THE AMERICAN SAMOA LONGLINE FISHERY, 1966-71

HOWARD O. YOSHIDA

ABSTRACT

Aspects of the longline fishery based at American Samoa covering the period from 1966 to 1971 are described. The fishery is discussed primarily in relation to the albacore, Thunnus alalunga, and in a small extent the yellowfin tuna, T. albacares. The landings of albacore fluctuated between 17,722 and 38,336 metric tons from 1966 to 1971. Although no discernible trend was evident in the relation between total landings and total effort, the relation between CPUE (cans per unit of effort) and effort showed a definite downward trend. Generally, fishing effort was confined to the north of lat. 20°S in the first and fourth quarters. In the second and third quarters large amounts of effort were also expended south of lat. 20°S. The length-frequency distribution of albacore showed that albacore sizes were stratified by length. North of lat. 20°S the size of albacore was rather uniform, in that only a single mode was evident in the length-frequency distributions. North of lat. 20°S two to four modes were evident.

The Honolulu Laboratory of NMFS (National Marine Fisheries Service) has been involved in measuring and monitoring the fisheries resources and developing the high seas fishing industry of the territories and island possessions of the United States in the Pacific Ocean. Part of this work included an investigation of the longline fishery based in American Samoa. What resulted in a report describing the history of the fishery and the distribution, apparent abundance, and size composition of albacore, Thunnus alalunga, landed from 1964 to 1966 (Ozuna and Sumida 1968). The present report describes the status of the American Samoa longline fishery from 1966 to 1971; it is timely because the fishery has changed considerably since 1966, particularly with regard to the apparent abundance of albacore. Data published by Ozuna and Sumida will also be used, especially where they are useful in illustrating certain continuing trends.

The earlier report included a rationale for confining the study to the albacore, the principal species of tuna taken in the fishery. The data were reliable only with respect to albacore because the catches of the other species were often not sold in their entirety to the canneries and, therefore, were not included in the catch reports by the vessel operators. However, as will be discussed later, the vessel operators have expended a considerable amount of effort to catch yellowfin tuna, T. albacares, in recent years. It is believed that most of the yellowfin tunas are now included in the catch reports and this species has become an important factor in the American Samoa longline fishery, and can no longer be ignored.

The tuna canneries, operated by Star-Kist Samos, Inc and the Van Camp Sea Food Company, depend entirely upon deliveries made by foreign flag vessels and fisherman. One of the most notable changes in the fishery over the years has been in terms of vessel nationality. The fishery began in 1964 with seven Japanes vessels. Vessels from Korea entered the fishery in 1968, and from the Republic of China (Taiwan) in 1964. The Japanese continued to increase their participation until 1963, but thereafter began a gradual withdrawal. On the other hand, the vessels from Korea and Taiwan greatly increased in number until the fleet reached a peak in 1967. Due largely to the withdrawal of the Japanese, the fleet has decreased since 1967. During the last quarter of 1971 there were 209 vessels in the fleet, consisting of 4 from Japan, 50 from Korea, and 155 from Taiwan.

SOURCES OF DATA

The data in this report were obtained through the operation of a fleet station in American Samoa, established in 1963, and manned continuously through December 1970 by personnel from NMFS, Honolulu. In January 1971 the field station was taken over by the Office of Marine Resources, Government of American Samoa. In the beginning the length, weight, and sex of 50 albacore, randomly chosen, were obtained from each trip landing. For various reasons, e.g.,

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DEPARTMENT OF MARINE & WILDLIFE RESOURCES
P.O. BOX 3730
PAGO PAGO, AMERICAN SAMOA 96799
changes in canny operating procedures, changes in the sampling procedures were necessitated in subsequent years. The collection of sex and weight data was discontinued in early 1971. Catch and effort data have been provided voluntarily by the fishing vessel operators from about 75% of the fishing trips. The longliners on some occasions fish widely scattered areas in single fishing voyages. Since there is no way to determine the origin of each fish in the catch and because the fish are sampled at random at the docks, it is probable that some samples include fish from several different locations. This problem was minimized by summarizing the length data by large geographical areas.

ANNUAL LANDINGS OF ALBACORE AND YELLOWFIN TUNA

Except for dips in 1961 and 1964, the albacore landings increased steadily from 1954 to 1965 (Table 1). The landings fluctuated between 17,722 and 28,310 metric tonnes (Table 1). The gain in importance of yellowfin tuna can be seen in the increased landings in the later years (Table 1). After a period (1954 to 1964) of reported landings of less than 2,500 metric tons, the reported landings increased substantially and fluctuated between 4,304 and 8,267 metric tons from 1965 to 1971.

