

**REPORT OF THE 15th ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF
POLLOCK RESOURCES IN THE CENTRAL BERING SEA
22 September - 6 October 2010**

Final: 6 October 2010

1. Opening of the Conference

1.1. Dr. James Balsiger (United States) opened the 15th Annual Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea on 22 September 2010. It is the first Annual Conference to be conducted via electronic mail (e-mail).

1.2. The description of the “virtual” Annual Conference process can be found at: http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/REFM//CBS/15th_annual_conference.htm

2. Opening Statements of the Delegates

Opening statements were provided by Japan, Korea, Poland, and the United States (Appendix 1).

3. Elections

3.1. Dr. James Balsiger, Regional Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Region (United States), was elected as Chair of the Annual Conference. Mr. Paul Niemeier (United States) served as Rapporteur. Ms. Patricia Livingston (United States) served as the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Committee Meeting

3.2. The following individuals served as the “voice” for each Party for e-mail exchanges: China (Mr. Liu Xiaobing), Japan (Mr. Toshiyuki Kubodera), Republic of Korea (Mr. Jeongseok Park), Poland (Ms. Aleksandra Kordecka), Russia (Dr. Alexandr Glubokov), and United States (Mr. Doug Mecum).

3.3. A list of the Annual Conference participants is provided in Appendix 2.

4. Adoption of the Agenda

The Agenda, as adopted, is provided in Appendix 3.

5. Report of the Scientific and Technical Committee

5.1 The Report of the 15th Scientific and Technical (S&T) Committee Meeting is provided in Appendix 4. The final Report was distributed to the Parties on 25 August 2010.

5.2. Documents submitted for the S&T meeting can be found at the following website:
http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/REFM//CBS/15th_annual_conference.htm

6. Action Items

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

The United States and Russia provided fisheries catch statistics and research cruise results. These were included in the S&T Committee Report. The United States and Russia also provided information on conservation and management measures taken in their exclusive economic zones.

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

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

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

There was no consensus among the Parties on how to set the AHL. Therefore, the process prescribed by Article VII and Part 1 of the Annex to the Convention was followed. Consequently, the Parties agreed that the AHL for 2011 be set at zero.

6.4. Establishment of the Individual National Quotas.

Since AHL was set at zero, no individual national quotas could be established. Japan pointed out the necessity of adopting procedures to allocate individual quotas if an AHL was adopted.

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

There was no action on this item. Conservation and management measures will remain at status quo at this time.

6.6. Establishment of the Terms and Conditions for Trial Fishing in 2011.

6.6.1. The Parties agreed to adopt the same terms and conditions for trial fishing in 2011 as agreed to at the 2010 Annual Conference.

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

6.7. Trial Fishing Plans for 2011.

None of the Parties announced trial fishing plans for 2011. Korea stated that it does not currently have any trial fishing plans for 2011, but will announce its plans in the future should it decide to conduct trial fishing.

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

No new information was presented.

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

No other living marine resources were discussed.

6.10. Meeting Observers.

There was no discussion on this topic.

7. Future Annual Conferences

7.1. Consideration of virtual meetings.

7.1.1. The Parties agreed to continue the virtual meeting process for 2011.

7.1.2. Japan welcomed the first virtual meeting in 2010 because of cost effectiveness and realization of easy participation for people concerned.

7.1.3. The Parties agreed to continue the practice recommended at the 2009 Annual Conference that the Party hosting the Annual Conference distribute available scientific information at least 45 days in advance of the Annual Conference, if possible. It was Poland's view that 45 days is the appropriate time lag between when the scientific report becomes available and the start of the Annual Conference. Japan did not insist on 45 days, but welcomed receiving new scientific information sufficiently in advance of the Annual Conference.

7.2. 16th Annual Conference.

7.2.1. Japan agreed to host the 16th Annual Conference and the Scientific and Technical Committee Meeting in the virtual meeting format in 2011. The United States will continue to support the Annual Conference on the Alaska Fisheries Science Center's web site and to provide rapporteur services for the S&T Committee Meetings and plenary meetings of the Annual Conference, as needed.

