

**The First Scientific Small Working Group on North Pacific Armorhead
for the North Pacific Fisheries Commission**

Tokyo, Japan

6-7 August 2014

Hakuyo Hall, Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology

Meeting Report

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Japan made opening remarks welcoming participants. A list of participants is included as Attachment 1.

2. Appointment of Chair and Rapporteur

Dr. Tomio Miyashita (Japan) was appointed as Chair and Mr. Michael Clark (USA) was selected as the Rapporteur.

3. Adoption of Agenda

The draft agenda was reviewed and adopted (Attachment 2).

4. Investigation of the Methodology and Data Needs of a More Appropriate and Practical Stock Assessment for North Pacific armorhead

The following presentation was made:

Issues of applying major stock assessment methods for North Pacific armorhead (SSWG-NPA1/WP2/J and Attachment 3). This presentation was made by Dr. Takehiro Okuda of Japan. Much of the nature and applications of the data for stock analyses were reviewed at a workshop during 27-29 March 2012 in Shimizu, Japan. Dr. Okuda reviewed the applicability of the data against various stock assessment techniques/models used in population analyses. His review indicated that there are substantial deficiencies of the data to apply to the stock assessment techniques. Thus, the quality, completeness and longer time sequences of the data on the fisheries and biological knowledge of the stocks need to be improved before advanced stock assessment models could be applied.

Participants discussed the grouping of data quality standards for applying various levels of stock assessments analytical techniques. The U.S. and Korea classifies them into 6-7 data quality groups.

The presentation by Dr. Okuda (above) illustrates that conventional stock assessment techniques may not yet be applicable for North Pacific armorhead. The available catch history data tend to fall in the lowest level of data quality.

5. Evaluate the Interim Measures and Voluntary Measures Suggested by Participants of SWG 12 (see Section 4 of the Report of SWG12)

A U.S. participant (Dr. Loh-Lee Low) proposed interim measures to regulate the North Pacific armorhead fisheries (SSWG-NPA1/WP3/US and Attachment 4). This proposal suggested that the North Pacific armorhead fisheries over the Emperor Seamounts should be (a) closed to fishing, or (b) for the parties to work out a rational management system to manage the fisheries.

Presentation: A “check list of potential and existing management options for North Pacific armorhead in the Emperor Seamounts area (SSWG-NPA1/WP5/J)” was presented by Dr. Masashi Kiyota of Japan. Participants commented on the options but could not reach agreement to determine the most applicable ones; although there was much discussion about what would not work.

Korea indicated that its additional voluntary measure includes extending the closed fishing season from 3 months (October to December) to 5 months (October to February) taking into account the spawning season (November to February) of North Pacific Armorhead for the purpose of protecting spawning stock biomass and stock recovery.

6. Explore the Interim Management Measures Including Evaluation of Their Effect for Sustainable Use and Recover of North Pacific Armorhead (i.e. time-closures, area-closures, catch limits, and any other single and/or combination of measure)

A presentation of SSWG-NPA/WP4/J was made by Dr. Kiyota. This discussion paper was drafted by Dr. Yonezaki et al. The paper suggested a “traffic light” coloring system to describe how effective interim measures adopted by Japan could be coded for their effectiveness to regulate North Pacific armorhead, splendido alfonso and VMEs. There were some follow up discussions whether some of these interim measures (deployment of observers, setting of annual catch limits and time/area closure) would be more effective for management than using other interim measures.

General discussions of Agenda Items 4-6 taken together. Here are some general points made:

1. Data -- There is still considerable gap in the data and research on North Pacific armorhead. The data gaps would have to be filled in due time so that lower tiers of assessment analyses can be made. According to the U.S. presentation (Attachment 4), one tier of data analysis that may fit North Pacific armorhead is using Data Tier 6 to average catches over a current productivity regime. Participants discussed not to “over-read” the information content of the data for management, but to use the data gaps as important research planning tools to improve the data base.
2. A depletion analysis of the CPUE data presented by Japan shows some promise for estimating stock biomass on fished seamounts but it is still difficult to relate the biomass estimates to TACs. There was considerable debate whether the use of only two high recruitment years would bias high the total allowable catches for management. An alternative is to use a longer time series of recruitment data that covers a wider range of high and low recruitment years to run the analyses.
3. The U.S. suggested that adaptive techniques could be applied for assessment and management of North Pacific armorhead including using salmon management/assessment strategies (i.e., establishing pre-season harvest and spawning biomass levels).
4. Include stakeholders – A meeting between scientists, managers and the fishing industry would be useful for setting North Pacific Armorhead management measures.

7. Other Matters

Japan requested information from Russia concerning a Russian fishing vessel in the Emperor Seamounts that was observed in June of 2014. The Interim Secretariat will follow up with Russian colleagues and distribute any information, as necessary, to all NPFC Participants.

8. Planning of the next SSWG North Pacific Armorhead Meeting (if appropriate)

Not recommending another meeting at this time, the SWG/SC may have additional guidance on whether or not an additional meeting is necessary.

9. Adoption of the Record of the Meeting and Report to the SWG

The report was adopted by participants.

10. Closing of the Meeting