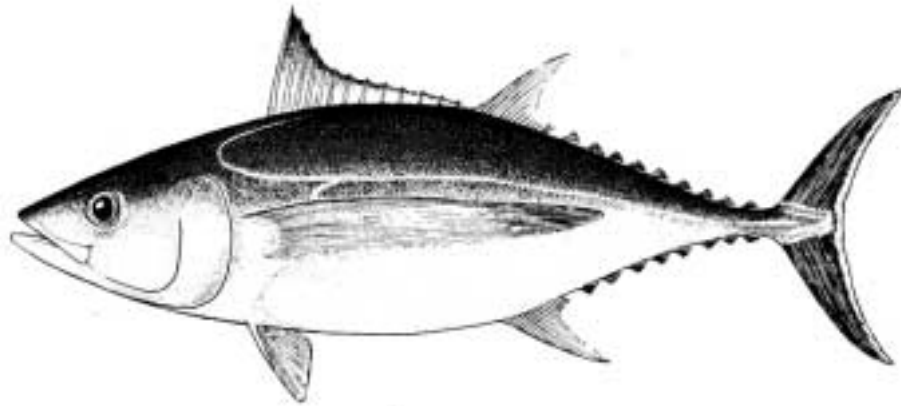


## **NFR-3**



### **An Update for Canadian Tuna Fisheries in the North and South Pacific Ocean for 2003<sup>1</sup>**



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July 2004

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian National Fishery Report for the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish (SCTB17) in Majuro, Marshall Islands, August 9-18, 2004. Document not to be cited without permission of the authors.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Canadians began fishing albacore tuna (*Thunnus alalunga*) in the north Pacific with troll vessels using tuna jigs in the mid 1930s. Canadian trollers began fishing albacore in the south Pacific in the mid 1980s. In the last two decades, larger vessels in the Canadian troll fleet have increasingly expanded their albacore fishing from the North American coast westward past the dateline and southward to the southern tropical convergence zone.

Increased fishing interests on the high seas formed the basis for Canada's entry into the multilateral negotiations for a new, Pacific Ocean wide, Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (HMS) in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. Canada was a full participant at the Multilateral High-Level Conference on the Conservation and Management of HMS in the Central and Western Pacific (MHLC). The Convention was adopted on September 4, 2000 during the seventh and final MHLC session in Honolulu, Hawaii. Representatives from the Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade were in attendance. Canada signed the Convention in May 2001.

Canada is committed to providing detailed catch and effort statistics, logbook data and fishing vessel information, as will be required under the new HMS Convention. This report provides brief descriptions of Canada's fisheries in the north and south Pacific in 2003, and recent Canadian fishery statistics and logbook information. Similar reports were prepared for SCTB12, (Argue et al. 1999), SCTB13 (Argue and Shaw, 2000), SCTB14 (Shaw, 2001), SCTB15 (Shaw and Stocker, 2002), and SCTB 16 (Stocker and Shaw, 2003).

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE CANADIAN ALBACORE TUNA FISHERIES**

### ***North Pacific Jig Fishery***

The Canadian jig fishery is comprised of two fleets. The coastal fleet operates within and near the Canadian and United States fishing zones in accordance with zone and port access privileges under the Canada/U.S. Albacore Tuna Treaty. Vessels in this fleet, mostly 35 to 60 feet in length, concentrate their fishing effort primarily from the southern California coast to the northern tip of Vancouver Island and, in some years, as far north as off the west coast of the Queen Charlotte Islands. Ocean conditions, the availability of albacore, and abundance and distribution of Pacific salmon all influence the size and distribution of the Canadian tuna fleet in any particular year. Effort in the coastal fishery normally starts in June and peaks in September, after the salmon season for trollers has wound down. The catch is primarily bled and blast frozen with some vessels holding fresh caught fish in ice or frozen brine. The catch from the coastal fleet is sold either into U.S. or Canadian plants where the fish are sold in the canned tuna market or the fresh-frozen sashimi market.

