



**Surveillance Report 3  
American Albacore Fishing Association (AAFA) –  
South Pacific Albacore Troll/Jig Fishery**

Certificate No.: **MML-FC-015**

**Moody Marine Ltd.**  
December 2010

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## 1.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scope against which the surveillance is undertaken:** MSC Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Fishing as applied to the AAFA Pacific Albacore Troll/Jig Fishery.

**Species:** Albacore tuna *Thunnus alalunga*

**Area:** South Pacific

**Method of capture:** Troll/Jig

Date of Surveillance Visit:	3-4 August 2010					
Initial Certification	Date: 4 <sup>th</sup> September 2007		Certificate Ref: MML-FC-015			
Surveillance stage	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>		
Surveillance team:	Lead Assessor: Rob Blyth-Skyrme Assessor(s): Joseph Powers Mike Laurs Paul Knapman					
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## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

This report contains the findings of the third surveillance cycle in relation to the American Albacore Fishing Association (AAFA) South Pacific Troll/Jig Fishery. The surveillance audit was carried out in accordance with the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Fisheries Certification Methodology (FCM) Version 6.

An announcement of the surveillance site visit was published on the MSC website on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2010 (See appendix A) and opportunity was provided to stakeholders to meet with or submit information on the fishery to the assessment team. Stakeholders who have previously commented on the AAFA fishery certification were also notified directly of the third surveillance audit.

Stakeholder representation or comments were received from the Worldwide Fund for Nature with regard to any future recertification of the South Pacific fishery. No other stakeholders chose to contact Moody International, the AAFA's certification body, with regard to the AAFA South Pacific fishery surveillance audit this year.

The surveillance team also met with the client and with staff of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Fisheries Resources Division, and then teleconferenced with Dr. Gary Sakagawa of NMFS, who is Chair of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) International Scientific Committee. During these discussions, evidence was gathered on the status of the South Pacific albacore stock, the performance of the fishery throughout the year, measures to meet the Condition of Certification and changes in management. A number of scientific and meeting reports were also examined by the surveillance team in producing this report, as detailed in the information sources section.

It should also be noted that Dr. Rob Blyth-Skyrme again undertook the role of lead assessor for this audit in place of Dr. Andrew Hough, who was part of the original assessment team. Rob is an Associate of Moody International.

## 3.0 RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section provides a tabulated format within which general information about the status of the stock and the fishery for this reporting period is provided along with the surveillance team's observations, conclusions and recommendations on the current status of the fishery and the client's progress toward meeting the single Condition of Certification.

With respect to the Condition, the following table sets out the original assessment scoring guideposts and scoring commentary and the requirements of the original Condition alongside the heading 'Activity assessed'. This identifies the areas in which the fishery was determined to be performing below the level required by the MSC standard during the initial assessment, and the required actions to address these issues.

As required by the MSC assessment methodology, AAFA produced an Action Plan setting out the stages involved in addressing the Conditions raised. This is set out in the table alongside the heading 'AAFA Action'. It should be noted that this Action Plan was deemed to be adequate by the original main assessment team.

According to the terms of the Action Plan, the client has provided information on the work undertaken to date.

This progress has been evaluated by the Moody Marine surveillance team ('Observations' and 'Conclusion') against:

1. The commitments made in the Action Plan;
2. The intent of the original Condition; and,
3. The original scoring indicator, guideposts and commentary.

The influence of any overall legislative and management changes in the fishery are also taken into consideration.

When the Condition has been judged to have been met, a re-evaluation of the scoring allocated to the relevant Performance Indicator(s) in the original MSC assessment will be included within the evaluation.

Item	Comments
<b>1</b>	<b>Stock status</b>
<b>Observations</b>	<p><b>South Pacific Albacore</b></p> <p>The 2008 stock assessment for South Pacific albacore concluded that there are no sustainability concerns regarding the overall stock. This assessment was updated in 2009. The 2009 assessment results differ moderately from results from the 2008 assessment, due to changes in relative abundance indices, splits in selectivity, assumed values of steepness and changes in growth modeling. These changes have resulted in a more realistic and credible model which fits the data better.</p> <p>The key conclusion again indicates that overfishing is not occurring and the stock is not in an overfished state. Reference point levels estimated in the 2009 assessment were more optimistic than the 2008 assessment and depletion was moderate at ~26%. There is considerable uncertainty about the early trend in biomass, though the trend has a negligible effect on management advice. There is no indication that current levels of catch are not sustainable with regard to recruitment overfishing; however, current levels of fishing mortality may be affecting longline catch rates on adult albacore.</p> <p><i>Management actions in Response to Status and Conclusions</i></p> <p>No actions are needed to maintain stocks above any recognized target and limit reference points. However, these reference points need to be formally adopted.</p>

