

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

September 16-19, 2002
Moscow, Russia

Final: 19 September 2002, 13:00

1. Opening of the Conference.

The Chairperson, Dr. Boris Kotenev, the director of the Russian Federal Research Institute of Fisheries and Oceanography, welcomed the delegations of the Parties to the Convention on The Conservation and Management of the Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea to the Seventh Annual Conference. Chairperson invited the representative of the Chinese Government, the Republic of Korean Government, Japanese Government, Polish Government, and United States Government to present opening Statements.

2. Welcome Address and Statements of the Delegates

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

3. Election

3.A. Chairperson

Dr. Boris Kotenev was elected as Chairperson of the Seventh Annual Conference.

3.B. Vice-Chairperson

Dr. Richard Marasco (U.S.) was elected as Vice-Chairperson.

3.C. Chairman of Scientific and Technical Committee

Dr. Richard Marasco – (U.S.) was elected the Chairman of the Scientific and Technical Committee.

3.D. Rapporteur

Dr Stepanenko (Russia) was appointed as rapporteur
LCDR Phillip Thorne (U.S.) was appointed as rapporteur.

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 S&T Committee Meeting of September 16— September 18 2002. The S&T Committee produced the S&T Report, which was distributed separately to the parties. Items discussed during the S&T Meeting were highlighted, which are fully described in the Report of the S&T Meeting. A summary of the S&T Committee's AHL discussion follows:

Japan and Korea presented historical data on the harvest of Pollock from the CBS from 1984-1991, and China and Russian will continue work to supply the necessary data.

Korea requested clarification of the reporting period for trial fishing. To remain consistent with reports from previous years, the reporting period will be from the previous conference to

the current conference.

China reported two vessels were sent to the Donut Hole in 2001, with no catches or locations of Pollock. China also noted the scale of trial fishing was not consistent to produce good results.

United States, Japan and Russia provided an overview of all survey activity conducted. The results from these activities are reported in the S&TC minutes.

United States reported no reliable biomass for the Aleutian Basin. No survey in the Aleutian Basin region was conducted in 2002. The most recent year for which a survey was conducted was in 2000. A survey of the Bogoslov I. (Convention Specific Area) was completed in 2002. The US proposed use of the Bogoslov I biomass as a proxy in accordance with the Convention. Korea also noted there is insufficient data to independently estimate the Convention area biomass. They noted comprehensive research to collect necessary data was necessary, and offered to host an intersessionary meeting on this issue.

There is no definitive answer to what factors are responsible for the low biomass of Pollock in the Convention area. Coastal states will prepare documents identifying management measures taken within their EEZ's and append them to the conference documents.

Russia has detected the first signs of rebuilding of Pollock stocks in high seas off the Cape Olutorskiy area of the Bering Sea, the first time this stock of Pollock has been detected in 10 years. It was suggested that the appearance of this stock could be attributed to the moratorium, although Korea questioned whether this appearance was due to the moratorium.

Japan suggested AHL be established in any circumstance, and proposed the methods used by the United States in the North Pacific be used as an approach to develop AHL. Japan suggested a method for calculating ABC, included as attachment 8 to the S&TC report. There was consensus that the ABC should be calculated using the methodology similar to the one proposed by Japan, or an improved one. Korea recommended the AHL can be set by consensus, if consensus is not reached then the procedures of Article VII of Part I of the Convention must be followed. The intersessional workshop will be an appropriate forum to have a complete discussion of AHL and ABC issues.

An overview was presented by the comprehensive research working group on activities for calendar year 2001-2002. Russia, Japan and the United States had vessel research days available and agreed to coordinate their research efforts in the CBS. Results of the research are reported in the S&TC report. It was proposed the work of this group continue. An inquiry was also made of Parties for research vessel time in 2002-2003, and the US indicated it was willing to take the lead in coordinating the research activity in the CBS. Dates of research vessel availability should be reported to all Parties 2-3 months in advance.

All parties should begin work immediately in developing a cooperative research plan for 2003, due to the short time period that exists for already planned research activity. All parties agreed there is a need for a comprehensive survey of the Convention area for AHL determination. Korea volunteered to host a meeting in Spring 2003 to develop a 2003 survey plan. There was also a discussion of integrating trial fishing with research activity. This issue will be made as an agenda item for the intersessional workshop proposed in Spring 2003. Agenda items for this workshop should be submitted to the Chairman of the S&TC by the end of November.