7.2.2. Korea expressed its willingness to host the 17th Annual Conference in 2012.

7.3. Election of the Chair and Vice Chair.

According to the 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 16th Annual Conference and will inform the Parties of the names of the Chair of the S&T Committee Meeting and the 16th Annual Conference in advance of the meetings.

8. Other Issues

There were no other issues.

9. Closing Statements

9.1. The final report was adopted by consensus. There were no closing statements.

9.2. This was the first time the virtual meeting process has been used for the Annual Conference. The Chair thanked all Parties for participating in this process.

9.3. Japan and Russia expressed their appreciation to the United States and the other Parties for completing the Report of 15th Annual Conference.

9.4. Korea expressed its sincere appreciation for the United States' devotion to conducting this virtual Annual Conference successfully for the first time. In addition, Korea kindly requested that the United States assist the next hosting Party of the Annual Conference to arrange the next virtual meeting and to conduct it successfully.

Appendices

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

**15th ANNUAL CONFERENCE 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
22 September - 6 October 2010**

Opening Statements

**Opening Statement of the Delegation of Japan
27 September 2010**

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, Japan would like to express its gratitude to the Government of the United States of America, for its sincere effort to host the 15th Annual Conference of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of the Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea, as the first virtual meeting.

The proposal to change the Rules of Procedure was adopted in the last annual meeting and the first virtual meeting is implemented with a view to saving cost of holding the annual meeting and exchanging information efficiently. It is very helpful for Japan to make many officials and researchers concerned participated in the process of annual meeting easily and effectively with a sufficient time for consideration. In this sense, Japan welcomes the virtual meeting a lot and greatly appreciates to U.S. as host country. This is exactly a great example of new style of international conference.

Japan will cooperate with Mr. Balsiger, the chair of the conference, to have a fruitful annual meeting of CBS throughout this year's virtual meeting.

Apart from the above comment, Japan would like to reaffirm the basic position concerning the conservation and management of the Pollock resource.

As is known to every member, it has already passed for 17 years since the moratorium on commercial fishing has been in active as the most strictest measure of conservation of pollock resources in the Central Bering Sea, where once harvested more than 1.4 million tons of Pollock at its best season. However it is regrettable that we have not found any sign of recovery of the pollock resources in the area yet.

The objective of the convention is to establish an international regime for conservation, management and optimum utilization of Pollock resources in the Convention Area. However, there is no symptom of recovery and the objective of the Convention is not achieved with indistinct reason.

In such circumstances, it is not too much to say that fishermen in Japan, who face difficulties because of the prohibition of fishing activities in the Convention Area and suffer from the depression of domestic fish market this year, have lost their interests in the catch in the Convention Area and consequently in the Convention itself. It is thought that the same situation may happen in the other fishing countries.

Now, doubting the significance of the Convention because of no achievement of recovery of pollock resources and also no support by fishermen, Japan should reaffirm two points below.

Firstly, as Japan has insisted that the member countries adopt the AHL on a rational scientific basis, whatever it is small, in order to get back to the objective of the Convention and restore the support from fishermen among the member countries.

Therefore it is of importance for member countries to continue to cooperate to the utmost extent to gather and share scientific information, which is vital for the establishment of AHL.

Secondary, it is required to take necessary procedures to resume fishing promptly in case of recognizing recovery of pollock resources.

Thank you for your attention.

**Opening Statement of the Delegation of the Republic of Korea
22 September – 6 October 2010**

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen

To begin with, Korea would like to express its sincere appreciation to the U.S. Party's devotion to arranging this kind of virtual Annual Conference successfully for the first time.

