

# **Report of the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea**

**Hosted by the United States  
23 November–4 December 2015**

Final: 09-12-2015

## **1. Opening of the Conference**

1.1 Mr. Douglas Mecum (United States) opened the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea on 23 November 2015. It was the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference to be conducted via electronic mail (e-mail).

## **2. Opening Statements**

2.1 Japan, Poland/European Union, the Russian Federation, and the United States submitted opening statements ([Appendix 1](#)).

## **3. Elections (Chair and Rapporteur)**

3.1 Mr. Douglas Mecum, Deputy Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service Alaska Region (United States) was elected Chair of the Annual Conference. Mr. Paul Niemeier (United States) served as Rapporteur. Dr. Loh-Lee Low (United States) served as the Chair and Rapporteur for the Scientific and Technical Committee Meeting held on 14-25 September 2015.

3.2 The following persons served as the contact points and “voices” for their respective Parties during Annual Conference e-mail exchanges: Takeshi Sato (Japan), Jeongseok Park (Republic of Korea), Louise Head (Poland/EU), Alexander I. Glubokov (Russian Federation), and Douglas Mecum (United States). The People's Republic of China (China) did not participate.

3.3 A complete list of the Annual Conference participants is provided in [Appendix 2](#).

## **4. Adoption of the Agenda**

4.1 The Agenda, as adopted, is provided in [Appendix 3](#).

## **5. Report of the Scientific and Technical Committee**

5.1 The *Report of the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Committee of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea* is provided in [Appendix 4](#). The final Report was distributed to the Parties on 28 September 2015.

5.2 Documents submitted for the S&T meeting were distributed to the Parties on 24 August 2015.

**6. Action Items.** The Chair reminded the Parties that pursuant to Article V of the Convention, all decisions at the Annual Conference on matters of substance shall be taken by consensus. A matter shall be deemed to be of substance if any Party considers it to be of substance. Decisions on other matters shall be taken by a simple majority of the votes. As China is not participating in the Annual Conference, decisions will be made on the basis of five votes.

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 United States and Russian Federation provided a detailed review of Bering Sea pollock catch and effort statistics, pollock research survey results, and the status of pollock stocks since the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in the Report of the Scientific and Technical Committee.

6.2. Establishment of a Plan of Work for the Scientific and Technical Committee

6.2.1. There were no recommendations for a Plan of Work for the Scientific and Technical Committee.

6.3. Establishment of the Allowable Harvest Level (AHL).

6.3.1. The Convention directs the Annual Conference of the Parties to establish by consensus the pollock AHL for the central Bering Sea for the succeeding year, based on the assessment of the total Aleutian Basin pollock biomass by the Science and Technical Committee. If every effort to achieve such consensus fails, the AHL is to be determined in accordance with a series of steps in the Annex to the Convention.

6.3.2. The Annex allows the coastal states--the United States and Russia--to establish the pollock AHL based on the best available scientific data. If the coastal states have insufficient data to establish the biomass, the Annex contains a default mechanism that deems the pollock biomass of the "Specific Area" (a subset of the Bogoslof Island pollock spawning grounds in the U.S. zone) to represent 60 percent of the Aleutian Basin pollock biomass. Per the Annex, if the extrapolated estimate of the total Aleutian Basin pollock biomass is less than 1.67 million metric tons, the AHL is set at zero and there is no directed fishing for pollock in the central Bering Sea for the succeeding year.

6.3.3. The Chair noted that the United States conducts pollock research surveys of the Bogoslof Island pollock spawning grounds on a 2-year cycle. The last survey was conducted in March 2014; the next survey will be in March 2016. Consequently, there was no new scientific data to report for 2015. The 2014 Bogoslof Island area survey by the NOAA research vessel *OSCAR DYSON* resulted in a pollock biomass estimate of 112,000 t. Using the method prescribed by the Annex to the Convention, the entire Aleutian Basin pollock biomass was estimated to be 186,700 t. This is approximately 11 percent of the trigger biomass level to authorize an AHL.

6.3.4. Japan reminded all the Parties of its proposal at the 19th Scientific and Technical Committee to discuss establishing a new rule for setting an AHL even though the Aleutian Basin Pollock biomass is less than 1.67 million metric tons, while no discussion was taken at the Committee this year.