The Canadian high seas fleet is comprised of larger jig vessels (most greater than 60 feet) with crews typically of two to four fishermen that remain at sea for trips of several months. These vessels, most of which are equipped with large freezers, operate primarily from west of the dateline to the Canadian zone in the north Pacific. Offshore fishing in the north Pacific on the Midway and Wake Islands grounds usually starts in late May or June and, weather and tuna abundance permitting, lasts through late fall as the vessels follow albacore towards the North American coast. Offshore vessel catches are also sold into the canned market, although the majority is bled and blast frozen then sold into the fresh-frozen sashimi market. There are a number of small processors that have established special niche markets for albacore. The product is either smoked (hot or cold) or loined and sold directly to consumers.

### ***South Pacific Jig Fishery***

Since the mid 1980s a smaller fleet has fished south Pacific albacore between the New Zealand zone and 140°W and 30°S to 45°S. After the end of the north Pacific albacore season (sometime in October), Canadian vessels fish in the southern albacore fishery during the austral summer months (December to April). Between two and five vessels fish in the south Pacific. These vessels range between 70 and 90 feet and have a crew of four. The majority of the fish are bled and blast frozen with a few vessels using brine. Some of the vessels will tranship their catch to carrier vessels at sea in order to continue fishing operations on migrating schools of tuna. However, in most cases the catch is sold to American Samoa, Fiji, French Polynesia (Papeete) and Canada. The Canadian markets are the same as for the north Pacific fishery.

## **ANNUAL FISHERY STATISTICS**

Prior to departing for the fishing grounds, Canadian tuna fishermen are requested to notify DFO of their intent to fish albacore tuna, and under the Canada/U.S. Albacore Tuna Treaty must indicate to DFO at least 48 hours in advance whether they intend to fish in the U.S. zone (Shaw 1997, 1999). The reporting information includes vessel name, homeport, CFV #, registration #, radio call sign, and Captain/operator name. All Canadian vessels must carry logbooks while fishing for highly migratory species in any waters. Logbook information consists of daily catch and bycatch (numbers of fish), effort (numbers of jigs, hours fished), position (Lat/Long), average fish weight, and SST. Logbooks and sales slips must be returned to DFO for entry into DFO's relational database (Argue et al. 1999).

### ***North Pacific Albacore***

Below, for FAO Statistical Areas (Chart 1), are the estimates of the 2002 and the *preliminary* estimates of the 2003 northern albacore catch by Canadian jig boats.

<b>FAO STATISTICAL AREA</b>	<b>ESTIMATED TOTAL 2002 CATCH (mt)</b>	<b>ESTIMATED TOTAL 2003 CATCH (mt)</b>
Northeast Pacific, Area 67	4,703	6,321
Northwest Pacific, Area 61	130	340

<b>FAO STATISTICAL AREA</b>	<b>ESTIMATED TOTAL 2002 CATCH (mt)</b>	<b>ESTIMATED TOTAL 2003 CATCH (mt)</b>
Eastern Central Pacific, Area 77 <sup>2</sup>	163	94
<b>TOTALS</b>	4,996	6,755

The distribution of total north Pacific Canadian catch between FAO Statistical Areas was based on the distribution of reported catch from logbooks. Logbooks have been received from 90% of an estimated fleet of 232 vessels that were fishing in 2002, and 95% of an estimated fleet of 187 vessels that were fishing in 2003.

The total estimated Canadian catch in the north Pacific for 2003 was 6,755 mt, compared to 4,996 mt in 2002. Most of this catch (94%) was taken in FAO Area 67. Catch in 2003 in Area 61 was more than twice the catch in 2002, whereas the catch in 2003 in Area 77 was substantially less than the catch in 2002. The Canadian fleet off the North American coast caught fish from southern California to the northern tip of Vancouver Island.