APPARENT ABUNDANCE OF ALBACORE AND YELLOWFIN TUNA

Ono and Sumida (1969) used various indices of apparent abundance in discussing the status of the fishery for albacore during 1954 to 1964. These indices included catch per trip, catch per day, and catch per 100 hooks. However, because data on number of hooks fished per day were not available for the entire period of their study, they elected to use the fishing trip as the basic measure of effort in analyzing the apparent abundance of albacore. They also examined the relation between catch and effort, and CPUE (catch per unit of effort) and effort, in evaluating the effect of fishing on the stock.

Ideally, in considering the mean annual CPUE as an index of apparent abundance, the fishery should affect all portions of the stock(s) under consideration equally throughout the years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Albacore</th>
<th>Yellowfin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>7,800</td>
<td>3,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>4,880</td>
<td>7,236</td>
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<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>9,658</td>
<td>2,093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>7,689</td>
<td>2,428</td>
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<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>10,233</td>
<td>7,700</td>
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<td>1960</td>
<td>10,942</td>
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<td>9,121</td>
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<td>4,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>12,528</td>
<td>3,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>10,977</td>
<td>5,922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>13,301</td>
<td>4,714</td>
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<td>1966</td>
<td>9,576</td>
<td>5,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>10,510</td>
<td>5,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>7,766</td>
<td>7,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>12,787</td>
<td>8,267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>13,258</td>
<td>8,912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>22,149</td>
<td>8,667</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, since the geographical limits of the fishery have been expanding each year, the situation is almost certainly not ideal. In this section I will extend some of the analyses of Ono and Sumida to determine if any change has occurred in the apparent abundance of albacore from 1954 to 1971. Since there are now 3 yr of effort data in terms of the number of hooks fished, I will make greater use of the catch per 100 hooks to determine the apparent abundance of albacore. It is assumed that fishing efficiency#### is not influenced by the gastronomy of the vessels, for Skillman (1972) found no evidence to suggest that any year modification or change in the relative efficiency of the fleet has altered any change in the catchability coefficient of albacore in the Samoan fishery.

Apparent Abundance of Albacore

Ono and Sumida (1969) analyzed the mean annual CPUE of albacore from 1954 to 1964 in terms of the catch per trip. They believed that the catch per trip was a satisfactory measure of apparent abundance because their analysis showed a close relationship between the monthly average catch per trip and the monthly average catch per day. However, there are some basic shortcomings in the catch per trip. One is that the catch per trip of any vessel is limited by the fish-holding capacity. Also, as indicated by Ono and Sumida (1969), the catch per trip is influenced by changes in the number of days fished per trip and by changes in the size composition of the vessels in the fleet. Changes in the number of hooks fished per day can also affect

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the catch per trip. The data do indeed show that the mean number of days fished per trip has increased during recent years (Table 2). The increase in the mean number of days fished per trip may also, in part, indicate change in the size of the vessels. That is, larger vessels, which presumably have larger holding capacities, probably fish more days to obtain a full load of fish.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Trip Length (mi)</th>
<th>Fishing Days per Trip</th>
<th>Traveling Days per Trip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>85.96</td>
<td>26.12</td>
<td>16.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>87.38</td>
<td>27.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>86.74</td>
<td>26.09</td>
<td>17.62</td>
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<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>85.00</td>
<td>27.74</td>
<td>17.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>86.45</td>
<td>30.30</td>
<td>20.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>88.63</td>
<td>40.30</td>
<td>34.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>97.80</td>
<td>80.00</td>
<td>66.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>86.19</td>
<td>55.00</td>
<td>42.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In their analysis of the apparent abundance of alewives from 1964 to 1965, Osu and Somida (1966) indicated that the mean catch per trip increased from 1954 through 1960 and then fell slightly and stabilized at a lower level in 1963-64. A continuation of this analysis (Figure 1) showed that the mean catch per trip continued to fluctuate around this lower level with no definite upward or downward trend. It is possible that the mean catch per trip is fluctuating near the mean fish-holding capacity of the vessels or near a level that is related to the profitability of the fishing trip. That is, a vessel may fish as many days as are needed to obtain a full load or until a catch is at least profitable is obtained. The trip, as an index of effort, does not take this factor into consideration, and, therefore, the catch per trip is not an accurate indicator of the apparent abundance.

