



North Pacific Fisheries Commission

NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-Final Report

**2nd Meeting of the Small Scientific Committee on Bottom Fish and Marine
Ecosystems
REPORT**

7-9 December 2021

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North Pacific Fisheries Commission
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Ecosystems

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WebEx

REPORT

Agenda Item 1. Opening of the Meeting

1. The 2nd Meeting of the Small Scientific Committee on Bottom Fish and Marine Ecosystems (SSC BF-ME02) took place in the format of video conferencing via WebEx, and was attended by Members from Canada, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and the United States. The Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC) and the Pew Charitable Trusts (Pew) attended as observers.
2. The meeting was opened by the SSC BF-ME Chair, Dr. Chris Rooper (Canada), who welcomed the participants. The Science Manager, Dr. Aleksandr Zavolokin, outlined the procedures for the meeting. Mr. Alex Meyer was selected as rapporteur.

Agenda Item 2. Adoption of Agenda

3. The Chair explained that a number of proposed amendments to the agenda had been received:
 - (a) A new agenda item on the summary of the SSC BF-ME01 meeting should be added between Agenda items 2 and 3.
 - (b) Japan's acoustic survey was conducted in 2020, and there was no acoustic survey in 2021. Consequently Agenda Item 3.3 should be updated to reflect the correct year of the survey.
 - (c) Agenda Item 3.4.3 Update on Japan's maturity data should be moved to Agenda Item 4.2 as the maturity data concern splendid alfonsino (SA), not North Pacific armorhead (NPA).
 - (d) Regarding Agenda Item 4.2.1 Yield per recruit analysis update of SA, the Small Working Group on NPA and SA (SWG NPA-SA) has agreed to conduct collaborative analyses on yield per recruit and spawner per recruit analyses and this topic will be discussed as part of Agenda Item 6.1.3. Therefore, Agenda Item 4.2.1 can be removed.
 - (e) A new agenda item on the overview of sablefish management should be added between 5.2 and 5.2.1.
 - (f) Agenda item 7.2.2 Review and recommendation of data used to identify VME (the flow

chart from SWG VME) should be discussed prior to Agenda Item 7.1.1 Update on developing a quantitative definition of VMEs.

- (g) A new agenda item for the description of the eastern NPFC VME identification guide should be added between Agenda Items 7.2.1 and 7.2.2.
- (h) It would make more sense to swap the order in which Agenda Items 7.3.2 and 7.3.3 are discussed.

- 4. The SSC BF-ME agreed to the proposed revisions.
- 5. The revised agenda was adopted (Annex A). The List of Documents and List of Participants are attached (Annexes B, C).

Agenda Item 3. Summary of SSC BF-ME01 meeting

- 6. The Chair summarized the discussions and outcomes of the SSC BF-ME01 meeting.

Agenda Item 4. Stock assessment and scientific advice on the management of North Pacific armorhead (NPA)

4.1 Review of Members fishing statistics for NPA in 2021

- 7. The Science Manager presented the fishing catch and effort statistics for NPA including the latest available data for 2020. Total catch in 2020 was 81 tons. One Japanese trawl vessel and one Japanese gillnet vessel were in operation targeting NPA and SA in the Convention Area.

4.2 NPA monitoring survey and Adaptive Management Procedure (AMP)

4.2.1 Review of the results from 2021 monitoring survey

- 8. The Science Manager presented the results of the monitoring survey for NPA in the Emperor Seamounts in 2021 (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-IP03). The fishing vessel Kaiyo Maru No.51 conducted four trawl hauls for at least one hour each in the Koko Seamount from March to June. The criteria for high recruitment were not met.

- 9. Korea informed the SSC BF-ME that a Korean vessel may be able to participate in the monitoring survey next year.

4.3 Update on analyses or progress on biomass estimates from the NPA 2020 acoustic survey

- 10. Japan explained that it conducted an acoustic survey for SA on the C-H and Colahan Seamounts in 2020 and that it will continue such work and related analyses and submit a working paper on the results at a future meeting.

4.4 Review of Members' research and joint research activities on NPA

11. Korea presented the catch size composition of NPA caught in the Emperor Seamounts by the Korean trawl fishery up to 2019 (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP14). Korea compared the catch-length composition of 2019, the year in which the NPFC's updated mesh size regulations entered into effect, and the catch-length composition in prior years. The catch composition in 2019 was larger in size than the other years. The weight over total length of the NPA was also higher in 2019 than in 2018.

