



North Pacific Fisheries Commission

NPFC-2025-SR

Secretariat Report to COM09

March 2025

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Report on the Commission's Activities

Secretariat

Abstract

This paper summarizes the activities of the NPFC since COM-08 (April 2024) to February 2025.

Introduction

In accordance with Rule 6 of the Rules of Procedure, this report highlights the Commission's intersessional activities and work programs carried out during the 2024/2025 period. Significant aspects included the implementation of harvest control rule for Pacific saury, finalizing a chub mackerel stock assessment and reporting of catch, discussions to advance the provision of science advice on all key stocks (to be considered at COM09), a full year of implementing the new reporting provisions from the transshipment Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) 2024-03, extensive analysis of compliance data (e.g., VMS and transshipment reports), standardization of Secretariat assessment reports (fisheries overview, transshipment, high seas boarding and inspection and, vessel monitoring scheme), implementation of the new compliance monitoring scheme (CMM 2024-13), and implementation of new accounting software for 2024/2025.

Activities

I. Overview of Meetings

List of the Commission Meetings held during the reporting period

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|
| Commission and subsidiary bodies (hybrid) | FAC06 TCC07 COM08 SC09 | 13 April 2024 9-12 April 2024 15-18 April 2024 17-20 December 2024 |
| Joint SC-TCC-COM SWG MSE PS meetings (virtual) | SWG MSE PS06 | 13-14 February 2025 |

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|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| TCC Meetings (virtual) | SWG PD and Ops (held back to back) | 20 June 2024 31 July 2024 18 September 2024 23 October 2024 20 November 2024 15 January 2025 |
| SC Meetings | SWG NPA-SA | 24 May 2024 (virtual) 20 August 2024 (virtual) 16 October 2024 (virtual) |
| | TWG CMSA | 22-23 April 2024 (virtual) 17-20 July 2024 (hybrid) 28 February-4 March 2025 (virtual) |
| | WG NSAM | 27-29 June 2024 (hybrid) 2 August 2024 (virtual) 17 October 2024 (virtual) |
| | SWG VME | 20 June 2024 (virtual) 27 September 2024 (virtual) |
| | SWG Milestones | 12 July 2024 (virtual) |
| | Joint SWG Pelagics | 3 July 2024 (virtual) 6 November 2024 (virtual) |
| | SSC BF-ME | 9-11 December 2024 (hybrid) |
| | SSC NFS | 22-23 August 2024 (virtual) |
| | SSC PS | 26-29 August 2024 (virtual) 11-16 December 2024 (hybrid) |

II. Commission and Subsidiary Body Meeting

- **7th Technical and Compliance Committee meeting:** The 7th meeting of the Technical and Compliance Committee (TCC07) took place in hybrid format in Osaka on 9-12 April 2024. Major topics discussed during the meeting included: an overview of the implementation of the transshipment measure; a new way forward for the NPFC Compliance Monitoring Scheme; a new CMM to prohibit directed fishing and require reporting of anadromous species in the Convention Area; amendments to 12 CMMs, including transshipment, marine pollution, VMS, IUU and most species specific measures; a resolution on labor standards; cooperation with other organizations including the International Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Network; Only one vessel was proposed in the provisional NPFC IUU Vessel List and the 40 on the current were adopted by the Commission for 2024. Intersessional TCC SWG meetings took place to advance the proposal for the transshipment observer scheme and address issues related to the Interim NPFC Rules of Transparency for TCC, HSBI, serious violations, VMS reporting and the establishment of historic existing levels for fishing effort. TCC07 provided 25 recommendations to the 8th Commission meeting for their consideration.
- **6th Finance and Administration Committee meeting:** The 6th meeting of the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC06) took place in hybrid format in Osaka on 13 April 2024. The meeting was Chaired by Mr. Dan Hull (United States). FAC06 reviewed administration matters including updates on financial status, staffing levels, human resources approaches (e.g., insurance benefits), NPFC Secondment and Internship programs, external performance Review and implications for FAC. FAC06 reviewed and endorsed the financial status for 2022/2023, proposed budget for 2024/2025 and 2025/2026, budget forecast for 2026/2027 and 2027/2028, and the Secretariat's Work Plan for 2024/2025, all of which were recommended to the Commission for adoption.
- **8th Commission meeting:** The 8th meeting of the Commission took place as a hybrid meeting in Osaka, Japan from 15-18 April 2024 and was chaired by Mr. Shingo Ota (Japan). The Commission meeting was attended by around 140 participants from nine Members, a CNCP, and nine Observer groups. The Commission Meeting achieved the following:
 - Adopted subsidiary body meeting reports with recommendations: 8th Scientific Committee, 7th Technical and Compliance Committee and 6th Finance and Administration Committee including budgets for 2024/25 and 2025/26,