When it comes to the Korean situation, seventeen years have passed since fishing operations have been suspended in the Central Bering Sea in 1993. In the meantime, Korean fishermen have provided their cooperation in the all-out effort to conserve and manage pollock resources, patiently awaiting their recovery so as to resume fishing operation. However, recovery rate during the last seventeen years has been seriously disappointing. In addition, there is no clear evidence that pollock resources in the Central Bering Sea will reach 1.67 million metric ton level as determined in the Conference. As well, the Annual Conference has not unfortunately provided a clear vision for resuming fishing operations.

Therefore, the Korean fishermen have been seriously concerned about whether the moratorium is in fact contributing to recovery of pollock resource, or whether the 1.67 million metric tons determined in the Convention is too ideal. In this respect, it is strongly recommended that we focus on how to rebuild pollock resources in the Convention Area, and discuss and share all the information on scientific evidences available among all Parties and then we can resume fishing operation thanks to the long-standing patience from moratorium.

In closing, I would highly expect fruitful outcomes during this virtual meeting and would like to reiterate Korea's commitment to work closely with all Parties to the Convention.

Thank you.

**Opening Statement of the Delegation of Poland and the European Union
22 September – 6 October 2010**

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour and a great pleasure for Poland and the European Union to participate in the Bering Sea Convention Annual Conference in this unusual setting. We very much hope that this virtual meeting will be as successful and productive as a face-to-face meeting ensuring a wide participation of Contracting Parties while limiting unnecessary travel.

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 due time and will launch the procedures for the EU to apply for accession.

The European Union is committed to RFMOs and the key role they play in the long term conservation and sustainable use of stocks and the importance of strengthening and modernizing these organizations. We are equally committed to using the latest scientific advice on the status of stocks as a basis for responsible resource management.

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

Thank you.

**Opening Statement of the Delegation of the United States
22 September – 6 October 2010**

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It has been an honor and a privilege for the United States to host the 15th Annual Conference of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea, virtually. This may be the first virtual meeting of a regional fisheries management organization. We encountered a few technical challenges that delayed our schedule slightly, but overall, we feel this has been a very successful process. For that, the United States would like to express sincere gratitude to the Parties for their cooperation, participation, and flexibility.

The United States believes that the Convention is an important international instrument in conserving and managing pollock resources in the high seas area of the Bering Sea. While it is disappointing to all Parties that we have not yet seen the rebuilding of these stocks, the United States believes the provisions contained within the Convention are still the best and most appropriate for the management and conservation of these stocks.

The United States believes the virtual process has been beneficial in continuing to uphold the principles of the Convention while allowing for cost savings to the Parties. We welcome the opportunity to assist other Parties in hosting these meetings virtually in the future and will continue to maintain the current website for the Annual Conference to allow the Parties to submit and share documents and scientific information regarding the Convention and its resources.

Thank you.

**15th ANNUAL CONFERENCE 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
22 September - 6 October 2010**

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**AGENDA FOR THE
15TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE 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
22 September – 6 October 2010

1. Opening of the Conference
2. Opening Statements of the Delegates
3. Elections (Chair, Vice-Chair, Chair of Scientific & Technical Committee, and Rapporteur)
4. Adoption of the Agenda
5. Report of the Scientific & Technical Committee
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 upon 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 marines resources other than Pollock in the Convention Area
 - 6.10 Meeting observers
7. Future Annual Conferences
 - 7.1 Consideration of virtual meetings.
 - 7.2 16th Annual Conference (virtual meeting)
 - 7.3 Election of Chair and Vice-Chair
8. Other Issues
9. Closing Statements

**15th ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
TO THE CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT
OF POLLOCK RESOURCES IN THE CENTRAL BERING SEA**

**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL
COMMITTEE**

1-31 August 2010 Virtual Process Meeting

Final Version 25 August 2010

1. Opening of the Meeting

Patricia Livingston (United States) served as the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Committee Meeting. A list of the participants is provided in Attachment 1.

2. Appointment of Rapporteur

Loh-Lee Low (United States) served as rapporteur to compile the S&T report. The following individuals served as the contact point from each party for email exchange – Japan (Toshiyuki Kubodera), the Republic of Korea (Jeong Suk Park), Poland (Jerzy Janusz), the Russian Federation (Alexander Glubokov) and the United States (Loh-Lee Low). The People's Republic of China did not participate in the email exchanges.