### ***South Pacific Albacore***

In recent years, between two and five Canadian flag vessels have fished southern albacore stocks below the equator during the November to March seasons. These vessels fished primarily in an area that extends from 130°W to 165°W and 30°S to 45°S. They have landed their catch at ports in American Samoa, Fiji, French Polynesia (Papeete) and Canada. Based on analyses of transshipment records and discussions with skippers, Canadian landings in this fishery from its inception in 1987/88 to 1994/95 are estimated to have ranged from 134 to 335 mt per season. Based on log book, sales slips, transshipment data, and fisherman interviews, the 1995/96 to 2001/2002 catch of southern albacore by Canadian registered vessels was:

<b>FISHING SEASON</b>	<b>ESTIMATED TOTAL CATCH (mt)</b>
1995/96	136
1996/97	149
1997/98	167
1998/99	253
1999/2000	351
2000/2001	206
2001/2002	144
2002/2003	unavailable

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<sup>2</sup> Excludes catch data from below the equator.

The estimated catch for the 2002/2003 fishing season was not available at the time of writing.

Charts 2 to 4 show an example of the distribution, by one degree square, of the 2002 southern albacore catch (numbers of fish), fishing effort (days fishing) and CPUE (numbers of fish per day fishing), respectively.

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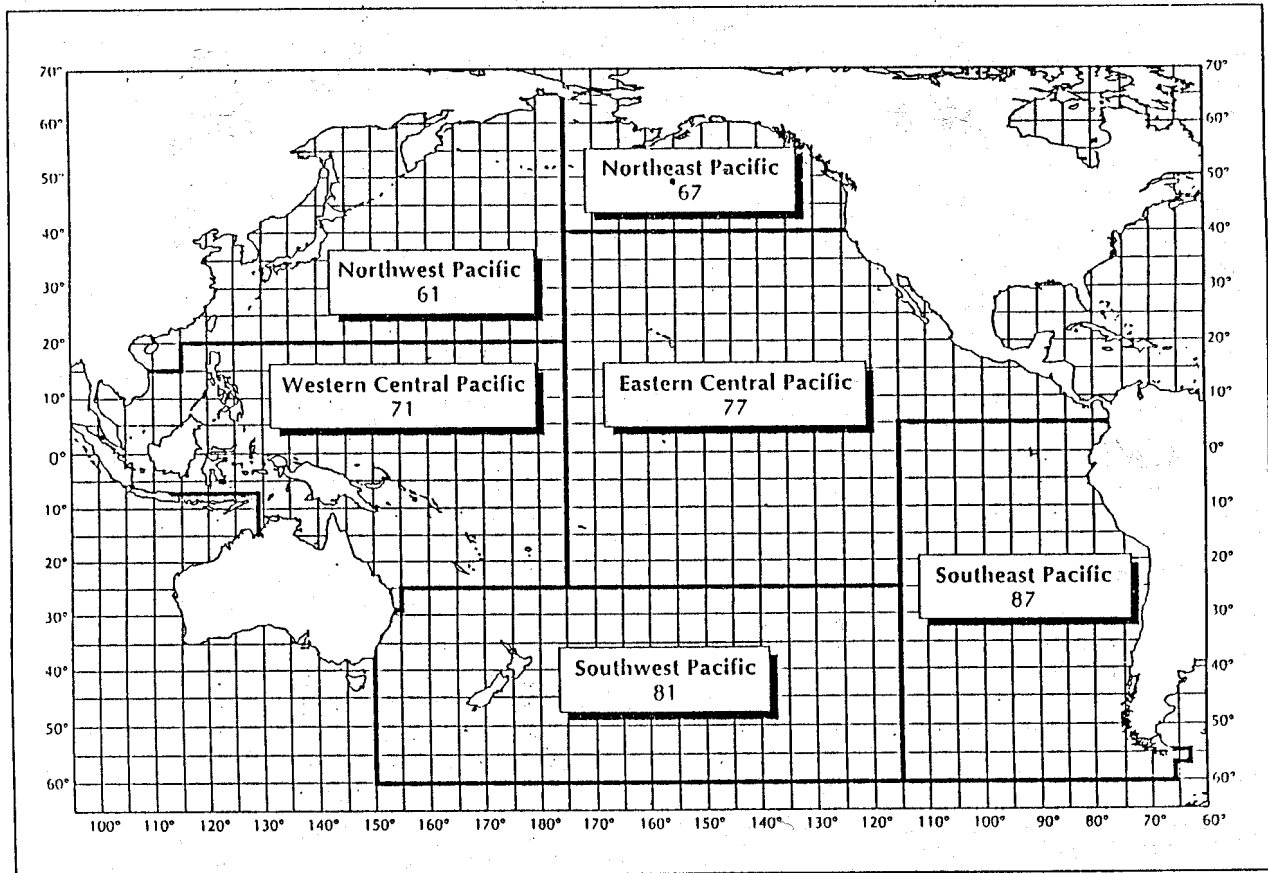