China reported an intention to engage in trial fishing activities in Nov-Dec 2002. It is the opinion of China that trial fishing can be an important part of research. The United States provided an enforcement report that was submitted with the S&TC report. Korea suggested that trial fishing rights should be transferable between parties. The United States would not support a request for more than 2 trial fishing vessels per month in the Convention area, or the transfer of trial fishing rights between Parties. The terms and conditions for trial fishing in

2003 will be the same as 2002.

The United States indicated it has put together a small amount of information on its NOAA regional website as an example. A demonstration page was submitted with the S&TC report. All parties agreed there are advantages with the development of a website. The remaining issue is what information should be made available to the public, and determination of appropriate information for the website. The US will provide a password that will allow access to the website by one member of each delegation.

The Conference agreed to adopt the Report of the Scientific and Technical Committee

6. Action Items

6.A. The Review of Scientific Data and Conservation Measures of the Coastal States Related to Pollock Fishing in the Bering Sea

- 6.A.1 Japan inquired of the United States if there are any regulation requiring a minimum net mesh size, and if there is a minimum size limit for retention of commercially harvested pollock. The United States responded there is no mesh size regulation, however 4.5 – 5 inches is typically used, as there is no market for small fish. There is no minimum size limit regulation, however the targeted size of pollock set by the processing industry is 600-1200 grams.
- 6.A.2 Japan inquired of the United States if bycatch of small pollock was a concern, and the United States answered that it was a concern, but as there is no market for those fish, fishermen try to avoid catching them.

6.B. The Establishment of a Plan of Work for the Scientific and Technical Committee

The United States suggested using the S&TC report to develop the plan of work.

6.C. The Establishing of the Terms and Conditions for Trial Fishing in 2003

- 6.C.1 The United States proposed the conditions for trial fishing for 2003 be identical to the 2002 conditions, consistent with the recommendation of the S&TC report.
- 6.C.2 Korea re-iterated their proposal made in the S&T Committee that parties which do not intend to conduct trial fishing be allowed to transfer their trial fishing rights to Parties that intend to conduct trial fishing. Additionally, Korea is willing to impose a catch limitation scheme for trial fishing, asserting that this would be more conservative than the current trial fishing plan. All parties will work on incorporating trial fishing into the comprehensive research plan at the Spring 2003 intersessionary meeting.
- 6.C.3 China stated trial fishing is different than commercial fishing, and is a vital part of scientific research. The scale of trial fishing should be expanded and encouraged. The data and results of trial fishing should be shared with all Parties. This will result in the Parties obtaining more effective data on the status of pollock stocks.
- 6.C.4 The United States is aware of the benefits and value of trial fishing, and is also aware of how trial fishing can be used in a scientific fashion. The integration of trial fishing information into any scientific assessment presents serious problems. Those problems have not been adequately addressed by this body. The United States, as in the past, cannot support the transfer of trial fishing rights from one party to another, and the reasons for this position have been passed at previous annual conferences and there is no need to repeat those reasons.
- 6.C.5 The Chairman noted at the scientific meeting in Seattle, detailed information on trial fishing were presented. In view of those detailed discussions in Seattle, the terms and conditions of trial fishing in 2003 should be the same as 2002, and the suggestions on trial fishing made by

Korea and China be discussed at the working group meeting to take place in Spring 2003 in Korea.

- 6.C.6 The United States supports the Chairman's comment, and the United States would entertain changes to the rules associated with trial fishing provided the usefulness of trial fishing in scientific research is clearly documented, and a comprehensive research plan established. Very stringent requirements would have to be imposed. These conditions are no more stringent than conditions imposed when several fishing vessels work together to evaluate the status of a stock. One of the features commonly associated with a comprehensive research plan is that fishing vessels occupy specified and fixed survey stations. All Parties should take it upon themselves to point out to their fishing communities that to be useful to science, very stringent requirements need to be followed. The United States has struggled with using commercial fishing vessels for scientific research in the US EEZ for several years. The United States will entertain this issue if it is developed in its full extent.
- 6.C.7 Korea appreciates the United States willingness to re-consider the terms and conditions of trial fishing in the context of a comprehensive research plan.
- 6.C.8 The Chairman proposed to make the terms and conditions for trial fishing in 2003 the same as 2002. However, the 2003 workshop in Korea can recommend new terms and conditions for trial fishing in a comprehensive research plan. If recommendations are suggested, Parties to the Convention will be contacted to act on recommendations in a timely manner. All Parties agreed.