6.3.5. Korea also expressed its concern that there has been no progress in terms of setting an AHL and allocating pollock among Parties since the decision on the 1993 moratorium. In this

regard, Korea underlined the need to establish a new rule for setting an AHL to allow Parties to be allocated even a small portion of the pollock resources as a symbolic meaning for fishermen.

6.3.6. Given the current status of the Aleutian Basin pollock stock biomass, the Republic of Korea (Korea), Poland/EU, and the United States agreed that the AHL for 2016 should be set at zero.

6.3.5. There was no consensus among the Parties on how to set the AHL. Consequently, the process described in Article VII. Part 1 of the Annex to the Convention was followed and the AHL for 2016 was set at zero.

6.4. Establishment of the Individual National Quotas.

6.4.1. Since the AHL for 2016 was set at zero, no individual national quotas could be established.

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

6.5.1. Based on the report of the Scientific and Technical Committee, there was no new advice and consequently, no new conservation and management measures were adopted.

6.6. Establishment of the Terms and Conditions for Trial Fishing in 2016

6.6.1. Japan, Korea, Poland/EU and the United States agreed to adopt the same terms and conditions for trial fishing in 2016 as was agreed at the 2010 Annual Meeting. Consequently, the Parties will continue the status quo for terms and conditions for trial fishing in 2016.

6.6.2. Poland/EU encouraged Parties to the Convention to conduct trial fishing in the region in 2016 in line with the terms and conditions recommended by the Committee in order to obtain more scientific data and understanding concerning the distribution and status of the pollock stock in the Central Bering Sea.

6.6.3. As in past Annual Conferences, the Parties recommended that countries planning to conduct trial fishing give at least one month lead time prior to fishing in order to facilitate enforcement efforts.

6.7. Trial fishing plans for the following year.

6.7.1. Poland/EU and the United States do not plan to conduct trial fishing in 2016 in the Convention Area. Korea also does not plan to conduct trial fishing in 2016 at this stage, but it will announce its plan in 2016 when it is available. In this case, Korea will notify all Parties of its plan at least one month prior to such fishing plan.

6.7.2. None of the other Parties announced plans for trial fishing in 2016 in the Convention Area.

6.8. Measures taken to investigate and penalize violations of the Convention.

6.8.1. The United States had neither reports nor detection of fishing activity taking place in the Convention Area in 2015 and thus had no new information to share.

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

6.9.1. None of the Parties had any matters to propose for this agenda item.

6.10. Meeting Observers

6.10.1 There were no observers.

## **7. Future Annual Conferences**

7.1. Consideration of virtual meetings.

7.1.1. The Parties agreed to continue the virtual meeting process in 2016.

7.2. 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference.

7.2.1. Japan will host the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference and Scientific Technical Committee Meeting in the virtual format in 2016.

7.3. Election of the Chair and Vice Chair.

7.3.1. According to Rule 2 of the Annual Conference Rules of Procedure, the Chair of the next Annual Conference shall be from the host Party and the Parties shall elect a Vice-Chair, if necessary. The Parties shall also elect a Chairperson of the Scientific and Technical Committee. A vacancy shall be filled by a nominee of the same Party, subject to the approval of the other Parties. As reported in 7.2., Japan will host the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference and will inform the Parties of the names of the Chairs of the S&T Committee Meeting and the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference in advance of the meetings.

## **8. Other Issues.**

8.1. Poland/EU raised to the table a request for membership by the EU in lieu of Poland as foreseen by the EU Accession Treaty of Poland and announced Poland's intention to consider the submission of a request for Convention amendment to allow the EU as a 'Regional Economic Integration Organisation' to become a member of the Bering Sea Convention.

8.1.1. Poland/EU asked for consideration of a possible amendment to the Convention (amendment to Article XVI.4) in accordance with Article XVII of the Convention in order to allow the participation of Regional Economic Integration Organisations and to allow for the European Union to become party to the Convention.

8.1.2. The United States stated that its position on this issue remains unchanged. The status of pollock stocks in the central Bering Sea does not support fishing opportunities for existing participants, and there are no indications that this historical trend will change in the near term. In this context, and in light of procedural questions about the scope of the issue that an amendment would address, the United States does not support the Parties seeking authority and expending resources to negotiate amendments to the Convention to accommodate additional participants at this time. Pursuant to Article XVI.4, invitations to other States to become Parties to the Convention must be made by unanimous agreement of the current Parties.

