

REPORT OF THE TENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF POLLOCK RESOURCES IN THE CENTRAL BERING SEA

September 6-9, 2005
Busan, Korea

1. Opening of the Conference

The provisional Chair, Mr. Ki Hiok BARNG, Director-General for International Cooperation Office (Korea), welcomed the delegations of the Parties to the Convention on The Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea to the Tenth Annual Conference. He invited the representatives of People's Republic of China (China), Japan, Poland, the Russian Federation (Russia), the United States of America (US), and the Republic of Korea (Korea) to present opening statements.

2. Welcome Address and Statements of the Delegates

Opening statements provided by the Parties are included in Appendix 1. A list of the participants is presented in Appendix 2.

3. Election

3.1. Chair

Mr. Ki Hiok BARNG, Director-General for International Cooperation Office Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (Korea), was elected as Chair of the Tenth Annual Conference.

3.2. Vice-Chair

Mr. Leszek Dybiec, Deputy Director Fishery Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Poland) was elected Vice Chair.

3.3. Chair of Scientific and Technical Committee

Patricia Livingston (US) was elected the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Committee.

3.4. Rapporteur

The Chairman proposed two different rapporteurs, one from the US and one from another country. The Parties agreed that Mr. Stetson Tinkham (US) would serve as lead rapporteur with assistance from each of the member countries desiring to participate.

4. Adoption of the Agenda

The Agenda was adopted (Appendix 3).

5. Report of the Scientific and Technical Committee

The Chair of the Scientific and Technical (S&T) Committee reported on the results of the S&T Committee meeting of September 6-8, 2005 in Busan, Korea. The resulting report was distributed to the Parties (Appendix 4). The Chair summarized the S&T Committee discussions as follows:

5.1. Update catch and effort statistics

5.1.1. Tables of historical catch and effort statistics on pollock catch in the Bering Sea were updated and included in the final S&T report (Appendix 4).

5.2. Review results of trial fishing

5.2.1. No trial fishing occurred in 2005.

5.3. Review results of research cruises

5.3.1. The US reviewed results of the 2005 Bogoslof survey, described plans for the 2006 Bogoslof survey, and reported preliminary results of research conducted in 2004.

5.3.2. Russia reported on the results of the Western Bering Sea (WBS) pollock research cruises.

5.4. Review the status of Aleutian Basin pollock stocks

5.4.1. The US stated that recent studies indicate that the pollock stock in the Central Bering Sea is low. It was further noted that there was no comprehensive survey that could be used to determine the status of the Aleutian Basin stock. Detailed information is included in the S&T report. (Appendix 4)

5.5. Factors affecting recovery of the stocks

5.5.1. A lengthy discussion on this topic took place. It was acknowledged that numerous factors ranging from climate change to predation could affect pollock abundance. No one factor was identified as being solely responsible for the lack of recovery of pollock in the Convention Area.

5.6. The effects of the moratorium and its continuation

5.6.1. The US noted there has been continued improvement of the pollock stocks on the eastern Bering Sea shelf, but that this improvement does not seem to have affected Aleutian Basin pollock stock levels, despite many years of the moratorium. The US recommended continuation of the moratorium.

5.6.2. Japan and Korea noted that the moratorium has been in place for more than 12 years with

no sign of recovery of pollock stocks in the Convention Area, and reminded the Parties that the objectives of the Convention are the conservation, management and utilization of pollock. Japan requested that additional methods be considered to fulfill the objectives of the Convention and stated that even if there is no fishing, an Allowable Harvest Level (AHL) should be set. China stressed that their fishermen have suffered huge economic costs in complying with the moratorium, but the stock level is still low. The Chinese Government is very concerned about the situation, and hopes additional research can be done to obtain more information.

