

Record of the 10th Scientific Working Group of the Preparatory Conference of the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (formerly the Multilateral Meeting on Management of High Seas Fisheries in the North Pacific Ocean)

Juneau, Alaska

30-31 August 2012

Meeting Report

1. Opening

The 10th Scientific Working Group of the Preparatory Conference of the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (formerly the Multilateral Meeting on Management of High Seas Fisheries in the North Pacific Ocean) (SWG10) was opened at 1:30 pm on Thursday, 30 August 2012 by Dr. Phillip Mundy from the United States. Dr. Phillip Mundy welcomed all participants and gave opening remarks. A list of meeting attendees is contained in Attachment 1.

2. Appointment of Chair and Rapporteur

Dr. Phillip Mundy was elected Chair of the 10th Meeting of the Scientific Working Group (SWG10) and Mr. Ryan Adams (United States) agreed to serve as Rapporteur.

3. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed, amended, and adopted (Attachment 2). A document list was provided to the participants (Attachment 3).

4. Discussion on the Development of Encounter Protocols on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems in the North Pacific Fisheries Commission Convention Area

4a. Dr. Loh-Lee Low (United States) presented the report of the intersessional working group created to develop encounter protocols on VMEs in the Convention Area. Given little follow up to an information gathering request, Dr. Low determined that the future of this exercise would be best conducted through the guidance of the SWG.

4b. Several SWG10 participants presented reports or made comments regarding research and analyses on encounter protocols:

- i. Canada: No encounter protocol that is nationally accepted was tabled, but Canada stated that some encounter protocols are being implemented on a regional basis, and additional information could be provided on request. Canada also circulated a science based encounter protocol framework for corals and sponges to all participants (SWG10/WP3/Ca). Canada will also try to provide information from a recent collaborative survey conducted with the US on the Cobb Seamount in time for the next SWG meeting.
- ii. Japan: Presented two reports on the results of the bottom environmental survey of the Emperor Seamount Chain trawl fishing grounds in 2010 and 2011. With one exception, no coral "communities" were observed by Japan. (SWG10/WP4/J and SWG/WP5/J)

- iii. Russia: Reported on its research of the Koko seamount, using specialized fishing gear to allow for gentle collection of bottom sentiments and organisms. Corals were identified to species (SWG10/WP11/R).
- iv. United States: Presented a report of a National Marine Fisheries Service workgroup on encounter protocols on VMEs in the NPFC Area, and suggested adding two groups of VMEs for monitoring: hydrocorals and sponges (SWG10/WP2/US). Gaps in data continue to be an important impediment to establishing fishing rules.
- v. Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC), as a registered observer, commented on the essential nature of the surveys and research provided by Japan and Russia as well as forthcoming research by the United States and Canada. DSCC noted that the conclusions of the NMFS working group described above were consistent with previous findings of the joint NAFO/ICES Working Group on Deepwater Ecology, and the best method for determining encounter protocols may be a zonal approach.
- vi. Data handling and data sharing: There was discussion on the best forum and formats to share research data, and participants were reminded of a data sharing protocol that was developed at the 2007 SWG that might be useful to further data sharing goals. The interim secretariat re-distributed this document to all participants (Attachment 4).

4.c Next Steps:

Parties agreed that data deficiencies make it difficult to answer the five questions tasked to the SWG by the NPFC. Multiple suggestions were tabled by participants on the next steps for the development of Encounter Protocols on VMEs (SWG10/WP8/US and SWG10/WP3/Ca). Japan stated that as a first step, the common understanding on what constitutes a VME for conservation purposes should be considered. The United States does not believe that this should be the first step. In light of current data deficiencies, Canada suggested that a logical next step may be to provide data in advance of the next SWG meeting to allow for peer review discussion and identify gaps in the data. After this data has been provided and peer reviewed, the SWG will be better equipped to make progress on the five questions it has been charged with answering.

5. Discussion on the Interim Measures on VMEs and Marine Species

Canada presented a report on identification of VMEs and assessment of impacts on seamounts in the Convention area that are the site of directed sablefish fisheries by Canadian vessels (to be formally presented to the interim secretariat at a later date). Canada will share the results of a recent research effort in the Cobb Seamount area with the other SWG participants.

Japan presented the Report of Interim Measures for Bottom Fisheries in the Emperor Seamounts (SWG10/WP7/J).