8.1.3. Korea expressed its support for the EU becoming a member of the Bering Sea Convention in lieu of Poland. As a formal process, Korea requested Poland/EU to submit their official proposal to amend the Convention for consideration among Parties.

8.1.4. Russia supported the position of the United States with regard to EU membership in Convention.

8.1.5. Given the differences of opinion between the United States, Russia, Poland/EU, and Korea, and the fact that China and Japan did not express an opinion on the Poland/EU request, the Chair advised that Parties continue discussion on this issue at the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference.

8.2. Recognizing that China has not participated in the meeting since 2008, Korea requested the Party hosting the 2016 virtual meeting contact China to encourage it to join virtual meetings in the future.

## **9. Closing Statements.**

9.1 There were no closing statements.

## **Appendices:**

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

**20<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea**

Hosted by the United States  
23 November –December 4 2015

**Opening Statement of the Delegation of the United States**

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The United States is pleased to host the virtual 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea. For the past 20 Annual Conferences, the Parties have agreed to an annual moratorium on commercial pollock fishing in the Convention Area. It is clear to the United States that pollock stocks in the Area have not yet recovered to the point that a commercial fishery can be conducted without endangering any potentially rebuilding pollock stocks. We share the hope of the other Parties that one day we may be in the position to sustainably manage a pollock fishery in the central Bering Sea. Until that time, however, the United States will continue to carry out its obligations pursuant to the Convention, i.e.; to meet and exchange information on pollock catches and effort, pollock survey results, and the status of pollock stocks Bering Sea wide, and to take appropriate precautionary measures to protect the pollock resource. Changing ocean conditions make it more important now than ever to continue to work together to closely monitor the long term sustainability of Bering Sea pollock stocks.

The United States acknowledges the value of meeting with the Parties face-to-face, but as long as there is no significant change in the status of the Aleutian Basin pollock stock biomass, the U.S. side is willing to continue the virtual Annual Conference process. It is still the best way to uphold the principles of the Convention while allowing for cost savings to the Parties.

The U.S. delegation will work to make this 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference a success and looks forward to interacting with the other Parties virtually over the next two weeks.

Thank you.

## **Opening Statement by Japan**

20th Annual Conference of the Bering Sea Convention, virtual meeting,  
23 November - 4 December 2015

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

The Japanese Delegation would like to express our gratitude to the United States of America for hosting the 20th Annual Conference of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of the Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea (CBS) in virtual meeting.

We assure Dr. Douglas Mecum, the Chair of the Conference, of our cooperation with him throughout this year's virtual meeting in order to have a fruitful meeting.

As every Party knows, over 20 years have passed since the moratorium on commercial fishing have come into effective as the most strict measure for conservation of pollock resources in the CBS. However it is regrettable that we have not yet received any good news of recovery of the Pollock resources in the area.

One of the objectives of the Convention is to restore and maintain the pollock resources in the Bering Sea at levels which will permit their maximum sustainable yield. However, this objective of the Convention has not yet been achieved.

Under the circumstances, the moratorium on fishing activities in the Convention Area continues, and fishermen in Japan, as well as those in other Parties have been facing difficulties.

Now, in order to get back to the objectives of the Convention and support our sustainable fishing industry, we have to continue cooperation to the utmost extent in gathering and sharing scientific information, which is vital for the establishment of AHL. In this context, however, it is unfortunate that no new scientific information was provided by the coastal states this year.

Along with the discussion in this meeting, we expect that it bring a fruitful and meaningful result for each Party.

We are looking forward to participating in this meeting.

Thank you.

**Opening Statement by Poland and the European Union**

**20<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Bering Sea Convention, virtual meeting,  
November 23-December 4, 2015**

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honour and a pleasure for Poland and the European Union to participate in the Bering Sea Convention Annual Conference. Following the positive experience of previous years, we are convinced that this virtual meeting will be successful and productive, while limiting unnecessary travel. We look forward to the active participation of all Contracting Parties.