Chart 1. Food and Agricultural Organization fishing areas for statistical purposes.

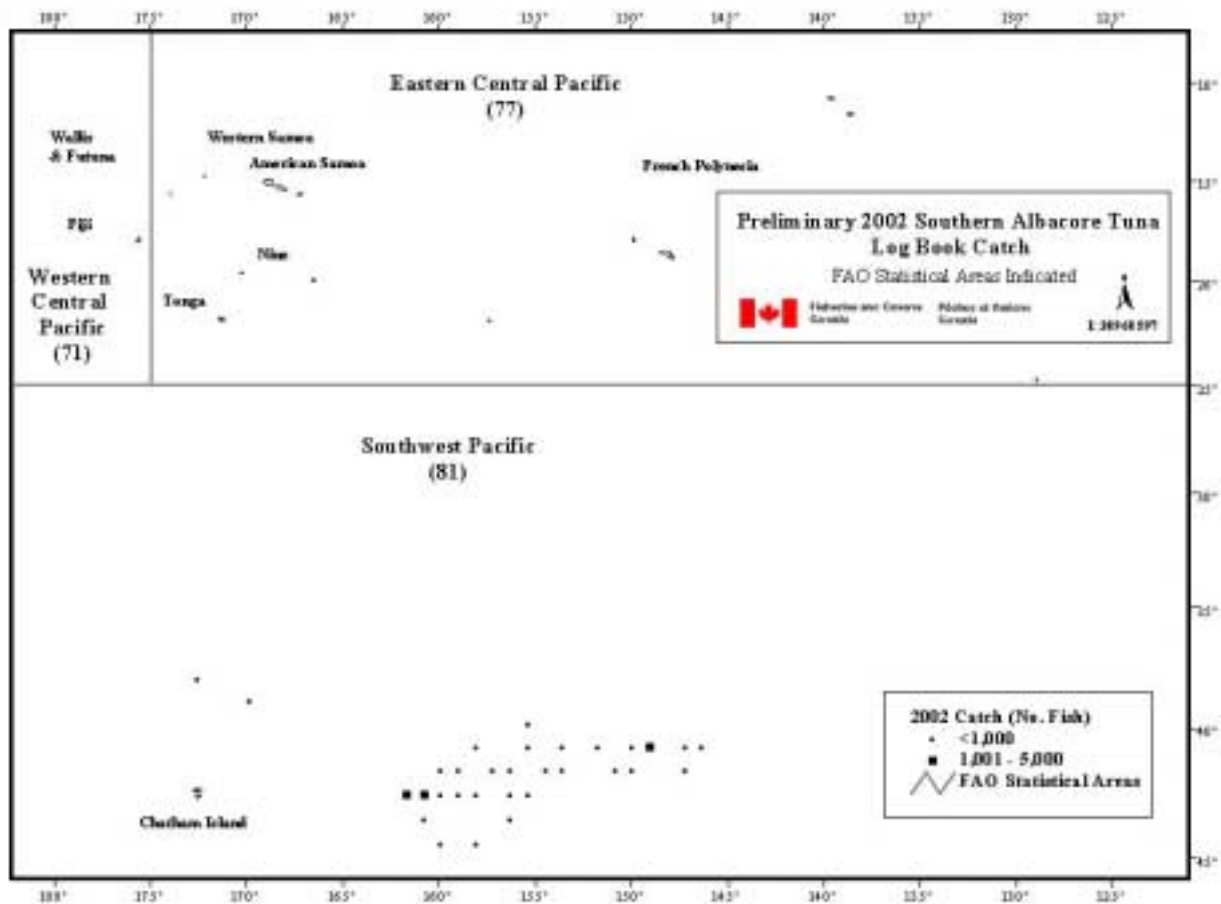


Chart 2.