Korea operated two commercial trawl vessels in NPFC convention area (Emperor Seamounts). From 2010-2012, there was 100% scientific observer coverage on the commercial trawl vessels. According to the observer data, 5-10% of total hauls included bycatch of VMEs (cold water corals). The bycatch weight of VMEs (cold water corals) ranged from a min of 0.3 kg to a max of 2.5kg when VMEs were caught in haul. Korea adopted a 50 kg threshold of bycatch of VMEs by

commercial trawl vessels. Korea will submit the data to the interim secretariat during the intersessional period.

In 2010 and 2011, Russian fishing companies did not apply to conduct bottom fishing within the convention area, and Russia has no information on the operations of the Russian fleet within the convention area for 2010 and 2011 (SWG10/WP13/R). Russia submitted the updated list of authorized vessels to the Interim Secretariat (SWG10/WP14/R). The SWG did not discuss this paper.

In 2010 and 2011, no US fishing vessels applied to conduct bottom fishing operations within the Convention area (SWG10/WP9/US).

6. Stock Assessment Workshop for North Pacific Armorhead

Japan gave a presentation on the Stock Assessment Workshop for North Pacific Armorhead, which was held in Shimizu, Shizuoka, Japan from 27-29 March 2012. Several points regarding this presentation were discussed, including the potential influence of oceanographic factors on the poor relationship between recruitment and stock size, the lack of current and virgin biomass estimates for Armorhead and the difficulties encountered while attempting to develop these estimates, and the influence of temporal and spatial variability in fishing effort and migration patterns on CPUE indices.

Several participants agreed that any input from the SWG regarding efforts to limit the catch of Armorhead within the Convention Area should be limited to scientific advice.

7. Discussions on the development of a 5 year science work plan

There was broad agreement that a five year science work plan would be beneficial for the SWG. The contents of the five year science work plan will be drafted at a later date and Canada volunteered to take a leadership role in developing a draft plan.

The following points of contact were provided to the Rapporteur:

Canada: Mr. Jonathan Terkel; Jonathan.Terkel@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

China: Dr. Tian Siqun; sqtian@shou.edu.cn

Japan: Dr. Masashi Kiyota; kiyo@affrc.go.jp

Republic of Korea: Dr. Seok-Gwan Choi; sgchoi@nfrdi.go.kr

Russian Federation: Dr. Aleksei Baitaliuk; baitaluk@tinro.ru

Chinese Taipei: Mr. Ming-Fen Wu; mingfen@ms1.fg.gov.tw

United States: Dr. Loh-Lee Low; loh-lee.low@noaa.gov

The development of a five year work plan is not intended to stop work currently underway and will not have any impact on the activities of the SWG until adopted.

8. Follow-up on how to respond to FAO on VME data in the NPFC Convention Area

As FAO did not specifically ask the NPFC Interim Secretariat to submit data, no data should be provided at this time. Pending clarification of process by NPFC Chair, there was agreement within the SWG to provide the data via the Interim Secretariat if and when FAO does request the data at a later date.

9. Discussion on collaborative research opportunities

Further discussion of this item will be deferred pending development of the five year science work plan discussed in section 7, at which time collaborative research opportunities may present themselves.

10. Planning for the next SWG meeting

The SWG agreed to meet for 1.5 days in calendar year 2013, either at the 4th or 5th Session of the Preparatory Conference for the NPFC. A final decision on the timing of the meeting will be determined via e-mail correspondence between SWG participants. Canada will work to have the draft five year science work plan completed by March in case the SWG does meet at Prep Con 4. A final decision will need to be communicated by the Interim Secretariat to China by the end of December 2012 to allow adequate time for meeting planning if Prep Con 4 is chosen.

The intersessional group should endeavor to correspond via e-mail and then meet in person as required between SWG meetings. There was a variety of views on the required frequency of these meetings. Further direction may be required from the Prep Con.

11. Other matters

DSCC, acting as a registered observer, wished to bring to the attention of the meeting of the SWG a set of slides prepared by Dr. Chris Yesson of the Zoological Society of London on habitat suitability for octocorals on the Emperor Seamount chain.

12. Adoption of the record of the meeting

The report of the meeting was adopted by consensus at 3:50 pm on 31 August 2012.

13. Closing of the meeting

Participants thanked the Chair, the Rapporteur, the Interim Secretariat, and the host government for their preparations, arrangements, and running of the meeting.