Poland and the European Union are fully committed to sustainable fisheries management outside EU waters and recognize the key role RFMOs play in the long term conservation and sustainable use of fish stocks. We firmly believe in using the latest scientific advice on the status of stocks as a benchmark for responsible resource management and will continue to promote this approach.

As you are well aware, following the accession of Poland to the European Union in 2004, the competence for conservation and management of international fisheries resources has been transferred to the European Union. As we have informed you in the past years, the Union will be seeking to become a party to this Convention in lieu of Poland in due time to ensure that all EU Member States are bound by it.

We look forward to participating in this meeting and hope it will be a productive and successful one.

Thank you



**Opening Statement by the Russian Federation**  
**20<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the**  
**Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea**

Hosted by the United States  
23 November –December 4 2015

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is an honour and a great pleasure for Russian Federation to participate in the Bering Sea Convention Annual Conference. On behalf of the Russian Delegation, I would like to express our gratitude to the United States, for hosting the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of the Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea in virtual meeting.

We hope that 20<sup>th</sup> Conference will be successful as others previous conferences and give us additional understanding of the status of the Bering Sea pollock stocks.

According the results of the S&T meeting the abundance of Pollock's Bogoslof stock is still at a low level. This level is significantly less than trigger biomass according Convention.

Russian Federation believes that virtual format of Annual conference is the best way for realizing Donut Hole Convention until the biomass of the Central Bering Sea Pollock stock at the low level.

We will work together for taking well balanced decisions corresponding with current status of the Bering Sea ecosystem including it Central part over the next two weeks.

Thank you.

**20<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the  
Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea**

Hosted by the United States  
23 November-4 December 2015

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**People's Republic of China**

The People's Republic of China did not participate.

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**20<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea**

Hosted by the United States  
23 November-4 December 2015

**Agenda**

1. Opening of the Conference
2. Opening Statements
3. Elections (Chair and Rapporteur)
4. Adoption of the Agenda
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6. Action Items
  - 6.1 Review of scientific data and conservation measures of the Coastal States related to pollock fishing in the Bering Sea
  - 6.2 Establishment of a Plan of Work for the Scientific and Technical Committee
  - 6.3 Establishment of the Allowable Harvest Level
  - 6.4 Establishment of Individual National Quotas
  - 6.5 Adoption of appropriate conservation and management measures based on the advice of the Scientific and Technical Committee
  - 6.6 Establishment of the Terms and Conditions for Trial Fishing
  - 6.7 Trial Fishing Plans for the following year
  - 6.8 Measures taken to investigate and penalize violations of the Convention
  - 6.9 Consideration of matters related to the conservation and management of living marine resources other than pollock in the Convention Area
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  - 7.2 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference
  - 7.3 Election of Chair/Vice-Chair

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8. Other Issues

9. Closing Statements



**REPORT OF THE 20<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE  
SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COMMITTEE OF THE PARTIES TO THE  
CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF POLLOCK  
RESOURCES IN THE CENTRAL BERING SEA**

14 – 25 September 2015 Virtual Process Meeting

**1. Opening of the Meeting**

Loh-Lee Low (USA) served as the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Committee Meeting. A list of the participants is provided in Appendix 1.

**2. Appointment of Rapporteur**

The Chair also served as rapporteur to compile the S&T report. The following individuals served as the contact point and “voice” from each party for email exchange –Japan (Orio Yamamura), the Russian Federation (Alexander I. Glubokov), the United States (Loh-Lee Low), the Republic of Korea (Seok-Gwan Choi), Poland/EU (Barbara Lewkowska and Adam Augustynowicz). The People's Republic of China did not participate.

**3. Adoption of the Agenda**

3.1. The agenda (Appendix 2) was adopted.

**4. Discussion of Science Issues**

**4.1. Update catch and effort statistics**

4.1.1. The United States and the Russian Federation provided updated pollock catch statistics by year and region (Appendix 3). Two figures at the end of the report are provided to show the geographical/statistical areas of the Bering Sea.

**4.2. Review results of trial fishing**

4.2.1. There was no new trial fishing reported by the Parties.

**4.3. Review results of research cruises**

4.3.1. The Russian Federation reported that it conducted a pollock survey in the northwestern Bering Sea during September-October 2014 by the R/V *TINRO*. The studies showed that the year classes with above average abundance were in 2006, 2008, and 2012. The average year classes were in 2009, 2011, and 2013. The PowerPoint report also provided projections of pollock biomass for the northern Bering Sea (Navarin area) and the western Bering Sea (Karagin area). The biomass ( spawning biomass and age 2+ biomass) is projected to increase in the northern Bering Sea from 2012 to 2018. The biomass in the Western Bering Sea is stable at a low level from 2010.

