



*Washington
Department of*
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**

2006 WASHINGTON STATE RECREATIONAL ALBACORE FISHERY

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INTRODUCTION

Albacore tuna (*Thunnus alalunga*) is one of the most sought after fish around the world, both commercially and recreationally, and are classified as a Highly Migratory Species (HMS). On the West Coast, they are managed federally through the Pacific Fishery Management Council process by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in cooperation with state fish and wildlife agencies.

While albacore fishing opportunity is important to Washington anglers and charter vessel operations, Washington's recreational catch represents less than 1% of the total albacore catch in the Pacific. There are about 28 nations that fish for albacore Pacific-wide, and the United States is engaged in international arenas that develop recommendations for the conservation of tunas throughout their range.

Federal regulations for HMS fisheries were developed in response to a need to coordinate state and federal management of HMS stocks and to help promote international efforts for long-term conservation and sustainability of HMS species. In 2004, NMFS adopted a federal regulation requiring all charter vessels to obtain an HMS permit before chartering for albacore and to comply with logbook and observer requirements.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) administered the logbook and observer programs for the Washington recreational charter fleet. In Washington, recreational tuna anglers catch albacore tuna almost exclusively. The occurrence of other HMS, such as bluefin tuna, in the recreational fishery is minimal, although blue shark is also commonly caught on albacore trips. Chartered tuna trips typically last 24 to 48 and strategies for catching albacore include trolling jigs and drifting using live anchovies as bait and chum. On average, a tuna charter takes 6 to 10 passenger, depending on the size of the vessel.

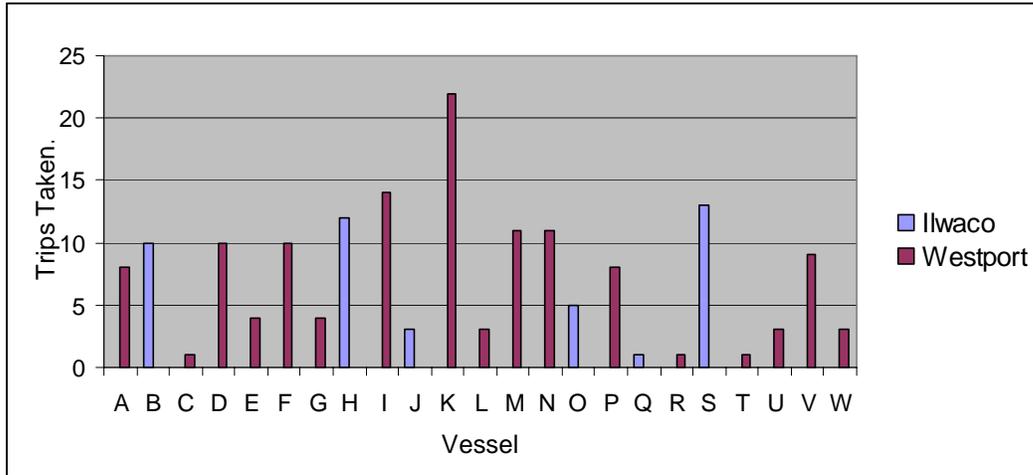
ALBACORE LOGBOOKS

Beginning in 2005, albacore charter vessels were required by NMFS and WDFW to maintain logbooks for each tuna trip taken (Appendix A). Logbooks must be completed within 24 hours of the completion of every tuna trip and the original logsheet must be submitted to WDFW by the last day of the month following the month of fishing. Basic vessel information, fishing dates, fishing area, species kept and released, and protected species interactions are to be recorded the vessel's logbook.

According to albacore logbooks, the first tuna trip was taken on July 21, 2006, and the last tuna trip was taken on September 30, 2006. There were a total of 167 chartered tuna trips taken out of Washington ports; 44 trips on 6 charter

vessels originated out of Ilwaco and 123 trips on 17 charter vessels fished out of Westport (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The number of trips taken by charterboats who fished for tuna in 2006.



Of the 18,941 albacore landed into Washington by charter vessels, 90.4% were landed into Westport and 9.6% were landed into Ilwaco. An average of 12.8 tuna were caught per angler on Washington charter vessels; however, the average amount of tuna per angler in Ilwaco was 4.9 and in Westport the average was 15.6 tuna per person.