5.7. Methodologies to determine Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) and AHL and Recommendation on AHL

5.7.1. Consensus was not reached on how to set an AHL.

5.8. Other matters and recommendations of the S&T Committee

5.8.1. Korea introduced a proposal for trial fishing in the Convention Area in 2006. (Appendix 4)

5.8.2. Russia introduced a proposal for the BAPIS program to further research and gather data on pollock stocks in the Aleutian Basin. All parties expressed support for the Russian proposal, but requested the proposal in writing. Russia subsequently distributed written copies of the proposal in English to the S&T. (Appendix 4)

6. Action Items

6.1. The review of scientific data and conservation measures of the Coastal States related to pollock fishing in the Bering Sea

6.1.1. The US and Russia submitted commercial catch statistics to the S&T, which were included in the S&T report. (Appendix 4)

6.1.2. Russia submitted its domestic management regulations in a past Annual Conference and reported that no changes have been made since the last Conference.

6.1.3 The US also updated the Parties on the limited fishery conducted near Adak in 2005 which was presented to the Parties at the Ninth Annual Conference. 1402 metric tons were harvested in 2005, which was below the Total Allowable Catch of 19,000 metric tons. No fish were harvested in the Bogoslof area or the Convention Area. A decision on whether to allow the fishery to continue in 2006 will not be made until the US domestic management council meeting in December 2005.

6.2. The establishment of a plan of work for the Scientific and Technical Committee

6.2.1 The US endorsed the S&T recommendation to convene a follow-on workshop to the Yokohama workshop on stock genetics. Japan expressed support for convening the

workshop, but noted that it will be unable to host the meeting.

- 6.2.2. Korea proposed that the workshop include research into changing pollock migration patterns, and the US supported the Korean proposal. Dr. Nishimura of Japan will contact other parties to determine the date and location of the meeting.

6.3. The establishment of the Allowable Harvest Level

- 6.3.1. Poland referred to the calculated ABC and article VII paragraph 1, and proposed setting the AHL at a small level, 3000 metric tons that is about 33% of ABC. China supported the Polish proposal. China stated that with the 3000 metric ton AHL, the exploitation ratio is 0.7% of total Aleutian Basin biomass, and that this presents no danger to the resource.
- 6.3.2 Japan agreed with Poland that an AHL should be established for 2006. Japan stated that consideration should be given to the effects of the moratorium on the Parties' fishing industries. Japan reiterated its position that, from a scientific point of view, ABC could be established and, therefore, it should be possible to derive an AHL from ABC. Japan also expressed support for Russia's Bering-Aleutian Pollock International Survey(BAPIS) proposal.
- 6.3.3 Korea noted that the Parties reached consensus on an ABC of 9168 metric tons and that, because the majority of Parties believe AHL should be equal to ABC, AHL should be set at 9168.
- 6.3.4 The US referred to the Annex, Part I, paragraph (c), and noted that basin biomass is near historical low levels and is significantly below the level at which AHL could be set under the Convention. The US also noted that all Parties seemed to agree that the present biomass level has not reached 1.67 million metric tons. Therefore, the US stated that because biomass has not yet reached the biomass target stated in the Convention, AHL should be set at zero. More compelling scientific evidence would be needed before deviating from the Convention provisions.
- 6.3.5 Russia stated that there was insufficient information to deviate from Convention provisions, and therefore the AHL should be set at zero. Russia stated it is unfortunate that the stocks remain at low levels, but propose that the BAPIS program may help provide answers to the questions that surround the continued low levels of the Aleutian Basin pollock stocks.
- 6.3.6 The Chair summarized the situation, stating that the Parties basically had three different positions: Poland and China supported setting the AHL at 3000 metric tons; Japan and Korea supported setting AHL equal to ABC; and the US and Russia supported setting AHL at zero. The Chair stated that because consensus was not reached, there was no choice but to set AHL according to Convention Article VII, which refers to the procedure outlined in Annex Part I, paragraph (c).
- 6.3.7 Japan stated for the record that: Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) for Aleutian Basin Pollock has been set and it is based on scientific rationale. From the position that pollock

preservation, management and optimum exploitation should be pursued in a rational manner and should be based on ABC and that all Parties should continue cooperation in order to achieve objectives of the Convention, our country kept submitting proposals to determine as AHL (ABC=AHL) a certain volume deemed reasonable from scientific standpoint by consensus stipulated in the Convention, article 7 paragraph 1. Japan believes that AHL should be set, even if the amount is very low and would not result in reopening fishing operations.

