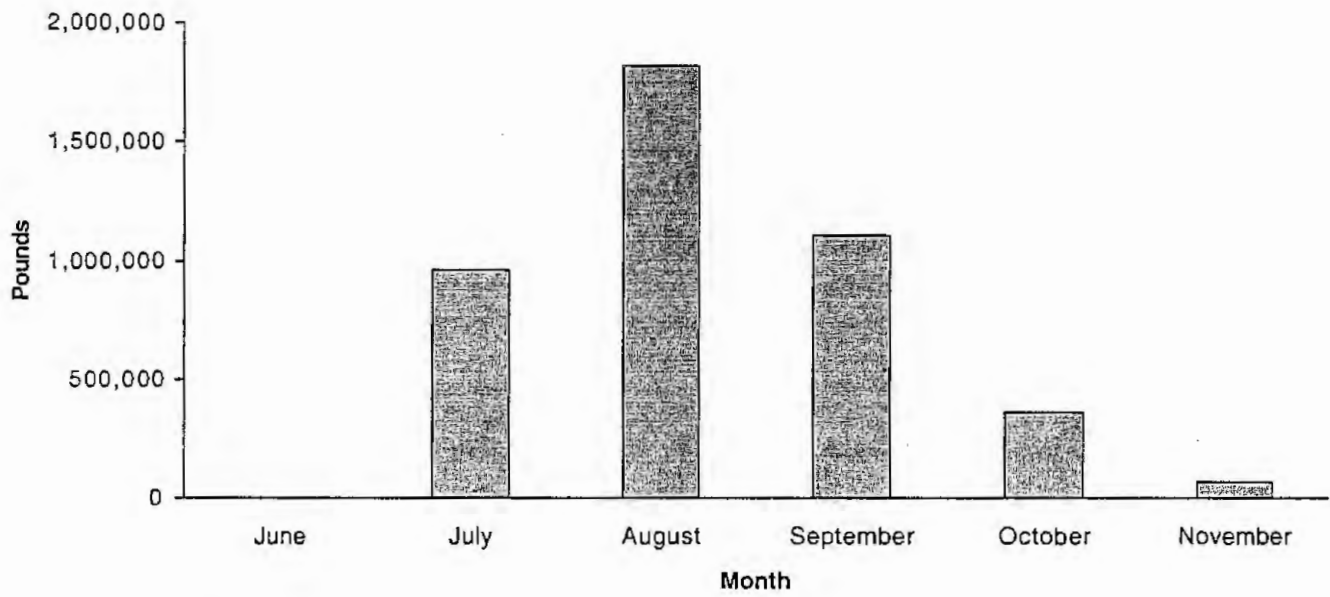


Figure 1. Oregon commercial albacore landings by month, 2002.

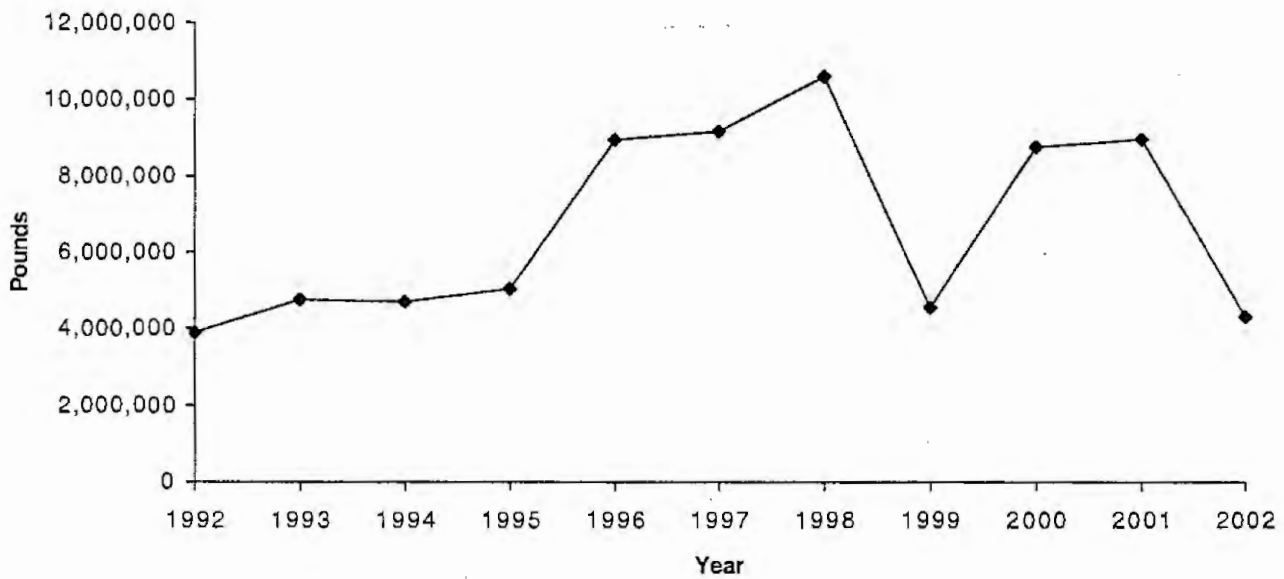


Figure 2. Oregon commercial albacore landings by year, 1992-2002.