It would be useful, then, to compare the catch per trip with the catch per day, which is not affected by as many variables as the catch per trip. The mean annual catch per trip from 1959 to 1971 fluctuated between 29.3 and 32.2 metric tons (Figure 2) and, as noted earlier, did not reveal any obvious trend. The mean annual catch per day during the same period fluctuated between 0.7 and 1.7 metric tons, and, contrary to the catch per trip, declined after 1963 suggesting that the longline vessels are fishing more days to compensate for the reduced catch per day. The mean total length of a fishing trip, number of days spent fishing, and number of days spent traveling on each trip (Table 2) all showed an increasing trend from 1963 to 1971, which indicates that, in general, the vessels are traveling farther away from the home base to fish and are fishing more days per trip.

![Graph](image-url)
The relation between the annual total landings of albacore and the total fishing effort (number of fishing trips) indicated that the annual landings increased with increasing fishing effort from 1964 to 1965. Based on this analysis, Uda and Sumida (1968) concluded that the point of maximum yield of albacore had not been reached in the American Samoan-based fishery. The fishing effort continued to increase subsequent to 1965, and reached a peak of close to 800 fishing trips in 1966. The albacore landings also continued to increase with the increased effort. The relation between the annual landings and the effort, in total number of days fished, from 1965 to 1967 also showed that the landings increased with increasing fishing effort (Figure 3). The catch per day plotted against effort in total number of days fished, however, shows a decline in the CPUE from 1966 to 1971 with increasing effort (Figure 4).

As noted earlier, our laboratory has been obtaining, from the vessel operators, effort data in terms of number of hooks fished since 1963. Using these data, the mean monthly catch per 100 hooks of albacore from 1965 to 1971 was computed (Figure 5). A salient feature of Figure 5 is that the mean monthly CPUE fluctuated much more from 1966 to 1971 than they did from 1963 to 1965. It is not clear what caused this change in trends in the monthly CPUE after 1965. One possibility is that it is related to a geographical change in fishing effort. As will be discussed in more detail in another section, in the years after 1965 more fishing effort has been expended in latitudes south of 16°S, where good CPUE of albacore are obtained in the second and third quarters of the year. This fact could also account for the definite peak in abundance of albacore in June or July during 1966 to 1971. It is also evident, however, that there is a slightly declining trend in the CPUE from 1966 to 1971.

A plot of the total annual catch of albacore against the estimated total annual effort in number of hooks fished, from 1963 to 1971 is shown in Figure 6. During this period the estimated total effort ranged from about 18,165,000 to 31,092,000 hooks and the annual albacore catch from 10,602 to 26,549 metric tons. With some minor exceptions, there was a strong positive relation between the annual catch and effort for the 1963-71 period. Generally, the catches increased with increased fishing effort. Uda (1971) also found a similar relationship between albacore catch and fishing effort in the South Pacific from 1962 to 1968.

In Figure 7 is plotted the CPUE in number of fish and in weight per 100 hooks fished against the estimated total annual number of hooks fished from 1963 to 1971. Both plots show a negative relation between CPUE and effort; the CPUE decreased with increased fishing effort. Thus, although the catch has been increasing with increasing effort, it appears that the fishery has had some effect on the stock size in that the CPUE has been declining with increasing effort.

The analyses above reflect average conditions of
the fishery taken as a whole. It is of interest to compare the conditions north and south of lat. 20°S, especially since the geographic boundaries of the fishery have been expanding over the years. That is, it would be useful to see how the CPUE in the older fishing grounds north of lat. 20°S compares with that in the more recently exploited grounds south of lat. 20°S. The annual mean CPUE was computed for the area north of lat. 20°S, which represents the older fishing ground, and the area south of lat. 20°S, which represents the newer grounds (Figure 8). This analysis must be viewed with some caution, however, since total effort expended south of lat. 20°S is less than that expended in the north. Southern waters are fished heavily only in certain quarters of the year and these are the quarters when good catch rates are obtained. The mean catch rates in the southern waters therefore, may be overly weighted by the catch rates obtained in those quarters. However, the mean annual CPUE is higher in the newer grounds than in the old. The mean annual CPUE's
from 1963 to 1971 in the old grounds were all less than five albacore per 100 hooks, whereas in the new grounds they were all greater than five per 100 hooks during the same period. Another difference is that in the old grounds the mean CPUE has been declining with increasing effort. In the new grounds the CPUE increased with increasing effort from 1963 to 1966. In 1967, the CPUE declined slightly and from that year to 1971 the CPUE appears to have stabilized around six albacore per 100 hooks. These facts suggest that the albacore fishery has been able to maintain itself by continuously expanding geographically to take advantage of better CPUE in newer areas. It should be repeated here, however, that despite the expansion into new fishing grounds the overall trend for the fishery has been a decline in CPUE (Figure 5). Furthermore, in the southern grounds to which the fishery has expanded, the albacore catches, as will be shown in a later section, are composed of a large proportion of smaller fish. These smaller albacore may not be the optimum size at which to harvest the stock.