4.3.2. The U.S. survey strategy for pollock in the Bering Sea are as follows: (1) Eastern Bering Sea (EBS) shelf – An annual survey to assess groundfish and crabs in the summer months (June to August); usually using two chartered fishing vessels; (2) EBS slope -- The NOAA ship *Oscar Dyson* conducts a summer pollock acoustic-trawl survey every 2 years (the latest one in 2014 and

the next to be 2016). It surveys the western and northwestern parts of the U.S. EEZ in the eastern Bering Sea, and the Russian side of the U.S.-Russia Convention Line; going back and forth from the U.S. EEZ to the Russian EEZ. This survey is part of a cooperative study of Bering Sea pollock with Russia's Pacific Fisheries Research Institute (TINRO-Center); (3) Aleutian Islands - The Aleutian Islands area is surveyed every 3 years using 2 chartered fishing vessels. The latest surveys were conducted during June-August 2014. The next survey will be in 2017; and (4) Bogoslof Island area -- The NOAA ship *Oscar Dyson* also conducts a pollock acoustic-trawl survey in the Bogoslof area every 2 years, the latest one in 2014 (3-14 March) and next to be in 2016. This is the specific area that has been designated in the Convention to provide an indicator of pollock stock condition in the central Bering Sea Convention Area.

The reporting of the cruise results and assessments of the pollock stocks in the U.S. EEZ are timed to the completion of summer surveys and a meeting of the Fishery Management Plan Team each year, generally about mid-September. The Plan Team drafts stock assessments for the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to start the process of fisheries management decision making for the following year. The website for these annual Plan Team reports can be found in <http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/REFM/Stocks/assessments.htm>. Pertinent parts of the U.S. survey and pollock stock assessments are discussed in section 4.4 below.

4.3.3. Japan generally conducts an annual salmon survey in the central Bering Sea during July to August. No pollock was caught (incidental to the salmon catch) in the central Bering Sea area in 2013 and 2014. The survey in 2015 caught some juvenile pollock (age 0) in 2 of the 17 stations sampled in the central Bering Sea. The numbers of pollock caught were 375 in station H08 and 131 in station H20.

#### **4.4. Review the status of Aleutian Basin Pollock stocks**

4.4.1. The Aleutian Basin also encompasses the central Bering Sea Convention Area (see the 2 figures at the end of this report). Direct surveys have not taken place as the area is rather large. Instead, the Convention established a specific area (defined in Convention Annex Part 1) around Bogoslof Island where the central Bering Sea pollock stock is known to migrate to spawn. It is in this specific area of Bogoslof where the abundance of pollock is estimated during February-March by the NOAA ship *Oscar Dyson* every 2 years, to provide an indirect indicator of the central Bering Sea Pollock stock abundance. The Annex assumes that the "specific area" represents 60% of the pollock stock in the entire Aleutian Basin at the time of the survey. The results of the historical surveys are shown in Figure 1 below:

# Bogoslof Survey Results, 1988-2014

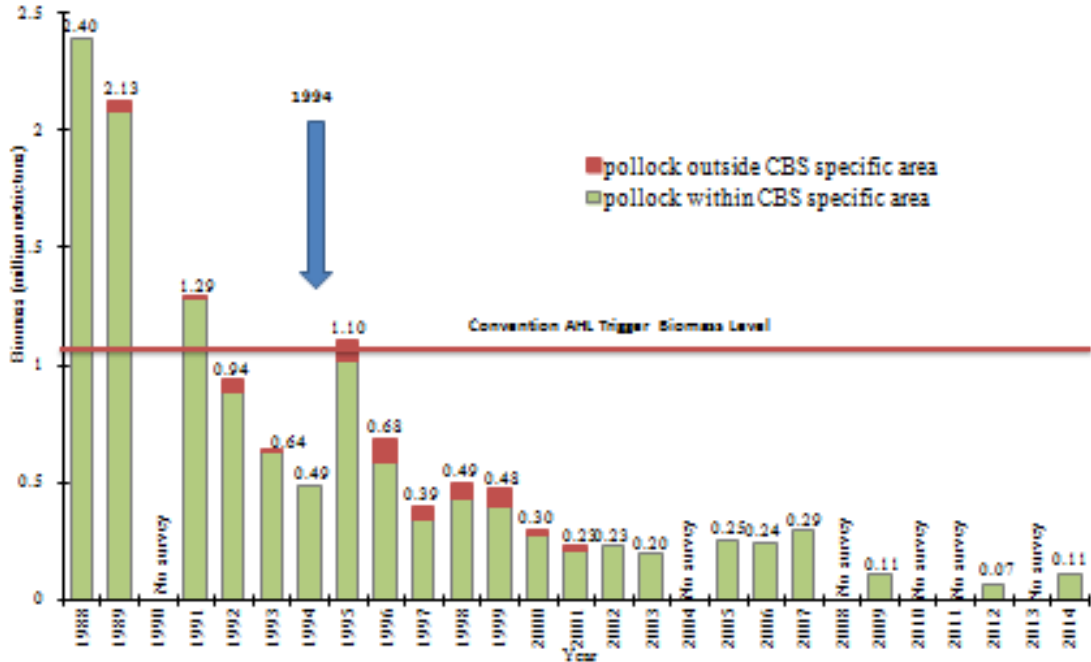


Figure 1. Biomass estimates obtained during acoustic-trawl surveys for walleye pollock in the Bogoslof Island area, 1988-2014. The United States conducted all the surveys; except for the 1999 survey, which was conducted by Japan.

4.4.2. The Russian pollock studies conducted in 2014-2015 showed that the pollock biomass in the Western Bering Sea is stable at a low level since 2010 and the biomass of the Navarin pollock has been projected to increase from 2012 – 2018.

4.4.3. The United States provided the following summary information about pollock stocks status for the Bering Sea by region. The table below is extracted from the U.S. document that summarizes the status and catch specifications of the pollock stocks in the Bering Sea-Aleutian Islands (BSAI) management areas in the U.S. EEZ. All units are in metric tons. \*The catches for 2015 are through 18 July.

All units are in metric tons.

Area	Year	Age 3+ Pollock Biomass	Overfishing Level (t)	Acceptable Biological Catch (t)	Total Allowable Catch (t)	Catch (t)
<b>1.E Bering Sea</b>	2010	4,620,000	918,000	813,000	813,000	810,215
	2011	9,620,000	2,450,000	1,270,000	1,253,000	1,199,069
	2012	8,340,000	2,470,000	1,220,000	1,186,000	1,205,197
	2013	8,140,000	2,550,000	1,375,000	1,247,000	1,270,745
	2014	8,082,000	2,726,000	1,369,000	1,267,000	1,298,593
	2015	9,203,000	3,330,000	1,637,000	1,310,000	831,737*
<b>2.Aleutians</b>	2010	242,000	40,000	33,100	19,000	1,285
	2011	261,000	44,500	36,700	19,000	1,208
	2012	251,000	39,600	32,500	19,000	975
	2013	266,000	45,600	37,300	19,000	2,964
	2014	259,525	48,600	40,000	19,000	2,348
	2015	228,102	36,005	29,659	19,000	710*
<b>3.Bogoslof</b>	2010	110,000	22,000	156	50	176
	2011	110,000	22,000	156	150	140
	2012	110,000	22,000	16,500	500	79
	2013	67,100	13,400	10,100	100	54
	2014	67,100	13,413	10,059	75	428
	2015	106,000	21,200	15,900	100	727*

\*The catches for 2015 are through 18 July 2015.

**EBS Stock area**— The biomass trends of the stock tends to reflect recruitment patterns. The 2008 biomass reached a recent low that resulted from poor recruitment of successive 2002-2005 year classes. Recruitment levels improved after that and so did the biomass. According to criteria used by the U.S. fishery management council process, the pollock stock in the EBS is not being subjected to overfishing, is not overfished, and is not approaching an overfished condition.