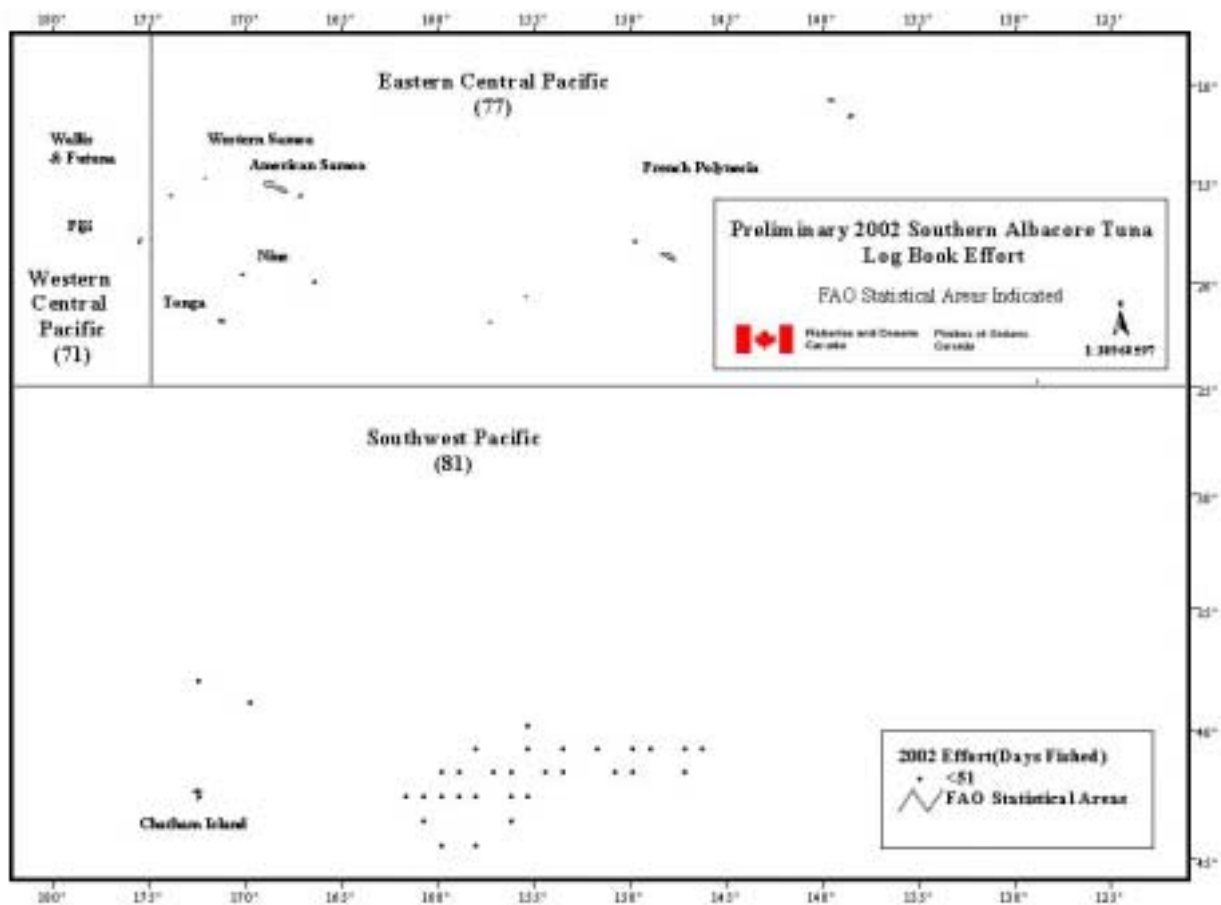


Chart 3.