A copy of the 2009 S&T report can be downloaded from:

http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/REFM//CBS/Docs/14th%20Annual%20Conference/CBS_2009_Conf-report_Steve.pdf

3. Adoption of Agenda

3.1: The agenda (Attachment 2) was adopted.

4. Discussion of Science Issues

4.1. Update catch and effort statistics

4.1.1. The United States and Russia provided updated pollock catch statistics for the Bering Sea, by region (See Table 1. in

<http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/REFM//CBS/Docs/15th%20Annual%20Conference/Tables-1-5.pdf>

4.1.2. No pollock fishery was conducted in 2010 in the central Bering Sea Convention Area.

4.1.3. Japan asked for explanations for the decrease in pollock catches in the U.S. and Russia EEZs after 2007 and the forecast for catches after 2010.

Russia responded that the main reason for decreasing catches is Navarin pollock stock status. Only one pollock year class produced between the years 2003-2009 is above average strength. It is the 2006 year class. Russia expects that the total biomass of Navarin pollock will increase in 2011 when the 2006 year class fully recruits into the fishing biomass.

The United States explained that declining catches of pollock in the Eastern Bering Sea from 2007-2009 reflected declining exploitable biomass of the stock (6.4 million t in 2007, 4.7 million t in 2008, and 4.6 million t in 2009). This declining trend is the result of 4 years of consecutive weak year classes (2002-2005) that entered the population. The total allowable catch (TAC) was

set by the United States at 1.394 million t in 2007, 1.0 million t in 2008, 0.815 million t in 2009 and 0.813 million t in 2010. The 2006 year class strength has been estimated to be above the long term average recruitment level and is expected to raise the exploitable biomass level after 2009 when the fish recruit more fully into the fishery.

Projecting forward, the United States anticipates that the exploitable biomass of the Eastern Bering Sea pollock stock will increase as the 2006 and 2008 year classes, which are above average strength, recruit into the exploitable biomass. The 2007 year class strength is below the long term average level which would moderate the expected increasing trend of the exploitable biomass. Figure 3 of “Update on Status of Pollock Resources in the eastern Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, and the Bogoslof Island Regions through 2009” submitted by the United States shows the time series of year class strengths and the trajectories of the biomass levels.

[http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/REFM//CBS/Docs/15th%20Annual%20Conference/US_pollock_assmt09-1.pdf]

4.2. Review results of trial fishing

4.2.1. There was no trial fishing reported by the Parties for 2010.

4.3. Review results of research cruises

4.3.1. The United States did not conduct a pollock research cruise in the Bogoslof area in 2010. The last survey there was in 2009. From last year’s S&T report, “the 2009 survey showed an estimated pollock spawning stock biomass of 73 million fish or 110,000 mt in the Specific Area of the Convention—the lowest level on record”. The fish were primarily ages 7-10 from the 1999-2002 year classes. .

4.3.2. The United States is conducting a pollock stock echo-integration trawl survey by the NOAA ship *OSCAR DYSON* in the eastern Bering Sea in summer 2010. This cruise will also enter the Russian EEZ in the northern Bering Sea to survey pollock. The United States is also conducting its standard trawl survey on the eastern Bering Sea shelf using two chartered fishing trawlers. The results of all these surveys are not yet available for this meeting as the cruises are still ongoing.

4.3.3. Japan presented a report on “Walleye pollock bycatch in salmon gillnet survey in the central Bering Sea, 1981-2010”. The report indicated that no pollock bycatch was encountered in the survey in 2009 and 2010. Japan commented in the report that “in spite of more than 10 years of moratorium, there has been no evidence of recovery of stock abundance or new recruitment of young fish in the area”.