**Aleutian Islands area**— There was a very strong 1978 year class that built up the biomass of Aleutians pollock from 1980-1985. Since that strong year class, recruitment (thus biomass) levels have declined drastically and remained at low levels; though there has been a general slow increase of biomass from 1999. These increases have resulted more from dramatic decreases in harvest levels rather than from good recruitment. The pollock stock in the Aleutian Islands is not being subjected to overfishing, is not overfished, and is not approaching an overfished condition.

**Bogoslof area:** As no new survey information is available since the 2014 U.S. survey, this section of the report is extracted from the 2014 meeting report: “The trend in estimated biomass in the Bogoslof Island area has been steadily down. The low biomass was detected in 2012 (67,100 t). The latest survey by NOAA ship *Oscar Dyson* estimated the 2014 pollock biomass to be 112,000 t. This is an increase from 2012. The pollock stock in the Bogoslof Island area, while low in biomass, is not subjected to overfishing as directed fishing has not been allowed. However it is not possible to determine whether this stock is overfished or whether it is approaching an

overfished condition since there is insufficient information about the population dynamics of the stock.”

Poland/EU asked the United States for an explanation of the increased pollock catch in the Bogoslof area in 2014 and 2015. The United States explained that the increase in pollock in Area 518 (Bogoslof) was primarily driven by increases in the arrowtooth/Kamchatka flounder fishery in that area in recent years. While the catch has exceeded total allowable catches in 2014-15, it is still substantially below acceptable biological levels (see table above). This flounder is primarily prosecuted by non-pelagic trawl catcher processors in the months of May through July.

Poland/EU further asked if biological data on fisheries in the area were taken. The United States indicated that observers are normally on board the vessels to sample the catches, including pollock bycatch. No special notes were reported on the catches; but the Chair asked that the United States provide further details on the bycatch in future S&T sessions.

#### **4.5. Factors affecting recovery of the stocks**

4.5.1. No new information was provided.

#### **4.6. The effects of the moratorium and its continuation**

4.6.1. No new information was provided.

#### **4.7. Methodologies to determine Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) and Allowable Harvest Level (AHL)**

4.7.1. Japan had previously proposed to discuss establishing a new rule for setting an AHL below the recovery level specified in Annex Part I of the Convention; but no action has been taken by any study group. Thus, no new information was provided.

#### **4.8. Recommendation on AHL**

4.8.1. No new information was provided. In the past, the Parties have used Annex Part 1 of the Convention to establish AHL. The AHL level has been set at zero; because the minimum biomass level needed to trigger a non-zero AHL according to the Convention Annex has not been reached. Figure 1 (above) shows the estimated biomass in relation to the biomass level needed to trigger establishing an AHL.

#### **4.9. Research Plans**

The United States plans to conduct its next survey on pollock in the Bogoslof area in 2016 (during a 2 week period in February-March). Other survey plans by the Parties (United States and Russia) in their EEZ waters are expected to continue as in previous years. Japan normally conducts its salmon survey (that may catch pollock incidentally) in the central Bering Sea annually.

### **5. Discussion of Enforcement and Management Issues**

5.1. Violations of the Convention.

5.1.1. No new information was provided; but no IUU fishing in the Convention area was known to have been reported in 2015.

#### **5.2. Terms and conditions for trial fishing for the following year**

5.2.1. The Committee recommended that the terms and conditions for trial fishing remain the same as in the previous years. Trial Fishing is addressed in Article X, paragraph 4 of the Convention. In general, any trial fishing intention needs an application and trial fishing plan to be

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approved by the Scientific and Technical Committee. No Party has applied for trial fishing to the Scientific and Technical Committee in 2016.

## **6. Other Issues and Recommendations**

6.1. Future Meetings of the Scientific and Technical Committee.

6.1.1. The next meeting of the Committee will be held via email exchanges as they have from 2010. The Party that will host this meeting (expected to be Japan) shall be determined at the Annual Conference.

## **7. Report to the Annual Conference**

7.1. The Chair of the Scientific and Technical Committee will convey the Scientific and Technical Meeting Report to the Annual Conference.

## **8. Closing Remarks**

8.1. Thank you, all participants

## Appendix 1

### List of Participants

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No name was provided by China.