4.4.1 Analysis of recruitment relationships to oceanography

12. The Chair presented a summary of research into the effects of oceanography on NPA recruitment in the Emperor Seamounts (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP02). Significant seasonal correlations were found between the recruitment index and the Arctic Oscillation, Pacific Decadal Oscillation and North Pacific Gyre Oscillation, suggesting that NPA recruitment mechanisms appear to respond to interannual ocean-atmospheric climate oscillations. Better knowledge of the connections between recruitment and the environment would be valuable for stock management.

4.4.2 Species summary document for NPA

13. Japan presented a species summary of NPA in the Emperor Seamounts drafted in cooperation with Members (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP06).
14. The SSC BF-ME reviewed the species summary (Annex D). The SSC BF-ME recommends that the SC adopt the species summary.

Agenda Item 5. Stock assessment and scientific advice on the management of splendid alfonsino (SA)

5.1 Review of Members fishing statistics for SA in 2021

15. The Science Manager presented the fishing catch and effort statistics for SA including the latest available data for 2020. Total catch in 2020 was 1,066 tons. One Japanese trawl vessel and one Japanese gillnet vessel were in operation targeting NPA and SA in the Convention Area.

5.2 Review of Members' research and joint research activities on SA

5.2.1 Update on Japan's maturity data

16. Japan presented a preliminary analysis for estimating size at sexual maturity of SA in the Emperor Seamounts (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP08). Japan analyzed 5,264 female gonads collected by Japanese fishing and research vessels in 2013-2021 and identified the reproductive season by calculating GSI (Gonadosomatic Index). Japan then estimated the size at maturity by

calculating FL_{50} (fork length at which 50% of the population reaches sexual maturity). Japan analyzed the monthly change in GSI and gonad development, and estimated the reproductive season for SA in the Emperor Seamounts as being during April to October. The size at maturity (FL_{50}) was estimated as 339.7 mm. However, results are still preliminary due to the indistinct reproductive season and the small sample size for maturity analysis. The next step will be to increase the sample size by including data from other Members and seeking an alternative approach to estimating maturity stages.

5.2.2 Species summary document for SA

17. The SSC BF-ME reviewed and revised the species summary of SA in the Emperor Seamounts (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP07). The SSC BF-ME recommends that the SC adopt the species summary (Annex E).

5.3 Adaptive management strategy for SA

5.3.1 Intersessional work to develop TOR for SA adaptive management plan

18. The SSC BF-ME discussed the intersessional work to develop a TOR for the SA adaptive management plan (AMP). The SSC BF-ME agreed that before advancing the AMP work further, there needs to be an agreed upon goal set based on the stock status. The SSC BF-ME therefore agreed that the first priority should be to conduct a stock assessment, determine the status of the SA stock, determine a management objective for the stock based on the stock status, and discuss potential management measures to achieve said objective, including AMP or other measures.

Agenda Item 6. Stock assessment and scientific advice on the management of sablefish

6.1 Review of Members fishing statistics for sablefish in 2021

19. Canada presented 1996-2021 data for landings, days fished, and CPUE from its sablefish fishery. No vessels fished for sablefish in the Convention Area in 2021. Some potential reasons for this may be the reduced price of sablefish, increased fuel costs, the relatively high total allowable catch set for the Canadian domestic fishery, reduced fishing activity in general due to COVID-19, and some concerns about vessel monitoring system requirements.

6.2 Review of Members' research and joint research activities on sablefish

6.2.1 Overview of sablefish management (Canada and USA)

6.2.2 Tagging studies – Joint USA-Canada research

6.2.3 Sablefish Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE)

20. Canada presented a summary it prepared together with the United States on current sablefish science, management and data collection/validation in the eastern North Pacific including the

NPFC Convention Area (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP04).

21. The SSC BF-ME encouraged Canada to make its catch and effort data on sablefish publicly available through the NPFC website.

6.2.4 Species summary document for sablefish

22. The SSC BF-ME reviewed the species summary of sablefish (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP12). The SSC BF-ME recommends that the SC adopt the species summary pending minor revisions (Annex F).
23. The SSC BF-ME reviewed the species summary of blackspotted and roughey rockfishes (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP13). The SSC BF-ME recommends that the SC adopt the species summary pending minor revisions (Annex G).

