

**Report of Seventh Meeting of the Scientific Working Group  
of the High Seas Bottom Fisheries in the North Pacific Ocean**

**Bellevue, Washington, U.S.A.**

**3-4 August 2009**

**1) Opening**

Mr. William Gibbons-Fly of the United States of America opened the Seventh Meeting of the Scientific Working Group at 10:00 am on 3 August 2009 and welcomed all delegations. Participants from Japan, the Republic of Korea (Korea), the Russian Federation (Russia), and the United States (U.S.) attended the meeting (Attachment 1).

**2) Appointment of Facilitator and Rapporteur**

Dr. Loh-Lee Low of the U.S. was selected as facilitator and Ms. Kate Mulvaney of the U.S. agreed to serve as rapporteur.

**3) Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was reviewed and adopted (Attachment 2). In addition, a list of documents was provided for the meeting (Attachment 3).

**4) Review and Follow-up of the Outcomes of the 6th Meeting of the Scientific Working Group**

Participants reviewed the outcome of SWG6 and discussed the following outstanding subjects from SWG6:

**a) Footprint Data**

The Interim Secretariat presented additional footprint data for the years 2000-2008 (SWG7/WP3), provided by fishing vessels. Korea provided amended footprint data and requested to have that data incorporated into the data holdings. Additional information on the list of authorized vessels from the NPO website was introduced and discussed by Japan (SWG7/Ref2). Russia reported no updates to the information provided previously. The U.S. continued to have no commercial fishing in the area.

Japan asked why the number of authorized vessels shown on the website for Russia and Korea is more than the number of vessels currently fishing. Russia clarified that although 26 Russian vessels applied for authorization, only three of those vessels were authorized by the Russian Federal Agency of Fisheries to operate outside of the Russian EEZ in the year 2009. Korea replied that although nine vessels have been authorized, only two of them are currently operating in the area. Participating States agreed to check the authorized fishing vessel list and report any updates to the Interim Secretariat. Japan stressed that regardless of the number

of authorized fishing vessels, each Participating State should implement measures to achieve the reduction of fishing mortality rate of splendid alfonsin in the North Pacific reflected in their respective submissions to the Interim Secretariat.

**b) Previous Observer Data**

Japan presented preliminary scientific observer data for the Emperor Seamounts-Northern Hawaiian Ridge (ES-NHR) during 2005-2008 (SWG7/WP6/J). The U.S. asked that Annex 5 referred to in the report also be distributed (SWG7/Ref3). Korea had no observer data to be introduced at the time of the meeting, but reported that observer data collection will begin next year. Russia distributed and presented a preliminary report of its recent observer operations (SWG7/WP12/R).

**c) Stock Assessment Collaboration**

It was acknowledged that the purpose of the proposed stock assessment collaboration was to identify the availability of data relevant to a stock assessment of North Pacific armorhead and for Participating States to assemble available data for eventual analysis. The U.S. presented a report entitled *Database Inventory for Armorhead Seamount Fishery in U.S. EEZ Waters: U.S.-Observed Foreign Permit Fishery and U.S. Research Cruise Activities* (SWG7/WP8/US). The paper included information on bottom longline research conducted by the U.S. from 1985 to 1993 as well as trawl data collected by U.S. observers on Japanese trawl vessels that were issued permits to fish in the U.S. EEZ from 1978 to 1984. After some discussion, the U.S. clarified that the objective of its working paper was to identify available data sources including historical sources for future stock assessments.

Russia presented information from its national armorhead fishery database for the ES-NHR (SWG7/WP10/R). The bulk of information was historical and collected from commercial fishing vessels during the period from 1968 to 1977. Additional information was collected on research cruises from 1969 to 1986.

Korea presented its inventory of armorhead data (SWG7/WP11/K) which describes the characteristics of Korean vessel, fishing equipment, fisheries and biological data as well as data from a scientific survey conducted in 2004.

**d) Integrated Research Plan**

The U.S. presented its draft integrated seamount research plan (SWG/WP7/US) which it proposed as a basis for a future armorhead stock assessment. The five priority information

areas originally proposed at SWG1 held in Busan, Korea and focused on in the report are: 1) life history information; 2) ecological information; 3) population dynamics information; 4) harvesting information; and 5) fishery independent information.

Japan presented SWG7/WP9/J on the preparation and reconfirmation of existing data for potential armorhead stock assessment. The paper reviewed fishing position, fishing effort, scientific survey, acoustic survey, size and biological data which were discussed in addition to possibilities for future research and a new scientific observer program.

The U.S. initially distributed a figure with a process and timetable for a proposed collaborative armorhead stock assessment, SWG7/Ref 4 (originally drafted at SWG6). The U.S. suggested that the timeline introduced (SWG7/Ref 4) was too ambitious and needs adjusting. A separate working group of stock assessment experts was suggested by the facilitator and agreed to by the participants in order to develop a more reasonable timetable and to review available information in terms of appropriate stock assessment modeling at a workshop of the SWG that will immediately precede SWG8.

Each Participating State agreed to identify a stock assessment point of contact to participate in developing an assessment plan.

Japan was concerned that comparable data must be provided by all Participating States who are actively fishing. All agreed to provide available information by seamount. Korea proposed the development of data templates. Following further discussion, the SWG adopted data templates for bottom fishing data submission (Attachment 4). Participants agreed that these templates should be completed and submitted to the Interim Secretariat by no later than one month prior to SWG8.

## **5) Discussion of Definition of Encounter with VMEs**

The facilitator referred to the proposals for amending provisions of the Interim Measures relating to the Encounter Protocol for NWPO that were discussed at SWG6, but on which no agreement was reached.

The U.S. described the ongoing discussion within NAFO to reconsider the current threshold criteria provisions as those standards are relevant to the criteria being used by Participating States that are actively fishing.

Various interpretations of UNGA Resolution 61/105 were discussed. Differences in interpretation remain and were not resolved. The U.S. and Japan both acknowledged that implementation of encounter protocols will likely be discussed in greater detail at the United

Nations in September (2009).

**6) Discussion on the Interim Measures on VMEs and marine species**

Outstanding issues regarding the implementation of Interim Measures were discussed, but consensus was not reached. The U.S. again raised the issue of application of the interim measures to the entire high seas area of the North Pacific Ocean, but noted that this was a topic for discussion in plenary.

**7) Other matters**

- a. The Participating States agreed to task the Interim Secretariat with developing an active fishing vessel list from 2008 onwards.
- b. With respect to the Russian report on observer operations, the U.S. and Japan asked Russia to describe the activities of the vessel *Tiburón* in the Northeast Pacific Ocean in light of U.N. Resolution 61/105 as well as to provide additional information on species composition. Russia informed the Participating States that the vessel was conducting research activities under the National Research Program and that the report contains preliminary data that has not yet been fully analyzed as the vessel is still at sea. Russia agreed to offer a full report of the data at SWG8.

**8) Adoption of the record of meeting**

The report of the meeting was adopted by consensus at 5:15 pm on 4 August 2009.

**9) Closing of meeting**

Participating States thanked the Facilitator, the Rapporteur, the Interim Secretariat, and the host government for their preparations, arrangements, and running of the meeting.