- Revised the Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) for Pacific saury including adopting an interim harvest control rule designed to help improve the status of the stock,
 - Agreed to updates to the transshipment CMM and committed to the further development of the transshipment observer scheme,
 - Updated CMMs for chub mackerel, bottom fisheries in the north-west and north-east Pacific Ocean, and vessel monitoring system,
 - Adopted a new CMM prohibiting directed fishing for, and retention of, anadromous fish (salmon),
 - Adopted a Resolution on labor standards on fishing vessels,
 - Agreed to proposals to deepen cooperation with other regional bodies, such as the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission and the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean,
 - Adopted the 2024 NPFC IUU vessel list, and
 - Members agreed to provide public access to Commission meeting documents in advance of the meetings.
- **9th Scientific Committee Meeting:** The 9th meeting of the Scientific Committee took place in Tokyo, Japan from 17-20 December 2024. It was chaired by Dr. Janelle Curtis (Canada). It was attended by the NPFC Members (Canada, China, European Union, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Chinese Taipei, the United States of America and Vanuatu) and observers from inter- and non- governmental organizations. The recommendations from the SSCs and TWG contributed to the Scientific Committee meeting which reviewed them and provided scientific advice to the Commission with respect to the management of fisheries resources and protection of marine ecosystems in the NPFC Convention Area. The SC revised its 5-year Research and Work Plans, addressed issues related to data collection, management and security, and discussed recent and future cooperation with other organizations to facilitate the implementation of the Work Plan. The SC reviewed the progress in assessments of the NPFC priority species, including providing advice on Pacific saury, chub mackerel and splendid alfonsino, and established a Small Working Group on Data (SWG Data) to develop a database for scientific data. The SC also reviewed reports from Members and partners on climate change impacts on NPFC stocks and marine ecosystems.
 - **Meetings of the Small Working Group on Management Strategy Evaluation for Pacific Saury (SWG MSE PS):** The SWG MSE PS held one meeting in a hybrid format since COM08, on 13-14 February 2025. It was led by Dr. Toshihide Kitakado (Japan) and Mr. Derek Mahoney (Canada) who represented the science and management sides, respectively. The SWG reviewed the interim harvest control rule (HCR) for Pacific saury as adopted by the Commission in 2024. As the next step to address the mid-term goal (3-5 years), the SWG discussed the development of candidate management procedures through an MSE process to meet the management objectives identified by

the Commission.

III. Meetings of SC's small scientific committees/technical working groups held since COM08

- **9th and 10th Meetings of the Technical Working Group on Chub Mackerel Stock Assessment (TWG CMSA)** took place in a hybrid format in Yokohama, Japan on 17-20 July 2024 and in a virtual format on 28 February-4 March 2025, respectively. The meetings were chaired by Dr. Kazuhiro Oshima (Japan). Participants reviewed Member's fisheries and research activities, discussed the Work Plan of the TWG CMSA, reviewed data for stock assessment and concluded the first stock assessment for chub mackerel. The TWG CMSA will continue to work intersessionally to improve data for stock assessment. It plans to update stock assessment of chub mackerel in summer 2025.
- **13th and 14th meetings of the Small Scientific Committee on Pacific saury (SSC PS)** were held in a virtual format on 26-29 August 2024 and in a hybrid format in Tokyo, Japan on 11-16 December 2024, respectively. The meetings were chaired by Dr. Toshihide Kitakado (Japan). Participants reviewed Member's fishery status including 2024 fishery, biological and environmental information relevant to Pacific saury, statistical data available for stock assessment, fishery-independent and fishery-dependent indices, stock assessment using "provisional base models" (BSSPM), new stock assessment models and climate change impact on Pacific saury. Based on the assessments conducted by Members, the SSC PS developed a stock assessment report and provided scientific advice on the management of Pacific saury fisheries. Additionally, the SSC PS provided input into the interim harvest control rule for Pacific saury as requested by CMM for Pacific Saury. The SSC PS agreed to a workplan and timeline for 2025 including the development of age-structured stock assessment models with better projection skills.
- **5th Small Scientific Committee on Bottom Fish and Marine Ecosystems (SSC BF-ME)** was held in Tokyo, Japan from 9-11 December 2024 and chaired by Dr. Chris Rooper. The SSC BF-ME reviewed Members' bottom fishing and research activities including progress towards a stock assessment for splendid alfonsino and North Pacific armorhead and research on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VME). The SSC BF-ME proposed revisions of the conservation and management measures for bottom fisheries and protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems, including a recommendation for two new area closures for bottom fisheries in the northwestern Pacific Ocean. It also updated species summary for North Pacific armorhead, splendid alfonsino and sablefish, developed a new species summary for skilfish, and reviewed the progress in VME

identification and assessment of the impact of bottom fisheries on VMEs.

