

I am responding to your request for input on conditions on the fishing grounds. I have been fishing albacore since the early 1970s, so I feel qualified to comment. I am a troller in the early part of the season and fish as a bait boat from mid August till the end of October. I also want to note that I produce between 100+ and 140 tons per season.

There is a problem with aggressive behavior on the part of the Canadians, and I have experienced it myself; I did not document it so I have no way to make my case. I don't think aggressive behavior on the part of Canadian fishermen fishing in our waters is something we as American fishermen fishing in our own waters need to present case by case; you just need to know it is a problem. I don't want another panel formed to meet and sort it out, and have more meetings. The Canadian Treaty is a constant drain on finances and time already.

I feel overcrowding on the fishing grounds is the biggest problem the Canadian albacore fleet fishing in our waters causes; we are competing with foreign fishermen in our own waters for a limited resource? When the U.S. fleet is working in an area that is productive, and a couple of Canadian vessels show up, it is only a matter of a day and a large part of the Canadian fleet moves in on our area. My self and many others find it so difficult to work under those crowded conditions that we have to leave the area to find something new.

Starting in August the fish are on the surface and we look for the schools with our eyes. The overcrowding starts costing the U.S. vessels substantially more money when a Canadian races the U.S. vessel to the limited number of visible schools of albacore. Once the school is run over it most likely goes down, so it is not available for another vessel. By the month of Sept. the trollers catch very little to nothing out of these surface schools. The bait boat's most productive part of the season is from August on. It is very costly to have the Canadian fleet running over schools for little or no fish, and a U.S. bait boat will produce a significant amount of fish from that same school if he gets to the school before it is run over. After the middle of August having the Canadian fleet competing with U.S. vessels is very costly to the U.S. fleet.

Respectfully,

Stephen Rittenberg

AAFA Board Member