[http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/REFM//CBS/Docs/15th%20Annual%20Conference/Japan%20Gillnet%20bycatch2010_-0730-1.pdf]

4.3.4. Russia submitted a report on 3 research cruises: (a) cruise aboard R/V *PROFESSOR KAGANOVSKI* to the Northwestern Bering Sea in August - September 2009, (b) cruise aboard SRTM *ARCTIC LEADER* to the Northwestern Bering Sea and Petropavlovsk-Komandorsk subzone in September - December 2009, and (c) cruise aboard RS *SOKUR* to the Kommandor Islands in April 2010.

[http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/REFM//CBS/Docs/15th%20Annual%20Conference/Russian_Federation_Studies_2010.pdf]

4.4. Review the status of Aleutian Basin pollock stocks

4.4.1. No new information was provided.

4.5. Factors affecting recovery of the stock

4.5.1. Japan asked if there have been any changes in the conservation and management measures taken by the United States and Russia to deal with the decrease of catch of pollock in their areas.

Russia responded that the total allowable catch (TAC) of pollock in the western Bering Sea was decreased from 428,000 t in 2009 to 338,000 t in 2010.

The United States responded that the TAC of pollock was also reduced to reflect the declining exploitable biomass of the eastern Bering Sea pollock stock, as explained in Agenda Item 4.1.3.. In addition, the TACs for pollock in the Aleutian area were set at 19,000 t between the years 2007-2010, substantially below their acceptable biological catch levels. The resultant catches were even lower (1,277 to 2,488 t for 2007-2009). The United States has not authorized a directed fishery on pollock in the Bogoslof Islands area for as long as the Convention has been implemented and bycatches have been minimal.

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. No new information was provided.

4.7.2. The Committee recommended that the methods remain as agreed at the 14th Annual S&T Meeting in 2009.

4.7.3. Japan further supported its position at the 13th Annual Conference for setting ABC in the Convention Area.

[<http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/REFM//CBS/Docs/13th%20Annual%20Conference/Report%2013th%20Conference%209-2008.pdf>]

4.8. Recommendation on AHL

4.8.1. No new information was provided.

4.8.2. Using the indirect method described in the Convention Annex Part I (b), the extrapolated biomass for the Convention area is 183,333 t. This is not large enough to trigger an AHL as determined by the Convention Annex Part 1 (c).

4.8.3. Japan and Korea reiterated their position that the Parties should set an AHL, even if it is small.

4.8.4. There was no consensus among the Parties on how to set AHL and therefore the process must follow that established in the Annex of the Convention.

4.9. Research Plans

4.9.1. The United States plans to conduct next Bogoslof Island pollock survey in 2011 and welcomes foreign participants. The United States will also continue to conduct bottom trawl surveys on the eastern Bering Sea Shelf in 2011. In the summer 2011, midwater pollock assessment survey by the United States in the Bering Sea is not currently planned.

4.9.2. Russia plans to conduct the next Navarin Basin and western Bering Sea pollock surveys in April-December 2011 with at least two vessels.

5. Discussion of Enforcement and Management Issues

5.1. Violations of the Convention

5.1.1. No new information was provided.

5.2. Trial fishing terms and conditions for 2011

5.2.1. No new information was provided.

5.2.2. The Committee recommended that the terms for trial fishing in 2011 remain as discussed at last year's meeting.

6. Other Issues and Recommendations

6.1. Future Meetings of the Scientific and Technical Committee

6.1.1. The virtual meeting process employed this year will continue in 2011.

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. This was the first time the virtual meeting process has been used for the S&T Meeting. The Chair thanked all for participating in this process.

8.2. The participants thanked the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Committee for leading the meeting.

Attachment 1. List of Participants

China

No one from China participated in the S&T exchange.

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Attachment 2. Agenda

Agenda for the Scientific and Technical Committee Meeting 15th Annual Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea Virtual Meeting hosted by the U.S. Party August 2010

1. Opening of the Conference
2. Appointment of the Rapporteur (U.S. will undertake this task)
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 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 the following year
6. Other Issues and Recommendations
7. Report to the Annual Conference
8. Closing Remarks