Apparent Abundance of Yellowfin Tuna

The discussion of the apparent abundance of yellowfin tuna will be primarily in terms of how it relates to the apparent abundance of albacore in the San- or longline fishery. For one thing, although albacore are selectively fished for by the fleet, yellowfin tuna (and small numbers of other species) are also caught by the longlines, and the CPUE for one species may affect the CPUE of another (Rothholz 1977). The CPUE for one species may affect that for another species because, in computing the CPUE, the total effort expanded was applied to the catch of each species without regard to the competition of the species
for space on the gear. Furthermore, there is another complicating variable: the fishermen apparently seek out yellowfin tuna when the catches of albacore are poor. They do this by modifying the longlines to fish shallower and by fishing closer to the equator where yellowfin tuna catches are known to be better. The fact that the price of yellowfin tuna increased from an average of $279 a ton in 1965 to $394 a ton in 1970 may also have been a factor.

As noted earlier, the CPUE of albacore in relation to time-averaged fishing effort has been declining, especially in the years subsequent to 1967. During 1968 and 1971, the yellowfin tuna CPUE was relatively good. It is apparent that as albacore fishing deteriorated, the vessels expended more effort to catch yellowfin tuna. The relation between albacore and yellowfin tuna CPUE in the Samoan longline fishery from 1963 to 1971 is shown in Figure 9. It appears that an inverse relation existed between albacore and yellowfin tuna CPUE. When yellowfin tuna CPUE was high, albacore CPUE was low, and vice versa. The correlation coefficient $r = -0.6636$; df = 7, however, was not significant.

![Figure 9: Relation between Albacore and Yellowfin Tuna CPUE.](image)

**SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Observations on the American Samoa fishery during the period from 1964 to 1966 indicated that the longline vessels shifted fishing grounds with season (Otsu and Sumida 1968). Seasonal and geographical differences in CPUE, however, were not readily apparent in the early years. In the following sections I will examine the spatial and temporal distribution of effort and CPUE in the fishery from 1966 through 1971.

**Effort**

In the early years of the fishery, the longliners confined their fishing largely to the vicinity of the Samoan Islands. Over the years, the vessels gradually extended their operations to more distant waters, and by 1966 the fishing grounds reached from about long. 170°E to about long. 150°W between the equator and lat. 30°S (Otsu and Sumida 1968). From 1966 to 1971 there was a further extension of the fishing grounds: the vessels fished from off the east coast of Australia to long. 100°W and from about lat. 10°N to about lat. 40°S. The fishing effort, however, was not uniformly distributed throughout the geographical limits of the fishery. Rather, there were distinct seasonal patterns in the spatial distribution of fishing effort.

A composite geographic distribution of the fishing effort on a quarterly basis for 1966 to 1971 summarized by 5° squares between the equator and lat. 40°S and east of long. 160°E is shown in Figure 10. As composite charts they can reflect only "average" conditions.

In the first and fourth quarters, the vessels generally fished in the north of lat. 20°S, and areas of concentrated fishing effort developed in about the same area each year. In the second and third quarters, the vessels expanded their operations to the south of lat. 20°S, and, in addition to the usual area of concentrated effort to the north, an area of high fishing effort also developed to the south of lat. 30°S. However, there apparently has been a change from earlier years in the operations of the fleet because prior to 1971 the vessels fished in the north during both the first and second quarters (Otsu and Sumida 1968). These figures indicate that the vessels were moving south in the second quarter, earlier than previously. In any event, these seasonal changes in the concentration of fishing effort have been interpreted to reflect the movement of albacore in the South Pacific Ocean (Sumida 1961; Otsu and Sumida 1968).