6.D. The Establishing of the Allowable Harvest Level

- 6.D.1 The United States commented that this body is dealing with a depleted resource and it should be concerned with conservation. With all delegates aware of the status of the pollock resource, the United States strongly believes the AHL be set equal to zero. Furthermore, all fishermen from all nations Party to this convention have all shared in the grief of having fishing quota set at zero or very low levels and areas closed to fishing.
- 6.D.2 Japan is fully aware of the need for conservation and agrees that the preservation of the stock is important, but equally important is rational use of the resource. In the S&TC meeting Japan proposed ABC. Japan believes that all the countries interested in preservation of the stock also need a hope they will be able to fish that resource. It is Japan's wish that an AHL be established based on ABC figures. Japan agrees with the United States on the status of the stock, but would like to set a minimal AHL, even if it does not allow commercial fishing.
- 6.D.3 The Korean delegate representing Pollock fishing industry made a statement, which is included as Appendix 5.
- 6.D.4 China stated the result of 10 years of moratorium is very clear, the pollock resource has not recovered. Flexible or alternative measures, such as setting a minimum AHL to allow Parties to allow fishermen to come to the Convention area are necessary. It has been China's experience that fishing in an area can actually stimulate stock reproduction. Conversely, when fishing vessels leave an area for an extended period of time, often fish stocks are discovered to be gone when fishing vessels return. Therefore, the proper fishing in the Convention Area would be positive to the stock production in the Convention Area.
- 6.D.5 Poland is of the opinion that AHL for the pollock stock be established taking the precautionary approach into account, and establishing AHL at a minimum level will have no harm on the stock. Poland supports the Japanese proposal of establishing AHL based on ABC.
- 6.D.6 The Chairman noted 4 parties proposed AHL at a low level, two parties proposed setting AHL at zero, and since consensus is not reached the procedure of Annex I of the convention should be applied. All Parties should recognize the Convention was established prior to the

entry into force of the 1995 Straddling Stocks agreement, consequently the nations of this table are in a better position than they would be if this issue were controlled by the Straddling Stocks agreement. Under that agreement, coastal states would establish the rules for fishing for pollock in the CBS, and no vessel of any state would be able to fish the CBS. Therefore, all Parties should understand this Convention enables all Parties to consider opening up fishing possibilities once the stock recovers.

- 6.D.7 Japan recommended setting AHL at a very low level, close to zero as a symbolic measure. Japan understands the United States position on setting AHL at zero, but requests a symbolic level of AHL.
- 6.D.8 At the meeting of the S&TC, Parties to the Convention agreed to Japan's proposal to determine an ABC for pollock stock in the Aleutian Basin.
- 6.D.9 Japan believes that, basing on above ABC volume, with the due consideration to the reasonable promotion of conservation, management and the optimum use of pollock resources and for the sake of further cooperation among the member states, aimed at achieving goals of the Convention, Parties should set scientifically sound quota as AHL. This very quota should be established no matter how small and unworthy of interest to the fishing industry it may be. The Convention countries should now and in the future strive to verify the effectiveness of moratorium as a measure to manage resources, as well as rationality of continuing moratorium itself. No effort should be spared to reveal the causes why, in spite of long term present moratorium, recovery of the stock did not occur.
- 6.D.10 The Chairman brought all Parties attention to paragraph 4, article 10 of the Convention. Per this article, establishment of any AHL would preclude trial fishing.
- 6.D.11 Japan commented they view AHL and trial fishing equally important, and this is why the adoption of AHL was suggested.
- 6.D.12 Per Annex I of the Convention, AHL was set at zero.

6.E. The Establishment of the Individual National Quotas

Since the AHL for 2003 was set at a zero level, no individual national quotas (INQ) were established.