Item	Comments
<b>2</b>	<b>The Fishery</b>
<b>Observations</b>	<p>The history of the fishery from all sources (not just AAFA) involves distant-water longline fleets of Japan, Korea and Chinese Taipei, and domestic longline fleets of several Pacific Island countries which catch primarily adult albacore over a large proportion of their geographic range. In recent years, the longline catch has expanded considerably with the development or expansion of small-scale longline fisheries in several Pacific Island countries, notably Samoa, American Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Cook Islands, New Caledonia and French Polynesia. A troll fishery for juvenile albacore has operated in New Zealand coastal waters since the 1960s and in the central Pacific in the region of the STCZ since the mid-1980s. Driftnet vessels from Japan and Chinese Taipei targeted albacore in the central Tasman Sea and in the central Pacific near the STCZ during the 1980s and early 1990s. Surface fisheries are highly seasonal, occurring mainly during December to April. Longline fisheries operate throughout the year although there is a strong seasonal trend in the distribution of the catch with the fishery operating in the southern latitudes (south of 35° S) during late summer and autumn and moving northwards during winter.</p> <p>After an initial period of development, annual catches of South Pacific albacore varied considerably and are now about 60,000 to 70,000 mt. Longline gear accounts for most of the catch, about 25-30,000 mt per year on average prior to about 1998, increasing to approximately 70,000 mt in 2005. This increase was largely due to the development of small-scale longline fisheries in Pacific Island countries. Troll catches are relatively small, generally producing</p>

	<p>less than 10,000 mt per year. The driftnet catch reached 22,000 mt in 1989, but has since declined to zero following a United Nations moratorium on industrial-scale drift-netting.</p> <p>U.S. West Coast albacore vessels must travel more than 10,000 nm to enter the South Pacific albacore fishery and return, not including distance travelled on the fishing grounds. Due to high fuel costs and uncertainty in market conditions, only a very limited number of U.S. vessels participated in the troll fishery for albacore in the South Pacific in 2009. This included one AAFA albacore fishing vessel, which unloaded a load of 60 tons of MSC certified albacore caught in the South Pacific upon returning to the West Coast. Official landings statistics for the 2009 South Pacific albacore troll fishery are not yet available; however, provisional data from the WCPFC indicate that the South Pacific catch was 66,996 tonnes, of which only 2,027 tonnes was taken in troll fisheries (WCPFC 2010).</p> <p>Troll fisheries have been and continue to be a small proportion of the overall catch of South Pacific albacore and the AAFA contribution to the catches has been an even smaller proportion of the troll catch.</p>
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Item	Comments
<b>3</b>	<b>Condition of Certification</b> - Decision rules and harvest control mechanisms
<b>Activity Assessed</b>	<p>This Condition relates to Principle 1, performance indicators: 1.1.3.6 and 1.1.3.7:</p> <p><b>1.1.3.6</b></p> <p><b>100 scoring guidepost</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear, documented and tested decision rules are fully implemented and have been fully reconciled with reference points, and the data and assessment limitations, and have been periodically evaluated.</li> </ul> <p><b>80 scoring guidepost</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear decision making rules exist, are fully documented, but may not have been fully evaluated. Decision rules are reconciled with appropriate reference points and with data and assessment limitations.</li> </ul> <p><b>60 scoring guidepost</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It can be demonstrated that decision making, though not documented, is logical and appropriate. Rules may not have been tested</li> </ul> <p><b>Score 75</b></p> <p>The scientific basis for decision making is well established and documented. At this point in the stock's exploitation history, decision rules are not mandatory, but effort should be made soon to begin the definition/evaluation process. Decision rules are currently based on the fundamental B/BMSY and F/FMSY benchmarks. Reconciliation with reference points and data/assessment limitations is undertaken as discussed above. The overarching decision rule to maintain stocks at or above MSY has been established and codified by the Commissions. Thus, this decision rule in place is consistent with reference points from the assessment and the limitations of data that are inputs to the assessment.</p>