IV. Other intersessional activities

1. Intersessional Small Working Group meetings for TCC and SC were held to discuss issues for respective committees and suggestions from those meetings were forwarded to each parent committee for consideration.

V. Operation of the Secretariat

1. Secretariat's Work Plan

The Secretariat's 2024/25 Work Plan was presented and approved at COM08. This Work Plan was to provide guidance on implementation and monitoring of Secretariat-related activities to be conducted in 2024. The 2025/2026 Work Plan will be presented at the FAC07 meeting for consideration by Members (NPFC-2025-FAC07-WP10).

2. Interns and Secondees

The Commission approved two interns to the Secretariat during the 2024/2025 period. Mr. Shinnosuke KATO (Japan) is working as an intern starting in November 2024 and Mr. Jiyu WANG (China) is working as an intern starting in February 2025.

The Commission agreed to the secondment of Mr Jumpei HINATA (Japan) who started with the Secretariat in May 2024.

3. Performance Review of NPFC Staff

In accordance with Staff Regulations 5.3 and 5.4, a performance review of all staff members was conducted for the 2024/2025 fiscal years and the results were reflected in the budgets.

4. Staff Issue

There were no changes in staff during the past fiscal year.

VI. Financial and administration matters

1. Status of Member contributions 2024/2025

The Status of Members' contributions for 2024/2025 is noted in the financial statement and the draft budget estimate prepared by the Secretariat (NPFC-2025-FAC07-WP01). The 2024/2025 Member contributions were received from all Members. In one case, a small account receivable remains of 116,241 JPY.

2. Selection of legal advisors: As agreed to at COM08, the Secretariat engaged two legal advisors through advertised processes.

- A legal advisor on international fisheries law related to Secretariat activities was engaged on an as-needed basis. Dr. Camille Goodman, currently working as an Associate Professor at the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS) was chosen out of 14 applicants of which four were interviewed. We have to date not had to consult with her as no specific issues have arisen that require advice at this time. She has been briefed on our activities that in the past required legal advice.
- A labor and social security attorney (*sharoushi*) has been engaged locally. Ms. Azusa Tanikawa of Kreston ProWorks has been engaged to provide advice on labor, social security and insurance issues. This includes the ability to make use of some aspects of the Japanese labor and social security system as well as introductions and support with private insurance companies.

3. Analysis of Secretariat functions

As directed by COM07, the Secretariat undertook an evaluation of key administrative functions and processes. Included in this analysis was the need to provide mandated insurance coverage under the staff regulations. This process included considering how other RFMO are addressing program delivery (e.g., WCPFC and SPRFMO), talking with their Secretariats and learning from their processes. A Consultants report was also commissioned that has been informative and shared with Members (NPFC-2024-FAC06-WP04) on Secretariat functions and consideration of future needs. A second consultancy that combines the evaluation of GS staff pay requested by COM07 with the consideration of how to provide mandated insurance was also undertaken. Extensive consultation was undertaken prior to this consultancy with other international bodies housed in Japan, as with insurance providers and government social insurance advisors, and research on local salary provisions. The proposed approach is outlined in NPFC-2025-FAC-WP04.

4. Annual Auditing

Tokoro Accounting Ltd. of Japan, as the Auditor for the Commission, completed their audit of the Secretariat's financial operations in March of 2025 based on the financial statements submitted by the Secretariat. As outlined in the 2024/2025 Secretariat workplan, the upgrade of our financial systems occurred in 2024/2025 with the implementation of financial accounting software QuickBooks. This approach is designed to prevent such a delay in the future. This document is available as an Information Paper (NPFC-2025-FAC07-IP01).

5. Financial Statement and Budget Estimates 2025/2026-2028/2029

NPFC-2025-FAC07-WP01, NPFC's budget and expense document, will be discussed in detail by the 7th Finance and Administration Committee

Proposed Budget Estimates for 2025/2026 – 2028/2029

The overall amount of the budgets proposed for 2025/2026 (just over ¥180 million) and 2026/2027 (just over ¥200 million) reflects an increase in budgeted amounts over the current level for 2024/2025 (of just over ¥170 million). Two changes that are identified are the proposed update and replacement of the fixed exchange rate, and transitioning the Commission meeting costs (currently around ¥20 million per year) to within the annual budget as opposed to solely the Working Capital Fund.