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## Appendix 2

### **20<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Committee of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea**

Virtual Meeting hosted by the United States  
14-25 September 2015

#### **Agenda**

1. Opening
2. Appointment of the Rapporteur (United States)
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Discussion of Science Issues
  - 4.1 Update catch and effort statistics.
  - 4.2 Review results of trial fishing.
  - 4.3 Review results of research cruises.
  - 4.4 Review the status of the Aleutian Basin pollock stocks.
  - 4.5 Factors affecting recovery of the stocks.
  - 4.6 The effects of the moratorium and its continuation.
  - 4.7 Methodologies to determine Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) and Allowable Harvest Level (AHL).
  - 4.8 Recommendation on AHL.
  - 4.9 Research plans.
5. Discussion of Enforcement and Management Issues
  - 5.1 Violations of the Convention.
  - 5.2 Terms and Conditions for Trial Fishing for next year.
6. Other Issues and Recommendations
7. Report to the Annual Conference
8. Closing Remarks

Appendix 3: Table of Pollock catches in the Bering Sea.

Table 1. All-nation historical catch of pollock from the Bering Sea, in metric tons, 1977-2015

Year	Olyotorskiy-Karagin (W of 170W)	Navarin Region (E of 170W)	Donut Hole	Bogoslof	Aleutian Region	Eastern Bering Sea	Total
							Bering Sea
1977	265,000				7,625	978,370	1,250,995
1978	417,000				6,282	979,431	1,402,713
1979	546,000				9,504	935,714	1,491,218
1980	825,000				58,156	958,280	1,841,436
1981	1,133,000				55,516	973,502	2,162,018
1982	976,000				57,978	955,964	1,989,942
1983	1,006,000				59,026	981,450	2,046,476
1984	252,000	503,000	181,200		81,834	1,092,055	2,110,089
1985	134,000	488,000	363,400		58,730	1,139,676	2,183,806
1986	297,000	570,000	1,039,800		46,641	1,141,993	3,095,434
1987	349,000	463,000	1,326,300	377,436	28,720	859,416	3,403,872
1988	475,000	852,000	1,395,900	87,813	30,000	1,228,721	4,069,434
1989	345,000	684,000	1,447,600	36,073	15,531	1,229,600	3,757,804
1990	582,000	232,000	917,400	151,672	79,025	1,455,193	3,417,290
1991	326,000	178,000	293,400	264,760	78,649	1,217,301	2,358,110
1992	282,000	315,000	10,000	160	48,745	1,164,440	1,820,345
1993	288,000	389,000	1,957	885	54,074	1,198,790	1,932,706
1994	204,000	288,900	NA	556	53,224	1,197,224	1,743,904
1995	79,000	427,300	Trace	264	60,184	1,169,614	1,736,362
1996	34,000	753,000	Trace	389	26,597	1,102,579	1,916,565
1997	30,000	735,000	Trace	163	24,721	1,036,789	1,826,673
1998	25,000	719,000	Trace	8	22,053	1,058,288	1,824,349
1999	46,000	639,000	Trace	1	965	889,561	1,575,527
2000	15,000	507,000	Trace	29	1,174	1,019,067	1,542,270
2001	25,000	526,000	0	61	788	1,247,305	1,799,154
2002	8,000	370,000	0	22	1,134	1,331,416	1,710,572
2003	14,600	411,200	0	24	1,653	1,491,356	1,918,833
2004	6,200	424,500	0	0	1,150	1,493,394	1,925,244
2005	4,400	446,800	0	0	1,622	1,483,398	1,936,220
2006	3,900	462,500	0	0	1,736	1,486,414	1,954,550
2007	62,600	587,900	0	0	2,519	1,354,091	2,007,110
2008	50,632	507,127	0	9	1,277	990,314	1,549,359
2009	26,052	328,517	0	46	1,729	810,821	1,167,165
2010	43,352	319,543	0	176	1,285	810,195	1,174,551
2011	37,189	336,690	0	173	1,208	1,199,066	1,574,326
2012	26,300	390,040	0	79	975	1,205,371	1,622,765
2013	29,800	358,900	0	57	2,964	1,270,732	1,662,453
2014	15,100	330,600	0	427	2,375	1,297,409	1,645,911
2015*	4,700	161,000	0	727	698	831,737	998,862

**Sources of Data**

Reported by the Parties to the Convention

\*US data through 18 July 2015, Russian data through 21 July 2015

# Statistic areas in the Bering Sea