6.2.5 Evaluation of historical harvest relative to trip limits

24. Canada provided a summary of its historical sablefish catch. Most of the catch is from the domestic fishery. In 2017, Canada closed most of its domestic seamounts to fishing. In Canada's view, the NPFC quota outside its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) probably does not reflect the obtainable harvest given the domestic seamount closures, nor sustainable harvest for open seamounts. Canada is evaluating the quota in the NPFC Convention Area to consider how it can be made to reflect Canada's domestic conservation measures. Canada believes that the coast-wide stock is in the healthy zone.

Agenda Item 7. Data-limited management tools and approach to assessment of NPA and SA

7.1 Discussion of next steps in identification of data limited approaches to stock assessment for NPA and SA

25. The Chair presented a summary of the SWG NPA-SA's work in 2021 (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP01).

7.1.1 Review of data available and data quality for stock assessment of NPA and SA (compiled by SWG)

26. The SSC BF-ME reviewed the available data for stock assessment of NPA and SA (Annex H).

7.1.2 Discussion of data availability and sharing

27. The SSC BF-ME discussed data availability and sharing and the work to develop a data sharing template. The SSC BF-ME agreed that it would be useful to share information that would help determine the spatial variation in life history of NPA and SA, while recognizing that there may

be confidentiality issues that prevent the sharing of fine-scale data. The SSC BF-ME requested the SWG NPA-SA to discuss the resolution at which spatial data could be shared and share the data intersessionally for further analyses using data limited approaches.

7.1.3 Review and recommendation of data limited tools available to use with existing data for NPA and/or SA

28. The SSC BF-ME reviewed the data limited tools available to use with existing data for NPA and/or SA (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP01).

7.1.4 Recommendations for plans to determine stock status and potentially rebuilding stocks

29. The SSC BF-ME reviewed the recommendations from the SWG NPA-SA on determining stock status and potentially rebuilding stocks of NPA and SA (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP01).

30. Japan reminded the SSC BF-ME of the SWG NPA-SA's discussions regarding taking a life history based approach to determining the stock status of NPA. NPA has a complicated life history that may make such an approach difficult. However, such an approach would nevertheless be an effective first step. Furthermore, since a life history based approach will also be taken for SA, doing the same for NPA could make the work more efficient.

31. Japan informed the SSC BF-ME that it will conduct yield-per-recruit analysis as collaborative work using data shared by Members.

7.1.5 Formulate TOR for stock assessment for NPA and SA

32. The SSC BF-ME reviewed the TOR for stock assessment for NPA and SA developed by the SWG NPA-SA (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP01). The SSC BF-ME recommends that the SC adopt the TOR for stock assessment for NPA and SA (Annex I).

7.1.6 Update on plans to hold workshop on managing NPA, SA and other species with other RFMOs

33. The Chair reminded the SSC BF-ME that the SWG NPA-SA agreed that holding a workshop on managing NPA, SA and other species with other RFMOs could be worthwhile, but that it should be given a lower priority given the SWG's current heavy workload. The SWG NPA-SA suggested that this matter could be revisited in future and perhaps such a workshop could be held as part of the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO's) ABNJ Deep Sea Fisheries Project.

7.1.7 Review CPUE time series for NPA and SA commercial fisheries

34. The SSC BF-ME discussed the development of CPUE time series for NPA and SA commercial

fisheries. Japan and Korea informed the SSC BF-ME that they have catch and effort data but have yet to begin work to calculate and standardize CPUE. Russia informed the SSC BF-ME that it only has historical catch and effort data for NPA and SA and that these data have many gaps that would make them less useful to include as inputs in a stock assessment.

Agenda Item 8. Assessment and scientific advice on the management of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VME)

8.1 Review of Members' research and joint research activities on VME

35. Japan presented a report on its sea-floor visual survey in the southern Emperor Seamounts in 2021 (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP09 (Rev. 1)). The survey was conducted to collect further information on the dense distribution of cold-water corals and other communities in Koko and Yuryaku Seamounts reported by the US research paper NPFC-2020-SSC BFME01-WP08. At Koko Seamount, uniaxial antipatharian coral *Stichopathes* sp. was observed in a wide range of the study area, consistent with the US study. Gorgonian and scleractinian corals were distributed sparsely in the northern part of the study area. In the southeastern part of study area, low to medium densities of several corals including Isididae gorgonian coral was distributed. In Yuryaku Seamount a mixed distribution of several coral species was observed at many study sites. Coral assemblages consisting of gorgonian species were densely distributed in the northwestern part and on the slope of the southeastern part. In some areas, results were consistent with the observation of the US research. An unreported coral community was identified in the northwestern part of Yuryaku Seamount. As the next step, Japan intends to compare its survey results with the US research in detail, examine the potential of these communities as a tool for SAI assessment, and conduct a more detailed survey for the communities that were identified in this study.

