

**REPORT OF THE 13th ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF POLLOCK
RESOURCES IN THE CENTRAL BERING SEA**

September 1-2, 2008
Kaliningrad, Russia

1. Opening of the Conference

Dr. Boris N. Kotenev of VNIRO, Russia, welcomed the delegations of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea to the 13th Annual Conference. He invited the representatives of Japan, Republic of Korea (Korea), Poland, the Russian Federation (Russia), and the United States of America (US), to present opening statements. China was not present.

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

Dr. Boris N. Kotenev, VNIRO (Russia) was elected as Chair of the Conference.

3.2 Vice-Chair

Ms. Patricia Livingston, REFM (United States), was elected Vice Chair.

3.3 Chair of Scientific and Technical Committee

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

3.4 Rapporteur for the Scientific and Technical Committee

Mr. Paul Niemeier (US) served as lead rapporteur with assistance from each of the member countries.

3.5 Rapporteur of the Main Conference

Ms. Tamara Wallen (US) served as lead rapporteur with assistance from each of the member countries.

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 1-2, 2008. 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. Poland requested that the Parties provide effort data in the future.

5.2 Review results of trial fishing

- 5.2.1 There was no trial fishing conducted in the region in 2008. Final results of the trial fishing that Korea conducted in 2007 are included as an attachment to the S&T report.

5.3 Review results of research cruises

- 5.3.1 Japan presented data on walleye pollock bycatch in Japanese salmon surveys.
- 5.3.2 Russia reported on the results of the Northwestern Bering Sea pollock research cruises in 2007. The Navarin area pollock continued to follow a downward trend and the Russians suspect that this is related to the climate changes in the region. The trend began in the south eastern area of the Bering Sea and has moved north and west.
- 5.3.2 The US reviewed results of the 2007 Bogoslof survey and indicated that the survey was not conducted in 2008. The next Bogoslof survey is scheduled in 2009; but there is a possibility that it may not be conducted because of budgetary concerns. The US also reported on the stock assessments of pollock in 2007 in the eastern Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands region and the Bogoslof Area. Additional information is contained in the S&T report.

5.4 Review the status of Aleutian Basin Pollock stocks

- 5.4.1 The US stated that there was no comprehensive survey that could be used to determine the status of the Aleutian Basin stock.

5.5 Factors affecting recovery of the stocks

- 5.5.1 There was no new information or discussion on this topic.

5.6 The effects of the moratorium and its continuation

- 5.6.1 The Parties noted that the moratorium has been in place since the implementation of the Convention from 1992; but there has been no indication of recovery of pollock stocks in

the Convention Area. Recovery will have to await significantly higher recruitment levels. The US noted that the recovery time of 15 years is not a long time for the recovery of the stocks. Japan requested that the US provide information on pollock fishery restrictions.

5.6.2 Parties agreed that the moratorium should continue.

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

5.7.1 The Parties agreed that biomass of pollock in the Convention Area should be determined using the indirect method in the Annex to the Convention; as there have been no comprehensive surveys that could directly estimate its biomass.

5.7.2 Proposals were discussed in determining ABC of pollock in the Convention Area; but the Parties could not agree on a standard method. Japan and Korea suggested extrapolating the ABC estimate of the Bogoslof area that the North Pacific Fishery Management Council determined. The US and Russia stated there is no evidence to support a standard percentage distribution and do not support this methodology. Poland has no recommendation with respect to ABC setting and encourages the development of additional scientific data for the purpose of endorsing any particular methodology.

5.8 Recommendation on the Annual Harvest Level (AHL)

5.8.1 Poland is now in agreement with the US and Russia that there is not enough scientific data to set an AHL. Japan and Korea maintain their support for the AHL setting methodology originally proposed by the Polish delegation in 2007. Consensus was not reached on how to set an AHL; therefore, the default mechanism in the Annex applies which results in an AHL of zero for 2009.

5.9 Other matters and recommendations of the S&T Committee

5.9.1 The USCG presented a report on enforcement efforts in the Convention Area in 2008. There were no observed violations.

5.9.2 Korea submitted a report on the results of their trial fishing in 2007.

5.9.3 The US requested that as much advance notice of trial fishing be given to USCG contacts in order to facilitate enforcement efforts. One month was given as the ideal lead time.

5.9.3 The US provided a presentation on the recovery plan for the short-tailed albatross. The recovery team is looking for additional sources of information to assist with the recovery plan.

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 fishery catch statistics and research results which were included in the S&T report.

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

6.2.1 There were no recommendations for a special plan of work for the S&T committee.

6.3. The establishment of the Allowable Harvest Level

6.3.1 US and Russia recommended that AHL for 2009 be set at zero. The total biomass has not reached the level necessary by the convention to set an AHL to anything other than zero.