**Catch Per Unit of Effort**

The mean quarterly CPUE for 1966-71 plotted by 5° square areas is shown in Figure 11. In a
Figure 10.—Quarterly geographic distribution of effort, 1966-71. The numbers in the figures are in thousands.
Figure 10—Quarterly geographic distribution of effort, 1966-71. The numbers in the figures are in thousands—Continued.
similar analysis covering a period from 1963 to 1965, seasonal and geographical differences in CPUE were not readily apparent (Otao and Sumida, 1968). For some reason that is not immediately clear, a distinct seasonal pattern in geographical differences in CPUE has developed in recent years. In the first quarter, there appeared to be no pattern in the distribution of areas with high CPUE (greater than five albacore per 100 hooks). However, the CPUE was better in the east-west extremes of the fishery. In the second and third quarters, an area of high CPUE developed between lat. 20° and 40°S. The fishery was also well developed north of lat. 20°S in the second and third quarters but as in the first quarter there were no well-defined areas of high CPUE. This situation in the fourth quarter revert-
ted to approximately what it was in the first quarter. However, in some years there was a tendency for an area of high CPUE to develop in the eastern extreme of the area fished between lat. 10° and 20°S.

Because of geographical and temporal variations in the distribution of the fishing effort, the description of the geographical and temporal changes in CPUE as given above is incomplete. As noted earlier, very little fishing effort was expended south of lat. 20°S in the first and fourth quarters. It would be of interest to determine whether a high CPUE could be obtained south of lat. 20°S also in the first and fourth quarters. The possibility exists, of course, that very little effort was expended south lat. 20°S in the first and fourth quarters because the fishermen knew from past experience that poor catch rates are obtained during those periods. Honma and Kamimura (1967) suggested that albacore in the South Pacific make north-south migratory and that the fishing vessels follow the movements of the albacore. In the eastern Pacific tuna fishery, Griffiths (1960) noted that the bait boat fishermen were able, on the average, to concentrate their effort on high densities of yellowfin tuna about 70% better than if their effort had been random. The data indicate that the fishermen may be able to predict the movements of the albacore with some degree of success in that areas of high fishing effort were usually associated with areas of high CPUE. There were, however, in which areas of high fishing effort did not coincide with areas of high CPUE. Thus, the fishermen may avoid fishing south of lat. 20°S in the first and fourth quarters because of bad weather or unfavorable conditions.

One other interesting observation is the division of the fishery at lat. 20°S. As noted above, the fishery develops north or south of lat. 20°S but seldom straddles it. This appears to be a well-es-
tablished phenomenon, for Kato (1966) has made the same observation. Kato mentioned both high catch rates in the area between lat. 10° and 20°S and between lat. 20° and 30°S, and a belt of low catch rates centered at lat. 20°S. The data also indicate that the latitudinal belt centered at lat. 20°S is also a low-effort area. The causes of this phenomenon are not clear.

SIZE OF ALBACORE

Because the canneries have changed the method of handling the fish, the albacore that are sampled for length are no longer being sexed. Consequently, in the analysis of the length distribution of albacore only the data collected from 1966 to 1970, when sex data were available, are presented.

A composite length-frequency distribution of male and female albacore taken by the fishery from 1966 to 1969 is shown in Figure 12. The fish

![Figure 12: Composite length-frequency distribution of albacore, 1966-69.](image)
ranged in length from 50 to 120 cm. A single prominent mode was present in both the male and female distributions. For the males the mode was located at 91 cm and for the females at 88 cm.

The albacore size data were also summarized into smaller units of time and area to detect any variations which might exist. Initially the geographical area of the fishery was divided longitudinally at long. 150°W and by 10° of latitude from the equator to lat. 40°S. This was done on a quarterly basis, keeping all the years separate. This analysis did not indicate any obvious differences in the length-frequency distributions of albacore east and west of long. 150°W, nor did it show any consistent annual and seasonal differences within each geographical unit. There were, however, differences in the length-frequency distributions between the latitudinal subdivisions of the fishery. Therefore, the length data were rearranged by 10° of latitude but without regard to longitude, seasons, and year (Figure 13).