	<p><b>1.1.3.7</b></p> <p><b>100 scoring guidepost</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mechanisms are in place to contain harvest as and when required to maintain (or allow the target stock to return to) productive levels. Specific measures to demonstrate effectiveness are in place.</li> </ul> <p><b>80 scoring guidepost</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate mechanisms are in place to contain harvest as and when required to maintain, or allow the target stock to return to, productive levels</li> </ul> <p><b>60 scoring guidepost</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mechanisms exist to monitor and (if necessary) reduce harvest, but may not fully contain harvest, or have not been tested/evaluated</li> </ul> <p><b>Score 75</b></p> <p>Mechanisms (should they be needed) can be initiated through the IATTC and WCPFC. Comparable actions have been taken by IATTC and WCPFC for other species (such as yellowfin and bigeye tunas). Currently, measures are in place in all three Commissions to not allow increases in fishing effort on albacore. This is exemplified by the Conservation and Management Measure WCPFC-03 which went into place on Feb 16, 2006.</p> <p><b>Condition</b></p> <p>It is recognised that the South Pacific albacore stock is assessed to be in a situation where recent catches are less than the MSY, aggregate fishing mortality is less than <i>FMSY</i> and the adult biomass is greater than <i>BMSY</i>. As such, at this point in the stock's exploitation history, decision rules are not mandatory, and specific mechanisms to control harvest are not needed (although these have been implemented for other species when required). However, to expedite the precautionary consideration of such rules and mechanisms, AAFA are required to take appropriate steps to request that management agencies begin a process to develop a framework for development and clear documentation of decision rules and appropriate harvest control mechanisms in the fishery.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b></p> <p>Appropriate requests from AAFA should be made within 6 months of certification of the fishery.</p>
<b>Conclusion from 1<sup>st</sup> Surveillance Report</b>	<p>AAFA has confirmed their commitment to continue to advocate that management agencies begin a process to develop a framework for development and clear documentation of decision rules and appropriate harvest control mechanisms in the fishery.</p> <p>Because there are no sustainability concerns regarding the overall status of the stock the management agencies have not felt inclined to formally adopt the reference points nor develop decision and harvest control rules</p> <p>While AAFA have met the requirement of the Condition it remains open until clear decision making rules are developed, fully documented and reconciled with appropriate reference points and with data and assessment limitations.</p> <p>AAFA have an on-going commitment to continue to advocate for sustainable</p>

	<p>and well managed albacore fisheries in the South Pacific and we heard that they will continue to press for the development of clearly documented decision rules and appropriate harvest control mechanisms in the fishery. Evidence of this commitment will be reviewed at the next annual audit.</p>
<b>Conclusion from 2<sup>nd</sup> Surveillance Report</b>	<p>AAFA has made considerable efforts to promote and support both domestic and international responsible management actions, as appropriate, regarding the South Pacific albacore resource over the course of this certificate.</p> <p>It is clear that the WCPFC managers are working to advance understanding of the South Pacific albacore and its fishery, to support the management regime that already includes a commitment to cap fishing effort at historic (1999-2005) levels.</p> <p>In conclusion, satisfactory progress is being made on this condition, and further work, as described, should allow this condition to be closed.</p>
<b>AAFA Action</b>	<p>In this most recent year (2009-2010) AAFA has continued to pursue the establishment of effort controls by advocating their position domestically to the Pacific Fishery Management Council. Additionally, AAFA has become a formal observer at IATTC. Their representations to and attendance at management forums have included:</p> <p><u>Letters</u></p> <p>Letter to IATTC, dated 26<sup>th</sup> April 2010. Re: Request for observer status</p> <p>Letter to PFMC, dated 8<sup>th</sup> June 2010. Re: Agenda Item E.1- Pacific albacore-International RFMO matters.</p> <p><u>Meeting Attendance</u></p> <p>Attendance at June 2009 PFMC Highly Migratory Species Management Team and Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel meetings, Spokane, WA, USA.</p> <p>Attendance at November 2009 PFMC Highly Migratory Species Management Team and Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel meetings, Costa Mesa, CA, USA.</p> <p>Attendance at 23-25<sup>th</sup> February 2010 PFMC Highly Migratory Species Management Team meeting, held in La Jolla, CA, USA.</p> <p>Attendance at 8-15<sup>th</sup> April 2010 PFMC meeting, held in Portland, OR, USA.</p> <p>Attendance at 10-17<sup>th</sup> June 2010 PFMC Highly Migratory Species Management Team and Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel meetings, Foster City, CA, USA.</p>
<b>Observations</b>	<p>The WCPFC Scientific Committee reviewed progress on identifying appropriate reference points for the key target species in the WCPFC at its 2009 meeting. It was noted that Annex II of the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement and Article 6 of the WCPFC Convention provide the legal framework for the application of the precautionary approach through limit</p>

