

Father Bernie Lindley

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Albacore

This is Father Bernie Lindley from St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, for Voices.

I've talked many times on Voices about my crab boat during the winter months of the crab season. However, I don't think I've mentioned much about my efforts during the summer albacore tuna fishery.

Albacore fishing is unique in Oregon because anyone can buy a permit for \$35 and legally sell the tuna from a commercially licensed vessel. Unlike crab, salmon, or the trawl fisheries, tuna is not limited entry. And there are no catch limits for sport boats. In other words, if you can get out to where the tuna live, then you can fill up your boat, assuming the fish cooperate.

I am relatively new to the tuna business. My dad and I have only been consistently participating in the fishery for the past 7 years. We are still learning. On a boat like ours, it isn't just about learning how to catch the fish, a real big part of it is learning how to freeze the fish onboard. Marine refrigeration systems are notoriously expensive and complicated. It took us three years to work out the kinks in our spray brine system and then we switched to a blast system because a blast freezer gets the fish colder. In the tuna world, the colder a fish is, the more you get paid for it. So, now we are working out the kinks on our super high-tech blast system.

So, right this minute, today, my dad is 80 miles outside of Coos Bay looking for schools of tuna that are feeding on the surface of the ocean. He has a relatively inexperienced crew with him on this trip and it seems the fish are harder to find than usual right now. But, hopefully, by this time next week, he'll have a few fish in the hold and we'll be making plans for our next delivery.