



North Pacific Fisheries Commission

NPFC-2026-FAC08-WP03

Submitted by the Secretariat

Funding request for 2026 and update on the special project to conduct an assessment for Splendid Alfonsino and North Pacific Armorhead

Abstract: The intention of this document is to provide a progress report on the implementation of the project to assess the Splendid Alfonsino and North Pacific Armorhead stocks endorsed by COM08 in 2024 and request funding for 2026.

Progress report

In 2024, COM08 endorsed the proposal from SC08 to hire an expert in the use of data limited methods in stock assessment to assist the SWG NPA-SA to conduct an assessment of the Splendid Alfonsino (SA) and possibly the North Pacific Armorhead (NPA) stocks in the Emperor Seamounts. In 2025, COM09 reviewed the outcomes of the project and agreed with the SC recommendation to extend the project.

The Secretariat hired two experts (who worked collaboratively under a single contract) recommended by Members, Drs. Maite Pons and Ricardo Amoroso. The invited experts participated in three virtual meetings of the SWG NPA-SA and worked intersessionally in collaboration with Members as described in the workplan below. They drafted two reports on [Depletion model analysis for North Pacific armorhead in the Southern Emperor–Northern Hawaiian Ridge seamounts](#) and [Preliminary SS3 Results for Splendid Alfonsino](#), and presented them to SSC BF-ME06 in Nagoya, Japan on 8-10 December 2025.

Date	Task
May 2025	Review SSC BF-ME reports, SWG NPA-SA meeting summaries and other relevant documents
May	Attend the 1 st SWG NPA-SA intersessional meeting (virtual)
May-Jun	Guide the SWG lead in preparing the appropriate data (e.g. standardized CPUE data) and models that will allow development of an integrated stock assessment model (e.g. Stock Synthesis or alternative) for SA

Jun-Jul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide code for model fitting, displaying model outputs and specific advice to the SWG lead that can be used to parameterize the integrated model for SA, as well as to estimate the variability of the model outputs • Assist the SWG in developing and applying alternative assessment methods, such as individual based models and depletion estimates for NPA stocks
Jun-Jul	Attend the 2 nd SWG NPA-SA intersessional meeting (virtual) to review progress and collect feedback
Aug-Sep	Assist the SWG in developing these models into management advice for SA.
Oct	Attend the 3 rd SWG NPA-SA intersessional meeting (virtual) to review progress and collect feedback
Nov-Dec 2025	Prepare a consultancy report and present it to SSC BF-ME06 (in person)

The SSC BF-ME reviewed the reports and provided the science advice on NPA and SA to SC/COM ([Annex D of the SSC BFME06 report](#)). The SSC BF-ME developed a stock status summary and identified uncertainties and future work on stock assessment for NPA and SA. The SC Chair will present to COM10 the stock status of NPA and SA and a recommendation from SSC BF-ME to continue to hire external experts for one more year to support the work of the SWG NPA-SA in 2026.

Requested funding for 2025: 2,142,700 JPY.

Expenditures: 2,102,372 JPY, including 1,500,000 JPY consultancy fee and 602,372 JPY travel costs to attend SSC BF-ME06.

Funding request for 2026

The SWG NPA-SA assessed the NPA stock using depletion model and conducted preliminary Stock Synthesis 3 (SS3) model analysis for SA. As for the next steps for 2026, SSC BF-ME06 agreed to improve the depletion model for NPA and keep developing integrated model using SS3 for SA.

Following the agreements from SSC BF-ME06, SC10 recommended COM10 continue to hire invited experts to support the SWG NPA-SA meetings with the SA and NPA stock assessments (Scientific Activities and Projects, Annex M).

The **purpose** of this final phase of the project is, with the support from an invited expert(s), to conduct an assessment of the Splendid Alfonsino stock using integrated model and improve depletion model for the assessment of the North Pacific Armorhead stock.

Project Lead: Dr. Kota Sawada

Commencement and Completion Date: May – December 2026

Project Budget Summary: 2,477,000 JPY, including
consultancy: 1,827,000 JPY (21 days)
travel costs: 650,000 JPY (SSC BF-ME07 meeting in Kobe)

The funding is proposed to come from the Special Project Fund.

The **Terms of Reference** (TOR) for an invited expert(s) will be to:

- 1) Guide the SWG Lead in preparing the appropriate data, indices and models that will allow further development of SS3 model for SA.
- 2) Provide code for model fitting, displaying model outputs and specific advice to the SWG Lead that can be used to parameterize the integrated model for SA, as well as to estimate the variability of the model outputs.
- 3) Assist the SWG in improving depletion model for NPA.
- 4) Assist the SWG in developing these models into management advice for SA and NPA.

Form of results: The experts will present a report to SSC BF-ME07 which addresses the above Terms of Reference including code for model fitting and displaying model outputs.

Risks of project not achieving Project Objectives: Low for the priority TOR #1,2, and 3. TOR #4, developing this model into management advice for SA and NPA, may require more time.

Milestones and costs:

Date	Task	Costs
May 2026	Review SSC BF-ME reports, SWG NPA-SA meeting summaries and other relevant documents	87,000 JPY (1 day)
May	Attend the 1 st SWG NPA-SA intersessional meeting (virtual)	87,000 JPY (1 day)
May-Jun	Guide the SWG Lead in preparing the appropriate data, indices and models that will allow further development of SS3 model for SA	348,000 JPY (4 days)
Jun-Jul	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finalize CPUE standardization• Look at options for extending the time series using logbooks and other sources• Work to improve biological information for SA• Conduct sensitivity analyses on important processes and parameters	696,000 JPY (8 days)
Jun-Jul	Attend the 2 nd SWG NPA-SA intersessional meeting (virtual) to review progress and collect feedback	87,000 JPY (1 day)

Aug-Sep	Assist the SWG in improving depletion model for NPA, including expansion of the model to incorporate entire time series of catch and CPUE	435,000 JPY (5 days)
Oct	Attend the 3 rd SWG NPA-SA intersessional meeting (virtual) to review progress and collect feedback	87,000 JPY (1 day)
Nov-Dec 2026	Prepare a consultancy report and present it to SSC BF-ME07 (in person); Assist the SSC in developing these models into management advice for SA and NPA	650,000 JPY (travel costs)
	Total:	2,477,000 JPY

Project staff: Dr. Kota Sawada, SWG NPA-SA members, Secretariat (Science Manager and Data Coordinator).