Almost without exception, the modal sizes of male albacore were larger than those of female
albacore in each of the latitudinal subdivisions. In the
areas north of lat. 20°S, both male and female
length-frequency distributions had a single well-
defined mode, in the areas south of lat. 20°S the
modes were less well defined. Kato and Hidema
(1967) found a similar pattern in the length-
frequency distribution of albacore in the South
Pacific off Peru.
Otsu and Sumida (1968) computed the mean
length of albacore in the fishery during the period
from 1962 to 1966. They divided the fishery into 5°
bands of latitude and noted that the fish were
smallest near the equator, largest at lat. 20° to
30°S and tended to be smaller again south of lat.
25°S. The results agree in general with those of
Otsu and Sumida; however, as seen above, the
length-frequency distributions indicate a more
complex situation than do the mean sizes. North of
lat. 20°S the mean sizes may be good indicators of
the general size of albacore because the length-
frequency distributions showed that the fish were
composed of single uniform size groups. South of
lat. 20°S, the catches were composed of several size
groups of fish and the mean does not indicate the
presence of different size groups of fish. For
example, although Otsu and Sumida stated that
albacore south of lat. 25°S tended to be smaller, my
data show that large fish were also present in these
latitudes.
Although it is not readily apparent in the
length-frequency distributions, there appears to
be a declining trend in the mean size of albacore in
the fishery. Otsu and Sumida (1968) noted that
albacore taken in 1964 and 1965 were shorter on
the average that those caught in 1966. My data
show that the declining trend in the mean length
of albacore has continued (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mean length (cm)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mean length (cm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>25.6</td>
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<td>1964</td>
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<td>28.2</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>28.0</td>
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The mechanisms that produced such a pattern in
the distribution of sizes in the fishery are probably
complex. The unique character of the length-
frequency distributions among the four lati-
tudinal bands must have resulted from some
nonrandom distributional process. The larger
numbers of smaller albacore in the more southern
waters suggest that albacore are initially recruit-
ed into the fishery in the area south of lat. 20°S.
The high CPUE experienced in the second and
third quarters of south of lat. 20°S may be an
indication of this. Also, it has been shown that
juvenile albacore which originate from spawning
that takes place north of lat. 20°S migrate south as
they grow larger (Yoshida 1971).

**SUMMARY**

A comparison of various indices of apparent
abundance of albacore indicated that catch per day
and catch per 100 hooks were better indicators of
apparent abundance than catch per trip. The mean
catch per day and catch per 100 hooks of albacore
have generally declined over the years, which
suggests that the apparent abundance of albacore
has declined in the American Samoa longline
fishery. To compensate for the reduced CPUE, the
longliners fished more days per trip and traveled
further from the home base seeking areas of good
catch rates.

The fishery apparently has had an effect on the
albacore stock. Although the annual landings have
continued to increase with increased fishing ef-
fort, the CPUE has declined. That the apparent
overall effect was not greater was due to the fact
that the fishing grounds have expanded, especially
into areas south of lat. 20°S where good catch rates
were obtained. The mean annual CPUE plotted against fishing effort for selected, discrete areas
north and south of lat. 20°S indicated that the
fishery has not as yet had as great an effect on the
south as it has to the north. There are at least two
possible reasons for the better condition of the
fishery to the south. First, the area south of lat.
20°S has not been exploited as long as the area to
the north. Second, it was shown that the albacore
are first recruited into the fishery in the latitudes
south of lat. 20°S, which may account in part for
the higher apparent abundance.

There was some indication that there were
temporal changes in apparent abundance of al-
bacore south of lat. 20°S. Because of poor weather
conditions or because the fishermen have learned
through experience that catch rates are better
during certain seasons, or a combination of these
and other reasons, fishing effort expended south
of lat. 20°S fluctuates seasonally. Areas of concentrated fishing effort were evident in the second and third quarters in the area south of lat. 20°S. Very little effort was expended in these waters in the first and fourth quarters. Good CPUE's were experienced in these areas of high fishing effort in the second and third quarters. Although there were some indications that the apparent abundance of albacore was low in the southern waters in the first and fourth quarters, more data are needed to show this conclusively.

The apparent temporal changes in CPUE in the southern waters may be related to seasonal changes in recruitment of albacore into the fishery. The length-frequency distribution of albacore in waters south of lat. 20°S showed that several size groups of fish were represented in the catches, including groups of small fish not found north of lat. 20°S. The good CPUE in the second and third quarters may indicate periods of active recruitment. Generally, the albacore were stratified by size latitudinally; however, no such stratification was evident longitudinally. North of lat. 20°S the catches were composed of fish of a single size group. South of this latitude, as already indicated, the catches were composed of several size groups of fish.

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CAPTAIN, R. C.

HOSMA, M., AND T. KAHNANA

KIM, T.

KIM, T., AND K. HIRANO

OWEN, T., AND E. F. SUMIDA

ROBERTSON, R. J.

SULLIVAN, H. A.

SUMIDA, A.

SUMIDA, G.

YOSIIDA, H.

DEPARTMENT OF MARINE & WILDLIFE RESOURCES
P.O. BOX 3730
PAGO PAGO, AMERICAN SAMOA 96799

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