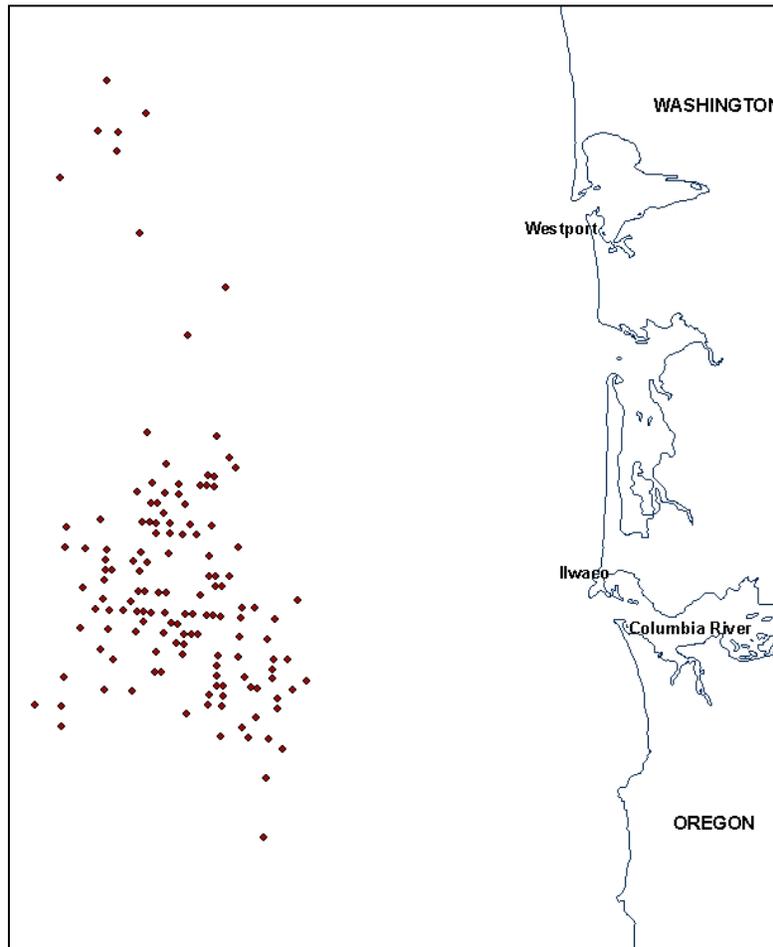
In Westport, 37.6 tuna per person was the most tuna caught on a trip and in Ilwaco the highest trip was 12.3 tuna per person (Table 1).

Table 1. Albacore landings by port according to reported vessel logbook information.

	Number of Tuna	% Landed	Average Per Person	Highest Per Person
Ilwaco	1,818	9.6%	4.9%	12.3
Westport	17,123	90.4%	15.6%	37.6
Total	18,941	-	12.8%	-

All of Washington’s chartered tuna trips took place off the southern coast of Washington and the northern coast of Oregon (Figure 3). Trips were approximately 40 to 45 nautical miles offshore. According to logbook data, the farthest any charterboat traveled was 75 nautical miles.

Figure 3. Washington tuna fishing locations according to 2006 charterboat logbook information.



OBSERVER PROGRAM

In 2006, at the request of the NMFS, WDFW administered an observer program for recreational charter vessels targeting albacore tuna. The primary objectives of the observer program were to document recreational albacore catch, bycatch of other fish species, interactions with protected species, and condition of released catch.

Eleven albacore charter trips on eight charter boats were observed by WDFW staff. The first observed trip was on August 4, 2006, and the last trip observed was on September 7, 2006. All observed trips were out of Westport, Washington. Observations were scheduled for Ilwaco but inclement weather caused the trips to be canceled.

The observed catch on the eleven trips consisted of albacore and blue fin tuna, and blue shark. There were 1,116 albacore landed into Westport on observed

trips, with the average trip landing 102 albacore. The only bycatch observed was blue shark (176 individuals). There was one interaction with a juvenile sea gull, which was not hooked but just carried the bait and hook in its bill for about 20 seconds before dropping it.

A summary of all observed catch (both kept and released) and a description of the condition of released catch are contained in Table 2. (Note: All released albacore was not intentionally released; released albacore include those that escaped by breaking the line or throwing the hook.)

Table 2. WDFW observed catch and bycatch (numbers of individuals) on albacore charter tuna trips in 2006.

Trip #	Albacore Kept	Albacore Released Live	Blue Fin Kept	Blue Shark Released Live	Blue Shark Released Dead
1	47	2		13	1
2	113	2		23	
3	31	3		14	
4	27	5	1	8	
5	123	12		45	
6	151	5		17	
7	54			5	
8	169	4		16	
9	107	13		7	
10	127	14		20	
11	167	7		7	

STATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT

In addition to the federal regulations, in 2006, WDFW adopted a state regulation requiring all recreational anglers to obtain a Washington recreational fishing license to fish for albacore; previously, albacore were exempt from the licensing requirement. This allows us to create a database of Washington tuna anglers and provides a mechanism to enforce state albacore fishing regulations.