36. Russia presented the preliminary results of its marine expeditions in the Emperor Seamounts (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP16). The expeditions involved a comprehensive study of the ecosystems using both standard methods and deep sea equipment, including study of planktonic communities, biological sampling of bottom fauna, studies of the conditions for the formation of ferromanganese and cobalt manganese crusts, biogeochemical studies of hydrocarbons in the water mass and bottom sediments, hydrological (hydrochemical) studies of water masses, and geology/landscape studies of bottom sediments of the study area.

8.1.1 Review and recommendation of data used to identify VME (the flow chart from SWG VME)

37. The Lead of the SWG VME, Dr. Janelle Curtis, presented a summary of the SWG VME's intersessional activities in 2021 (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP10), including development a flow chart to identify data that can be used to identify VMEs in the northwestern and

northeastern parts of the NPFC Convention Area.

38. The SSC BF-ME reviewed and revised the flow chart and agreed to include the revised flow chart in the CMMs For Bottom Fisheries and Protection of VMEs in the NW Pacific Ocean and the NE Pacific Ocean.
39. The SSC BF-ME agreed that model predictions that suggest the presence of VMEs are a high priority for groundtruthing using visual surveys.
40. DSCC expressed concern that no management measures would be taken regarding areas identified as likely to be VMEs using predictive modelling until a survey has been done to groundtruth or ascertain that the area is in fact a VME. DSCC believed that the groundtruthing should rather be used to improve the robustness of the predictive modeling and in the meantime areas identified as likely to be VMEs should be protected unless a survey is conducted in the area and concludes that a VME is not present.

8.1.2 Update on developing a quantitative definition of VMEs

41. Canada presented a study on the use of predictive habitat models and visual surveys to identify VMEs on seamounts in the Convention Area (NPFC-2021-BFME02-WP05). Canada proposed a quantitative method of VME identification that integrates visual data and model predictions in a manner that aligns with the SWG VME's flow chart, the precautionary approach, the Convention, and the research plan of NPFC's Scientific Committee. The methodology involves five steps: identify a visual threshold for VME occurrence, develop predictive models of VME indicator taxa, identify areas likely to be VMEs, use visual data in areas likely to be VMEs, and identify VMEs according to FAO criteria with visual data. Canada used data from Cobb Seamount to illustrate the proposed methodology and explained that the analyses have no management implications. Canada recommended that the SSC BF-ME endorse the proposed method as one method for identifying VMEs in the Convention Area, and that Canada moves forward with revising the method based on feedback and use it to identify VMEs and areas likely to be VMEs in the eastern part of the Convention Area.
42. The SSC BF-ME discussed the current NPFC VME indicator taxa list and agreed to task the SWG VME with discussing potential additions to the list, including reviewing the VME indicator taxa of other RFMOs.

8.1.3 Review of Members available VME related data

43. The SSC BF-ME reviewed the table of Members' available VME related data, which was last

modified at the SSC VME04 meeting (Annex J).

8.2 VME identification

8.2.1 Update on VME indicator taxa identification course

44. The Science Manager reminded the SSC BF-ME that the SC agreed to hold a VME indicator taxa identification course in 2020 but decided to postpone it until 2021 due to travel restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

45. The SSC BF-ME agreed to further postpone the course and to revisit the matter.

8.2.2 Description of eastern NPFC VME ID guide

46. Canada informed the SSC BF-ME that it has developed a VME identification guide for the eastern part of the Convention Area, available at:

<https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.900778/publication.html>.

8.3 Encounter protocol

8.3.1 Review and recommendation of post-encounter measures

47. The SWG VME Lead presented the recommendations of the SWG VME for post-encounter measures (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP10).

48. The Science Manager presented the revised post-encounter measure proposed by the SWG VME. The SSC BF-ME agreed to hold further discussions on the proposed revisions under Agenda Item 10.

49. Japan presented an overview of SIMRAD's ITI fishing net monitoring system and Marport's Trawl Fish System used by Kaiyo Maru No.51 in the Emperor Seamount (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-IP01). Based on the capabilities of the abovementioned systems, Japan recommended that the fact that trawl nets are not contacting the seabed be confirmed electronically by a third party when a vessel enters a temporary closure area. Japan also recommended that the area to be temporarily closed by the move-on rule should be limited to 1 nm either side of the trawl track based on the plausible distance between the track line of the net and the vessel.