6.3.3 Korea stated that this is a difficult time for fishermen in Korea not to be allowed to fish for pollock. By offering even a small AHL, it gives hope to the fishermen who are awaiting the recovery of the pollock stocks in the Central Bering Sea.

6.3.4 Japan supported the remarks made by Korea and agrees that there should be a small AHL set.

6.3.5 The Chair summarized the situation, stating that the Parties had two different positions: Japan and Korea propose to set a small AHL, while Poland, Russia and the US 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), and setting the AHL for 2009 at zero.

6.4. The establishment of the Individual National Quotas

6.4.1 Since AHL could not be established, it follows that 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 There is no action on this item because conservation and management measures should remain status quo at this time.

6.6 The establishment of the terms and conditions for trial fishing in 2009

6.6.1 US recommended that countries planning to conduct trial fishing give at least one month lead time prior to fishing in order to facilitate enforcement efforts.

6.6.2 The Parties did not adopt any additional revisions to existing trial fishing terms and conditions.

6.7 Trial fishing plans

6.7.1 No Parties presented any plans to conduct trial fishing in 2009.

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

6.8.1 US presented a report on monitoring and enforcement efforts in the S&T committee.

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 presented on the relocation plan for the short-tailed albatross and request assistance for the recovery of that species from the Parties in that effort, especially from Japan and Russia.

6.10. Meeting Observers

6.10.1 No discussion on this topic.

7. Fourteenth Annual Conference

7.1 Time and Location

7.1.1 The next Annual Conference would rotate to the U.S. The U.S. Party will inform the Parties of the details at least three months before the Conference. Tentatively the Conference is scheduled to take place August 31 – September 1, 2009 in Portland, Oregon.

7.2 Election of the next Chair and Vice-Chair

7.2.1 The U.S. Party nominated Dr. James Balsiger, NOAA Fisheries, as Chairman for the 14th Annual Conference in the United States.

7.2.2 Japan will provide the Parties a nomination to serve as the Vice Chair for the 14th Annual Conference at a later date.

8. Other Business

8.1. Japan proposes that the Parties consider changing the format of future meetings by alternating between “Face to face” and “Virtual” meetings. Japan encouraged Parties to exchange proposals prior to the next meeting.

8.2. The U.S. and Korea supported consideration of the proposal from Japan for an agenda item at the next meeting. Russia recommends that the Parties review the proposal from Japan for consideration during the intersessional period and discuss the matter at the next scheduled meeting.

8.4. Poland concurs with the Russian position that this is not the time to undertake such a decision and that there are a number of benefits that are derived from meeting face to face.

9. Closing Statements

The Parties made oral closing statements. Written statements were not provided.

Appendix Tables

1. Opening Remarks
2. Delegation List.
3. Plenary Agenda.
4. Report of the Scientific and Technical Committee.

APENDIX 1: Opening Remarks
THIRTEENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF
POLLOCK RESOURCES IN THE CENTRAL BERING SEA
September 1, 2008
Kaliningrad, Russian Federation

OPENING STATEMENT BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is for the third time that Russia is hosting distinguished delegates to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on conservation and management of pollock resources in the Central Bering Sea.

This time we decided to change the conventional meeting site, which is Moscow, in favor of the beautiful city of Kaliningrad which enjoys long standing traditions of a fishing port town housing one of the most important fishery research institute in Russia, which is AtlantNIRO. Hoping that you will like the city of Kaliningrad we shall do our best to make your stay here both useful scientifically and pleasant in all respects.

As a species in total and as separate stocks, pollock keeps making surprises to us, not always pleasant or understandable. At the last meeting Steve Barbeaux noted an unprecedented decline in pollock biomass within the central Aleutian Chain. Stocks continue to go down in the eastern Bering Sea; the Bogoslof stock remains to be scarce; the Navarin stock of pollock keeps diminishing for the recent two years. All this happens despite the precautionary approach to setting TAC and account of the volume of these populations in the ecosystems of the Bering Sea when developing conservation measures.

I do not think I shall be mistaken if I dare say that 14 years ago, when the Convention was being signed none of the participants expected to encounter such a complicated mechanism ensuring homeostasis of the species and the populations thereof.

However, each successful meeting deepens our understanding of the regularities of functioning of the living nature. Our hope is that the joint work during the coming three days will enable us to rise to a new level of knowledge and make correct decision.

I call all participants of the Conference to consolidate our efforts to explore the Bering Sea pollock which will certainly be reflected in accuracy and long-term nature of our forecasts regarding deep water aggregation recovery.

Now I ask members of Russian delegation to introduce themselves.

OPENING STATEMENT BY JAPAN

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen. I am deeply honored to attend the meeting of the 13th Annual Conference of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of the Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea as the representative of Japan.