6. Secretariat documents

The Secretariat prepared documents for the SC09, TCC08, FAC07 and COM09 meetings as well as SSC, TWG and SWG meetings during the year. These documents include provisional agendas, meeting information papers and working papers as requested by the Commission for discussion at the meetings. The Secretariat, with the help of one of the interns (Mr. S. KATO) has drafted the NPFC Yearbooks for 2021-2022 and 2023. These will primarily be available on-line but limited numbers will be printed.

7. Enhancement of cooperation with other organizations

Based on direction from COM08, the Secretariat supported the signing of MOU between the NPFC Chair (Mr. Shingo OTA) and the Chairs of ISC (Dr. John HOLMES) and WCPFC (Dr. Josie TAMATE). These MOU join earlier agreements with NPAFC, PICES and SPRFMO. They have facilitated cooperation between Secretariats on best practices including facilitating development of common administrative processes.

8. First Performance Review of the Commission

The NPFC, through an intersessional decision-making process after COM06, agreed to conduct a performance review. This performance review report (<https://www.npfc.int/report-2022-npfc-performance-review>) was presented at COM07 with the decision that individual subsidiary bodies would review the recommendations and consider their status and implementation. COM08 noted the interest to track progress by updating comments from the subsidiary bodies and this is captured in a spreadsheet presented in NPFC-2025-COM09-IP09.

VII. Information Technology - Data Management System and Website Development

During 2024–2025, the Secretariat has made significant progress in data management by releasing and upgrading various online systems to support the Commission's initiatives.

Transshipment Reporting System

The Secretariat enhanced the Transshipment Reporting System by integrating a transshipment map, thereby increasing the system's visibility and facilitating Members' MCS activities. The notification function for both the offloading and receiving parties has also been improved, and further enhancements are planned. Additionally, an application programming interface (API) has been developed to facilitate the electronic transfer of transshipment data and is expected to be operational for the 2025 season.

Annual Reporting System Update

In line with newly enforced CMMs (CMM 2024-16 for Anadromous Fish, effective 24 July 2024, and CMM 2023-14 on Sharks, effective 26 July 2023), a new data entry section has been created for Sharks and Anadromous Species. The Secretariat will continuously work to align with the updated CMMs and meet the Members' requirements.

Chub Mackerel Catch Data Reporting System

Chub Mackerel catch data entry and display section has been developed as the new CMM CMM 2024-07 For Chub Mackerel entered into force on 1 June 2024. The Chub Mackerel catch data reporting system receives the monthly/weekly catch data by different gear types (Trawlers and/or Purse Seiners) and the system automatically transitions data entry from monthly to weekly once aggregate catches reach 60% of TAC.

Catch Data under Public Domain

New sections are available on the public domain to showcase the cumulative Pacific catch data for both Pacific Saury and Chub Mackerel. These can be accessed at:

- <https://www.npfc.int/chub-mackerel-cumulative-catch-public>
- <https://www.npfc.int/pacific-saury-cumulative-catch-public>

NPFC Meeting Page Update

Improvements have been made to the NPFC meeting document management section by introducing clear headings for Commission meetings. Additionally, meeting documents can now be searched by their posting dates under the "All Documents" section.

NPFC GIT Repository

The Secretariat established the NPFC GIT Repository for the TWG CMSA and SSC BFME and plans to extend its use to other Scientific Committee subsidiaries. After successfully

applying for the GitHub Nonprofit Plan, the Secretariat is now coordinating with GitHub to complete the transition. Ongoing support will be provided to Members regarding system usage, access facilitation, and technical assistance as needed.

Secretariat IT Infrastructure

With the Secretariat's transition to Microsoft Office, staff can now fully utilize the Microsoft Teams environment to enhance collaboration, including sharing documents through SharePoint. A local contractor has been engaged to review the Secretariat's IT infrastructure—assessing the status of network hardware, internet speed and reliability, and overall security measures.

VIII. High Seas Boarding and Inspection (HSBI)

In accordance with the Convention Article 7 and CMM2017-09 and its implementation plan, the High Seas Boarding and Inspection scheme was officially launched 1 April 2019. Currently six Members – Canada, China, Japan, Russia, Chinese Taipei and the USA have registered inspection vessels and authorities for inspection through the website and notified Members of their intention to conduct HSBI in the Convention Area. Reports of the inspections conducted by Members have been uploaded on the HSBI events website. A summary of HSBI activities can be found in NPFC-2025-TCC08-IP05.