	<p>reference points. Currently, however, the Commission has not formally adopted any specific reference points but has largely used default MSY-based biological reference points as a target reference point in its evaluation of stock conditions.</p> <p>The Scientific Committee adopted a work plan to investigate alternative stock status reference points and this was discussed at the 2010 meeting. The work involves: 1) Identification of candidate indicators (e.g. <math>B_{current}/Bo</math>, <math>SB/SBMSY</math>) and related limit reference points (e.g. <math>B_{current}/Bo,&gt;X</math>, <math>SB/SBMSY&gt;Y</math>), the specific information needs they meet, the data and information required to estimate them, the associated uncertainty of these estimates, and the relative strengths and weaknesses of using each type within a management framework; 2) Using past assessments, evaluation of the probabilities that related performance indicators exceed the values associated with candidate reference points; 3) Evaluation of the consequences of adopting particular limit reference points based on stochastic projections using the stock assessment models; and 4) Undertaking a literature review/meta-analyses to provide insights into levels of depletion that may serve as appropriate limit reference points and other uncertain assessment parameters (e.g. steepness). Also, in the 2010 meeting a more general framework including multispecies aspects were discussed. The current recommendations of the Scientific Committee in this regard are to continue these efforts with the goal of completing them prior to holding a Management Objectives Workshop in 2011.</p> <p><i>Management actions</i></p> <p>In order to promote understanding and dialog between the WCPFC Commission and its Scientific Committee, the Commission agreed that the Scientific Committee convene a seminar on technical issues associated with reference points, and ii) WCPFC6 should consider the possibility of holding a dedicated workshop on management objectives in 2010. This workshop was therefore held to fulfil the first of these agreements.</p> <p>The WCPFC endorsed both the short- and medium-term work plans on reference points recommended by the Scientific Committee</p> <p>Establishment of formal target and limit reference points and control rules are important to AAFA as they complete this certification period and, presumably, enter into the recertification process. The MSCs default assessment tree now requires the formal adoption of reference points and control rules. Thus, progress within the RFMOs may be required to meet these criteria before recertification.</p> <p>Having said that, the AAFA fishery has limited resources and ability to affect changes at the RFMO level. Nevertheless, they are encouraged to explore additional options to achieve those ends.</p>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>AAFA has continued to make considerable efforts to promote and support both domestic and international responsible management actions, as appropriate, regarding the South Pacific albacore resource over the course of this certificate.</p> <p>It is clear that the WCPFC managers are also continuing to work to advance</p>

	<p>understanding of the South Pacific albacore and its fishery, to support the management regime that already includes a commitment to cap fishing effort at historic (1999-2005) levels.</p> <p>In conclusion, satisfactory progress is still being made on this condition, but substantive progress on the establishment of reference points and control rules for this stock will be needed to enable this condition to be closed. Work that is being carried out by the WCPFC, and which is due to be presented in 2011 at a workshop on management objectives, should allow this condition to be closed out.</p>
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Item	Comment
<b>4</b>	<b>Any complaints against the certified operation; recorded, reviewed and auctioned</b>
	No complaints were received against the certified operation in the course of this year's certification.

Item	Comment
<b>5</b>	<b>Any relevant changes to legislation or regulations</b> <p>Following the awarding of their MSC certificates, AAFA introduced and implemented its own certificate-sharing programme.</p> <p>Because AAFA operates under the Californian Fish Marketing Act there is a requirement within the "Act" that the certificate-sharing programme be limited to AAFA members. AAFA originally created a two-tier membership that allowed full or partial membership. Both forms of membership enabled participation in the MSC programme, however, only full membership afforded full privileges and voting rights.</p> <p>For 2010, AAFA changed the requirements of the certificate-sharing programme, by removing the option for partial membership. This was to ensure that fishermen who benefitted from the MSC certification were also fully on board with AAFA's commitment to quality and to the performance requirements of the AAFA certificate.</p> <p>AAFA has provided Moody Marine with updates on their membership thereby ensuring that a record of vessels that form part of the certificate sharing program is maintained. The assessment team had been pleased to note that membership of AAFA, and participation on the certificate-sharing programme, had grown considerably, from 26 vessels in 2006, to 53 vessels in 2008, to 71 vessels in 2009. Following the changes made by AAFA to the certificate-sharing programme, the assessment team were again pleased to note that membership dropped only slightly to 69 vessels for 2010.</p>

