



LUKE WHITTAKER

Crew offload tuna at Safe Coast Seafoods on Aug. 7 in Ilwaco. Albacore are flash frozen immediately after being caught to preserve quality, and then loined at local processing plants.



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Albacore tuna are hoisted offloaded from the F/V Gooney Bird on Aug. 7 at Safe Coast Seafoods. August has historically been the month with the heaviest commercial tuna landings for Oregon and Washington state, with the season wrapping up around October, depending on weather.

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Vanya Taylor, skipper
of F/V Gooney Bird

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Last year, Safe Coast Seafoods and Ilwaco Landings each recorded their first offloads of the 2021 commercial tuna season on July 12. Much of the delay this season was due to scattered fish further offshore.

“Earlier this year you had to go quite a ways offshore to find them, up to 200 miles,” Taylor said. “We spread out when the fishing gets slow, then converge once we find them; takes a lot of the guessing out of it.”

Tools such as SeaView, satellite fishing software that uses oceanic and weather data, along with traditional sonar, are instrumental in helping locate tuna, Taylor explained.

“It really helps pinpoint where you want to go look, you’re not blind out there that’s for sure,” he said.

The time spent on land will be short, however, while the fishing is hot offshore.

“I’m going to head right back out tomorrow, just have to get some gear, but I’ll be fishing by Tuesday. We turn and burn as quick as we can — the summer is only so long,” Taylor said.

By the numbers

In 2021, when commercial albacore landings were impacted both by fishery conditions and COVID precautions, Oregon and Washington state each recorded their slowest seasons in two decades.

In Oregon, 192 participating vessels landed 1,460 metric tons of albacore at an ex-vessel value of \$6.6 million, according to the Pacific Fishery Management Council. Washington landings by 110 vessels totaled 1,842 metric tons with a value of nearly \$8.2 million. Both states had the smallest number of working tuna boats since 1991.

The record year for Oregon landings was 2004, when 450 boats brought in 4,878 tons. In Washington waters, the modern record was 10,793 tons in 2003 landed by 323 vessels.

Adjusted for inflation, Oregon’s most lucrative recent year was 2011, when 4,392 tons sold for \$22.6 million. Washington’s best tuna year moneywise was 2012, when 329 boats landed 8,774 tons that sold for \$33.7 million.

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