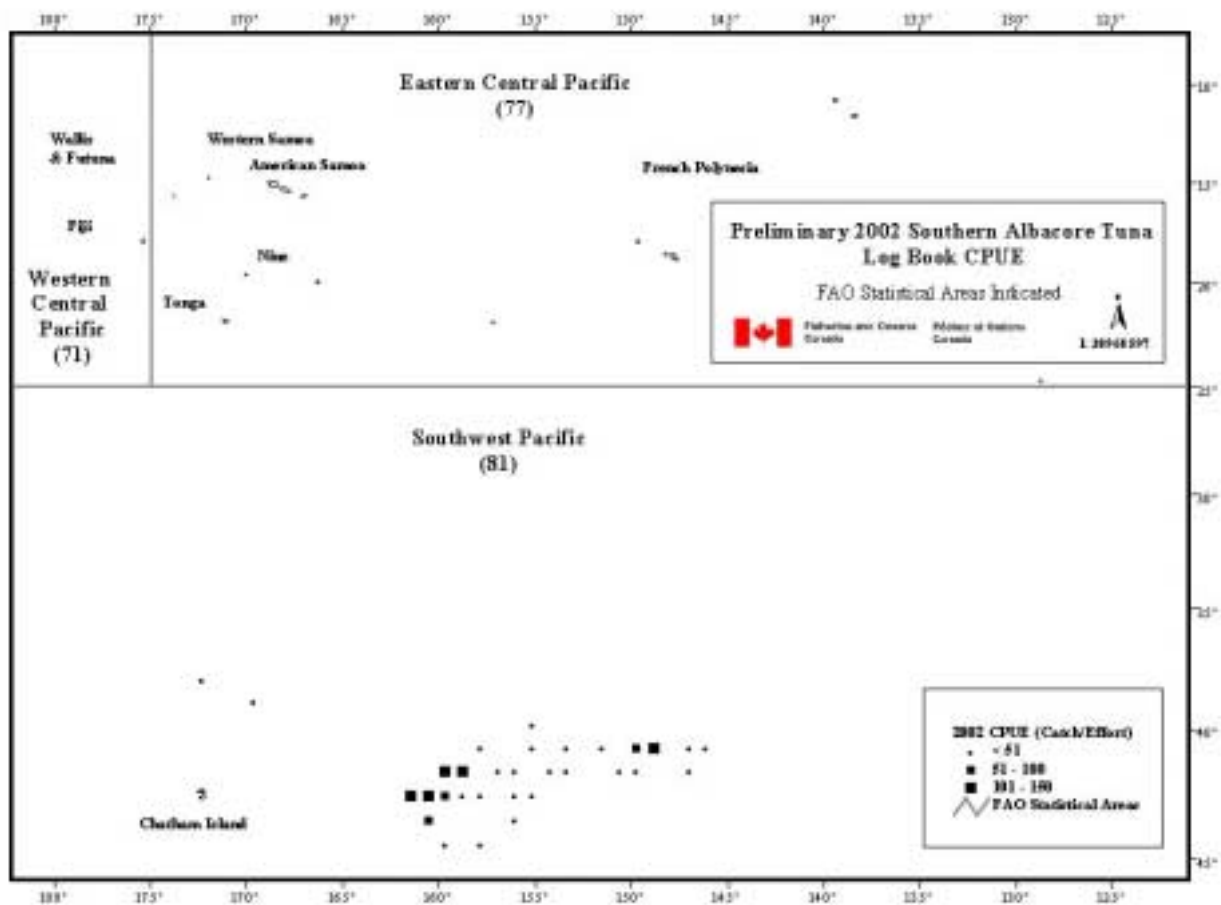


Chart 4.