6.F. The Adoption of Appropriate Conservation and Management Measures Based upon the Advice of the Scientific and Technical Committee

Since the Chairman for S&T Committee stated that no new recommendations were forwarded by the S&T Committee, all the decisions regarding regulations and measures which were made last year at the 6th Conference, were adopted.

6.G. Trial Fishing Plans

- 6.G.1 China will send fishing vessels for trial fishing purposes during March-December 2003 and will notify the U.S. Coast Guard when details of the operations are known.
- 6.G.2 Korea will also conduct trial fishing activity in 2003 in conjunction with a comprehensive research survey. Details will be discussed at the Spring 2003 workshop, and the survey may be conducted in the summer vice winter.
- 6.G.3 Japan noted it is unlikely Japan will conduct any trial fishing, however if a concrete plan is developed all Parties will be notified.
- 6.G.4 Russia plans on conducting trial fishing in the next year.
- 6.G.5 The United States has no plans for trial fishing next year. The United States noted that in the

past, Parties should have appropriate documentation for trial fishing available at the annual conference.

6.H. Reception of Reports Relating to Measures Taken to Investigate and Penalize Violation of the Convention

Report was discussed at the S&TC meeting, and was not re-addressed.

6.I. The Consideration of Matters Related to the Conservation and Management of Living Marine Resources other than Pollock in the Convention Area

No comments

6.J. Meeting Observers

The Parties agreed to the same observers rules for 2003 that were used in 1998-2002 (See Report of the Second Annual Conference 1997 Part 6.J.10).

7. Eighth Annual Conference

7.A. Time and Location

United States offered to host the Eighth Annual Conference in Portland Oregon, the week of September 15.

7.B. Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson

7.B.1 Dr Jim Balsiger was elected chairperson

7.B.2 Takashi Mori was elected vice-chairperson

8. Other Business

8.A Re-evaluation of current convention

8.A.1 Korea has proposed two items under this agenda to promote the goal of the Convention. The first item, "Discussions of the Convention issues," may focus on integrating and reevaluating all scientific findings that have been collected during the last decade and make a summary report that includes highlights of key accomplishments from scientific activities. The next step would be to compare the scientific information in the Convention with the highlights obtained. The final step would be to make a review report on this issue. Korea expects that this issue be discussed at the Spring 2003 workshop in Korea.

8.A.2 The United States agrees that the integration of scientific findings should be an agenda item for the Spring workshop.

8.B Establishment of intersessional activities

Korea considers that the second item, "The establishment of an intersessional activity," was smoothly reflected during the Scientific and Technical Committee meeting.

9. Closing Statements

The closing statements of the Parties are provided in Appendix 8.

Appendix 2 -- LIST OF DELEGATIONS

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Press Release

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

September 16-19, 2002 Moscow Russia
JOINT PRESS RELEASE
Final, 19 September 2002

Representatives from the six Parties to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea met in Moscow, Russia and continued their cooperative efforts to conserve and manage pollock stocks in the Convention Area.

The Seventh Annual Conference held under terms of the Convention took place 16-19 September 2002. The Conference was chaired by Dr. Boris Kotenev from Russia. The Parties to the Convention, the Russian Federation, Poland, the People's Republic of China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States of America, agreed on the conservation and management measures and reviewed scientific information on the status of pollock stocks. The Scientific and Technical Committee agreed on a plan of work for 2003.

The Seventh Annual Conference determined that the biomass of the pollock resources in the Convention Area has not reached the criteria described in the Convention. Accordingly, by the Convention rules, the annual harvest level of pollock in the Convention Area was set at zero. In the absence of a harvest level, trial fishing by vessels of the Parties to the Convention will be permitted in 2003. The Parties agreed to strengthen scientific efforts and cooperation.

In 2003, member States plan to conduct a coordinated research effort in the Central Bering Sea and the Aleutian Basin. This provides a unique opportunity to study pollock distribution and migration patterns in the Bering Sea. Comprehensive scientific information such as this will allow the Parties to make better informed decisions on the conservation and management of the pollock resource.

The United States of America invited the Parties to start the Eighth Annual Conference in September 15, 2003 in Portland, Oregon.

Appendices:

1. Opening Statements
2. Delegation Lists
3. Plenary Agenda
4. Trial Fishing Terms and Conditions for 2003
5. Statement of the Korean Fisheries industry
6. Press Release
7. Closing Statement