IX. NPFC Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)

The NPFC Regional VMS entered into force as of 10 August 2021 with support of Members' FMC and became fully operational in January 2022. VMS data is transmitted by the Member's Fisheries Monitoring Centre to the contractor (CLS) and rendered useable, in the secure cloud, by the NPFC Secretariat and Members with an inspection presence. As required by paragraph 24 of the CMM (2024-12), the Secretariat will provide a report of the implementation of the measure for review at TCC08. This report may be found in NPFC-2025-TCC08-IP09.

X. Transshipment

The transshipment measure came into effect on 26 July 2023 and 2024 was the first full year of operations under the new reporting requirements. The measure has provided a significant new dataset to allow the Secretariat to conduct analyses on the activities in the Convention Area. 2024 saw some progress in the use of the online reporting application and the development of an API interface to facilitate electronic data submission. A full report on the implementation of the transshipment measure may be found in NPFC-2025-TCC08-IP08.

XI. International Liaison

In accordance with Article 21 of the Convention (Cooperation with Other Organizations and Arrangements), NPFC representatives attended several meetings relevant to the activities and objectives of the NPFC. Some attendance was virtual with many meetings being in the hybrid format.

- 1. PICES Annual Meetings (Honolulu, Hawaii):** The SM attended the PICES-2024 Annual Meeting which was held from 26 October – 1 November 2024. The SM took part, as a panelist, in the workshop on *Exploring international knowledge co-production: Lessons learned from international marine science organizations at the science-policy interface*. The workshop reviewed how knowledge generated by PICES had been used by its partners and what would be the potential ways of enhancing knowledge co-production. Also, SM took part in business meetings of PICES committees and working groups and contributed to updating the Framework for enhanced scientific collaboration between NPFC and PICES.
- 2. Regional Secretariats Network (RSN) and FAO COFI (Rome, Italy):** The ES attended the 10th RSN Meeting on 5,6 and 12 July 2024 as well as FAO COFI 8-12 July 2024. The meeting was attended by forty-seven of the RSN members and permanent observers, one invited expert organization and the Government of France. The meeting discussed in detail global policies and the role of the network in their implementation at the regional level and provided an opportunity to discuss best practices in the operations of the individual Secretariats including with partners with which NPFC has MOU.
- 3. Deep Sea Fisheries (DSF) Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting (virtual):** The ES and SM attended the 2nd meeting of the DSF PSC meeting on 14-16 January 2025. In 2024, the DSF project supported some NPFC activities, such as consultancy on climate change impacts on NPFC stocks and marine ecosystems and shark ID guide. In 2025, the project will collaborate with NPFC on further improvement of the shark ID guide and stock assessments for data-limited stocks.
- 4. 31st Annual Meeting of the NPAFC (virtual):** The ES and SM attended virtually the 31st Annual Meeting of the NPAFC in May 2024. They took part in the Committee on Enforcement and Committee on Scientific Research and Statistics, including reviewing the progress made on the Five-year Work Plan to implement NPAFC/NPFC Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC). The NPAFC proposed to co-host a joint workshop on interaction between fisheries and anadromous fish in the North Pacific high seas as a potential further collaboration between the NPFC and NPAFC.
- 5. 12th SPRFMO SC meeting (Lima, Peru):** Following the establishment of an MOU between NPFC and SPRFMO, SM attended the 12th SPRFMO SC meeting in Lima, Peru on 30 September – 5 October 2024. Although the two RFMOs do not overlap in their

Convention Areas, they share a lot of goals and, as relatively young RFMOs, are going through similar stages of development. SM learnt about the processes for stock assessment, science data management, observer programs and meeting logistics in the SPRFMO and reported to SC09 in December 2024. He also shared with SPRFMO his experience and best practices for SC project management, intersessional work, SC structure and roles of a science manager in supporting SC work.

6. Other Meetings

- CM attended the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum to provide an update on fisheries and activities in the NPFC Convention Area (Tokyo, 25 September 2024).
- The IMCS Network visited the Secretariat in January 2025 to review several projects being developed by the Network to assist RFMOs, including a Hub for IUU Vessel Lists.
- CM and CA attended virtually regular meetings of the Pan Pacific Fisheries Compliance Network, a forum to share issues of concern to Pacific RFMOs
- SM attended virtually intersessional meetings organized by the DSF project, i.e. Technical Meeting on 16 May 2024, and responded to surveys and requests.