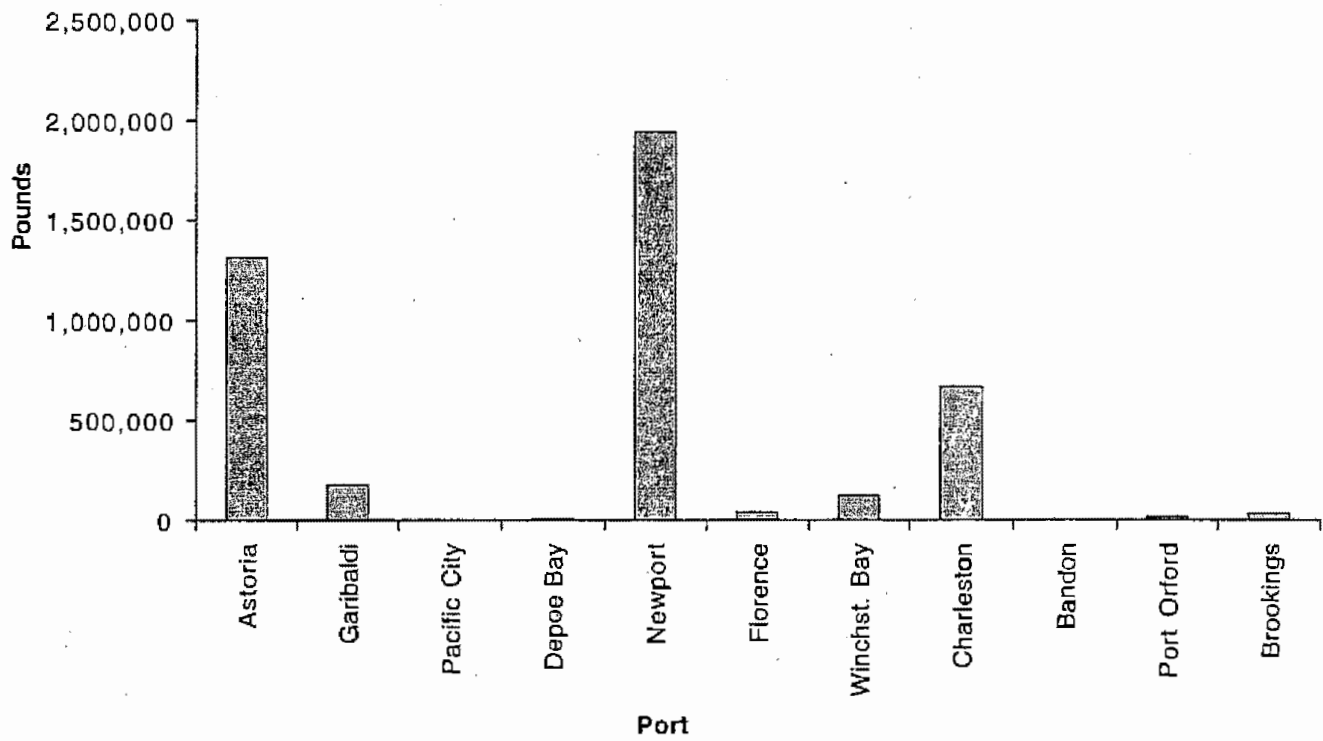


Figure 3. Oregon commercial albacore landings by port, 2002.

Appendix A. Oregon Albacore Summary for 2002

|  | PORT SAMPLED |           |            | TOTAL COAST |
|--|--------------|-----------|------------|-------------|
|  | ASTORIA      | NEWPORT   | CHARLESTON |             |
| Number of Logbooks Issued                              | 1            | 43        | 3          | 47          |
| Number of Data Collections Attempted (sampled)         | 30           | 219       | 25         | 274         |
| Number of Logs Transcribed by Samplers                 | 22           | 26        | 7          | 55          |
| Number of Voluntarily-Completed Logs Collected         | 11           | 64        | 11         | 86          |
| Total Landings from Sampled Vessels (Lbs) <sup>1</sup> | 458,660      | 1,409,027 | 250,252    | 2,117,939   |
| Number of Trips Sampled for Length-Frequency           | 9            | 74        | 10         | 93          |
| Number of Fish Measured                                | 611          | 6,682     | 725        | 8,018       |
| Estimated Total No. of Trips <sup>2</sup>              | 127          | 299       | 134        | 753         |
| Estimated Total No. of Vessels <sup>3</sup>            | 53           | 115       | 45         | 253         |
| Estimated Total Jig Landings (Lbs)                     | 1,313,458    | 1,943,244 | 665,935    | 4,316,500   |
| Estimated Total Bait Landings (Lbs)                    | 0            | 0         | 0          | 0           |
| Estimated Total Jig & Bait Landings (Lbs)              | 1,313,458    | 1,943,244 | 665,935    | 4,316,500   |
| Estimated Total Gillnet Landings (Lbs)                 | 0            | 0         | 0          | 0           |
| Estimated Sport Total Landings (Lbs) <sup>4</sup>      |              |           |            | 49,000      |
| Estimated Total Landings for Other Gear Types (Lbs)    |              |           |            |             |
| Estimated Total Landings (Lbs)                         |              |           |            | 4,365,500   |

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Some vessels landed in more than one port during the season.

<sup>4</sup> Sport sampling was conducted by the Ocean Recreational Boat Sampling Program (ORBS) of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Marine Resources Program at numerous sites along the coast. Their projected estimate of coastwide catch was 3,264 fish. That number was multiplied by 15 lbs to obtain an estimate of 49,000 lbs.