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Russian Federation, delegation of Russia and all the people in Kaliningrad for their sincere effort devoted to hosting this conference.

As we all know, already 15 years passed since the moratorium on commercial fishing had been adopted as the strictest measure of conservation of pollock resources in the Central Bering Sea. We have also to admit with regret that as yet we cannot find any sign of recovery of the pollock resources in the area. In such circumstances, many fishing companies in our country which operated trawlers in these waters in the Past went bankrupt. A few remaining fishermen are reduced to extremely miserable conditions in recent years due to demands to impose more severe restrictions on trawl fishing in the high seas in order to protect marine ecosystem and exorbitant prices of fuel.

On behalf of the government of Japan, we would like to offer to our badly pressed fishermen a measure of hope, however small, by securing certain concessions from the coastal states and by taking up at this meeting constructive activities aimed at effective and sustainable exploitation of stocks once resources have recovered.

I hope that this time Annual Conference will be meaningful and productive for all the member states of the Convention.

Finally, I would like to introduce to you the members of the delegation of Japan. I am Taku SASAKI, from the Fisheries Agency of Japan. By my side Mr.Szulc, our adviser and interpreter.

Thank you for attention.

OPENING STATEMENT BY REPUBLIC OF KOREA

(Opening remarks was given by Jongkwan AHN, Head of Delegation, but a written statement was not provided)

OPENING STATEMENT BY POLAND

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is great honor for us to participate in the Thirteen Annual Conference of the Parties to the

Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea. I would like to express my gratitude to Government of Russian Federation for organizing and hosting this Meeting.

Many things have changed in Poland and in the Polish fishery since 1995 when the Convention entered into force. First of May 2004 Poland joined European Union and the competences for management of the international fisheries now lie with the European Community.

Taking into account that the EC has not yet become a member of this Convention and that Poland remains member until this date, Poland will speak on behalf of the EC at this annual meeting and will reflect the Community position.

The representative of European Commission Mrs. Aleksandra Kordecka is taking part at the Conference in the frame of Polish delegation and will be an official speaker of the Polish delegation.

OPENING STATEMENT BY THE UNITED STATES

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen:

The United States delegation is honored to be able to participate in this 13th Annual Conference of the Parties to the Convention for the Conservation and Management Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea. My name is Loh-Lee Low and I am honored to be entrusted to lead discussions of the U.S. delegation at this meeting. On behalf of our participants, I would like to thank the Russian Party for hosting this conference in Kaliningrad. This will be the second trip for many of our delegates to Kaliningrad and we look forward to the fine hospitality that our Russian host is famous for.

The United States is represented by a large delegation as we place great importance to this Convention and many of our participants are also here to attend follow up meetings with our Russian host. This Convention continues to experience a moratorium on commercial fishing for pollock stocks in the central Bering Sea despite our joint efforts to rebuild the stocks. It may seem like an unusually long period of time to wait for the recovery of the pollock resources, but we know that it is common in nature for many fish stocks to take a long time to recover. The U.S. delegation is committed to the pollock stock recovery efforts and looks forward to revelations at the Scientific and Technical Committee about research and status of the stocks in the central Bering Sea and its adjacent EEZ waters.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to introduce the U.S. delegation at this time

APENDIX 2
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

13th CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON THE
CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF POLLOCK RESOURCES IN THE CENTRAL
BERING SEA

1-2 September 2008 at Kaliningrad, Russia

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Appendix 3

Agenda for the 13th ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF POLLOCK RESOURCES IN THE CENTRAL BERING SEA

September 1-2, 2008
Kaliningrad, Russia

- 1.** Opening of the Conference
- 2.** Welcome Addresses and Opening Statements of the Delegates
- 3.** Election (Chair, Vice-Chair, Chair of Scientific & Technical Committee, and Rapporteur)
- 4.** Adoption of the Agenda
- 5.** Report of the Scientific and Technical Committee
- 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
 - 6.2.** The establishment of a Plan of Work for the Scientific and Technical Committee
 - 6.3.** The establishment of the Allowable Harvest Level
 - 6.4.** The establishment of the Individual National Quotas
 - 6.5.** The adoption of appropriate conservation and management measures based upon the advice of the Scientific and Technical Committee
 - 6.6.** The establishment of the Terms and Conditions for Trial Fishing in 2009
 - 6.7.** Trial Fishing Plans in 2009
 - 6.8.** Reception of reports relating to measures taken to investigate and penalize violations of the Convention
 - 6.9.** The consideration of matters related to the conservation and management of living marines resources other than pollock in the Convention area
 - 6.10.** Meeting Observers
- 7.** Fourteenth Annual Conference
 - 7.1.** Time and Location
 - 7.2.** Election of Chair and Vice-Chair
- 8.** Other Issues
- 9.** Closing Statements