Item	Comment
<b>6</b>	<b>Any relevant changes to management regime.</b>

	There were no substantive changes reported within this year's annual reporting cycle.
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Item	Comment
7	<p><b>Overall Conclusions</b></p> <p>The overall management of the fishery continues to at least the level as during the main assessment.</p> <p>The client has devoted substantial effort and demonstrated significant progress regarding conditions placed on the certification of the AAFA South Pacific albacore troll/jig fishery, and considerable progress is being made towards the development of stock reference points and an associated sustainable fishery management regime. The single condition on the fishery remains in place, however.</p> <p>The client has confirmed their intent to continue to participate in the management and advisory forums and advocate the development of formalised and documented decision-making management processes on the stock.</p> <p>MSC Certification should therefore continue, with surveillance audits to the same schedule.</p>

Information Sources:
Small, C.J. (2005). Regional Fisheries Management Organisations: their duties and performance in reducing bycatch of albatrosses and other species. BirdLife International, Cambridge, UK. 105 pp.
WCPFC Scientific Committee, Fifth regular session, meeting in Port Vila, Vanuatu 10–21 August 2009.
WCPFC Scientific Committee, Sixth regular session, meeting in Nuku’alofa, Tonga 10–19 August 2010
WCPFC Sixth Regular Session, Papeete, French Polynesia 7–11 December 2009.
WCPFC (2010) Tuna fishery yearbook 2009, provisional files. Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, Noumea, New Caledonia.
<b>Contacts</b>
Natalie Webster, AAFA
Chip Bissell, AAFA
Gary Sakagawa, NMFS and Chair of WCPFC Scientific Committee

Meetings Conducted:		
Date	Organisation	Attending
3 <sup>rd</sup> August 2010	AAFA	Mrs. Natalie Webster Mr. Chip Bissell

	Moody Marine Ltd	Dr. Rob Blyth-Skyrme Dr. Joseph Powers Dr. Mike Laurs
3 <sup>rd</sup> August 2010	AAFA  Moody Marine Ltd  NMFS	Mr. Chip Bissell  Dr. Rob Blyth-Skyrme Dr. Joseph Powers Dr. Mike Laurs  Dr. Suzanne Kohin Dr. Russ Vetter Dr. Steve Teo Dr. Steve Stohs
4 <sup>th</sup> August 2010	AAFA  Moody Marine Ltd  NMFS (by telephone)	Mr. Chip Bissell  Dr. Rob Blyth-Skyrme Dr. Joseph Powers Dr. Mike Laurs  Dr. Gary Sakagawa
4 <sup>th</sup> August 2010	Moody Marine Ltd  Worldwide Fund for Nature	Dr. Rob Blyth-Skyrme Dr. Joseph Powers Dr. Mike Laurs  Dr. Bill Fox
4 <sup>th</sup> August 2010	AAFA  Moody Marine Ltd	Mr. Chip Bissell  Dr. Rob Blyth-Skyrme Dr. Joseph Powers Dr. Mike Laurs

**Standards and Guidelines used:**

1. MSC Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Fishing
2. MSC Fishery Certification Methodology Version 6. September 2006
3. MSC TAB Directives – all

**Appendix A**

**American Albacore Fishing Association (AAFA)  
Pacific Albacore Pole & Line and Troll/Jig Fishery  
Marine Stewardship Council Certification – 2010 Surveillance Audit  
Certification Body: Moody Marine Ltd**

### **Surveillance Audit**

MSC certification requires annual surveillance audits of all certified fisheries. These audits have two principal functions:

1. To review any changes in the management of the fishery, including regulations, key management or scientific staff or stock evaluation
2. To evaluate the progress of the fishery against any Conditions of Certification raised during the Main Assessment.

During the audit, we shall be speaking with representatives of the fishery, fishery management and any other stakeholder who would like to provide information that may help in our audit. We expect to carry out most meetings over the period 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> August in San Diego.

Should you have any information on this fishery that you feel should be considered in the assessment, please advise us. If you would like to arrange a meeting, please advise us of:

- a) Your name and contact details
- b) Your association with the fishery
- c) The issues you would like to discuss

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19<sup>th</sup> July 2010

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