- 6.3.8 Korea stated that AHL should be set by consensus stipulated in the Convention, Article VII, paragraph 1 and the Parties should continue to make efforts to set AHL in following years. The US stated that it would continue research programs on pollock to achieve the Convention's objectives.

6.4. The establishment of the Individual National Quotas

- 6.4.1. The Chair stated that since AHL could not be established, no individual national quotas could be established.

6.5. The adoption of appropriate conservation and management measures based upon the advice of the Scientific and Technical Committee

- 6.5.1. No new advice from the S&T Committee was provided to the Parties and no recommendations for new conservation and management measures were made by the Parties.

6.6. The establishment of the terms and conditions for trial fishing in 2006

- 6.6.1 All Parties supported the Korean proposal for trial fishing in 2006 and Russia reaffirmed that all species caught during trial fishing cruises should be recorded.

6.7. Trial fishing plans

- 6.7.1. Korea circulated to the Parties a detailed plan to conduct trial fishing. (Appendix 6)
- 6.7.2 Japan supported the Korean proposal, stating that it would lead to better results in determining the stock levels in the Aleutian Basin.
- 6.7.3 US questioned how the trial vessels will report any product onboard prior to entering the Convention Area. Korea indicated the vessels would not have any product onboard prior to beginning trial fishing. The US then expressed its support for the proposal and indicated it could provide technical support to the Korean efforts, including through the use of acoustic data logging systems. The US offered to transfer its trial fishing rights for two vessels for two months to Korea pending examination of the US domestic legal and regulatory framework.¹
- 6.7.4 China, Russia, and Poland expressed support for the Korean proposal.

¹ Subsequently to the meeting Poland agreed to transfer trial fishing rights of two vessels to Korea in 2006.

- 6.7.5 Korea stated that it will provide all valuable data to the other Parties and the Annual Conference.
- 6.7.6 China indicated they will provide trial fishing plans to the Parties if and when it develops them for 2006.
- 6.7.7 The Parties reaffirmed that any Party wishing to conduct trial fishing will abide by the Convention provisions and previously adopted terms and conditions adopted in 1999 regarding trial fishing.

6.8. Reception of reports relating to measures taken to investigate and penalize violations of the Convention

- 6.8.1. No actions were taken in 2005.

6.9. The consideration of matters related to the conservation and management of living marine resources other than pollock in the Convention Area

- 6.9.1. The US requested that vessels conducting trial fishing collect information on all living marine resources and that such information be provided to the Parties.

6.10. Meeting Observers

- 6.10.1. The Parties agreed to the same observer rules for 2006 that have been in use since 1998 (recorded in the Report of the Second Annual Conference, 1997, Part 6.J.10).

7. Eleventh Annual Conference

7.1. Time and Location

- 7.1.1 China stated that it will not be able to host the 2006 Annual Conference and expressed its hope that Poland would be able to host the Eleventh Annual Conference. China stated that it would host the Twelfth Annual Conference in 2007 possibly in Beijing.
- 7.1.2. Poland provisionally agreed to host the Eleventh Annual Conference. Poland will provide the date and location of the Conference pending consultations after the 2005 Polish elections.
- 7.1.3 The US, Russia, Japan, and Korea requested the Conference be held in early September to avoid conflicts with other international fisheries meetings.

7.2. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

- 7.2.1 Poland was unable to nominate a chair for the Eleventh Annual Conference, but will provide a nomination in October 2005.
- 7.2.2 The chair suggested Ms. Baoying Zhu, head delegate of China, to serve as the vice chair for the Eleventh Annual Conference. China will confirm the nomination at a later date.

8. Other Business

8.1. Frequency of the Conference

8.1.1. At the Ninth Annual Meeting, the US agreed to look into the possibility of convening virtual meetings. Based on its research, the US proposed to continue annual face-to-face conferences.

9. Closing Statements

The closing statements of the Parties are provided in Appendix 7.

Appendices:

1. Opening Statements.
2. Delegation List
3. Plenary Agenda.
4. Report of the Scientific and Technical Committee.
5. Results of the Central Bering Sea Pollock Workshop on Allowable Harvest Level and Stock Identification held June 6-9, 2005 Seattle, Washington USA.
6. Trial Fishing Proposal by Korea.
7. Closing Statements Provided by the Parties.