8.3.2 Reports from Members on analyses of the impacts of different fishing gears on VME from their own data or literature

50. Canada presented a synopsis of literature assessing the impacts of longline hooks and traps on the seafloor (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP15). Longlined hooks and longlined traps (pots) can interact with VME in several ways. Traps can be dropped directly on top of colonies, or

dragged on the bottom during deployment and recovery. Longlines can snag on rocks, and become entangled during recovery, or when hooked fish struggle. Derelict fishing gear has also been observed caught on VME indicator taxa.

8.3.3 Consider gear-specific thresholds and gear-specific closures for encounter protocol

51. The SSC BF-ME discussed gear-specific thresholds and gear-specific closures and agreed to task the SWG VME with reviewing the practices of other RFMOs and recent literature on the subject.
52. The SSC BF-ME discussed how to define a temporary closure in the case of a VME encounter in the northwestern Pacific Ocean.
 - (a) The SSC BF-ME discussed the setting of move-on rules and the size of the area for closure. Some Members suggested that a 1 nm move-on distance would be appropriate in light of observations indicating that VME patch sizes do not exceed 1 nm. Other Members suggested that there is sufficient uncertainty to warrant maintaining the move-on distance at 2 nm. The SSC BF-ME agreed to maintain the move-on distance at 2 nm and conduct further scientific analyses towards potentially amending the move-on distance.
 - (b) The SSC BF-ME discussed which vessels the temporary closure should apply to. The SSC BF-ME suggested that each Member should prohibit its bottom fishing vessels from contacting the sea floor with their trawl nets. The SSC BF-ME noted that there is some uncertainty about how this stipulation would be enforced and that further analyses should be conducted to demonstrate whether trawl nets can be operated in a way that ensures that they do not contact the sea floor.

8.4 Significant and adverse impacts (SAI) assessment

8.4.1 Update on small working group progress on standardizing an approach to defining SAI

53. The SWG VME Lead gave an update on the SWG VME's progress on standardizing an approach to defining SAI (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP10).
54. The SSC BF-ME agreed to task the SWG VME with continuing this work.

8.4.2 Update on analysis of the potential impact of current fishing activities on known and potential VME sites in the Emperor Seamount area

55. The SWG VME Lead explained that the SWG VME agreed that analysis of the potential impact of current fishing activities on known and potential VME sites in the Emperor Seamount area is related to standardizing an approach to defining SAI of bottom fisheries on VMEs and did not explicitly discuss this task.

Agenda Item 9. Data collection and reporting

9.1 Review of the template for collection of scientific observer data

56. The SSC BF-ME reviewed the template for collection of scientific observer data and determined that no revisions are currently required.

9.2 Update on Japan's fish ID guide, translation into English and translation costs

57. The Science Manager provided an outline of the provisional design and content of Japan's fish identification guide, which is being translated into English by Japan and also being reviewed by a contracted expert (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP11).

58. The SSC BF-ME agreed with the proposed design and content of the fish identification guide.

9.3 Review and discussion of other RFMOs' practices regarding developing maps of combined fishing footprint

59. The Science Manager presented a review of other RFMOs' practices regarding developing maps of combined fishing footprint (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-IP04). The review included the practices of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO), the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA), and the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC).

60. The Data Coordinator, Mr. Sungkuk Kang, presented a summary of bottom fishing footprint data and provisional maps of bottom fishing footprints (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-IP02 (Rev. 1)).

61. The SSC BF-ME agreed to post the maps in the Members' Area of the NPFC website.

62. The SSC BF-ME suggested adding a bathymetry base layer and also developing a heat map aggregated by gear type regardless of Member. The SSC BF-ME agreed to task the SWG VME with improving and updating the maps.

Agenda Item 10. 5-Year Rolling Work Plan

10.1 North Pacific armorhead

10.2 Splendid alfonsino

10.3 Sablefish

10.4 Vulnerable marine ecosystems

10.5 Other ecosystem components

63. The SSC BF-ME reviewed the 2021-2025 SSC BF-ME 5-Year Rolling Work Plan and updated it as detailed in NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP03 (Rev. 1).

64. The SSC BF-ME took stock of the activities of its various SWGs. The SSC BF-ME agreed to disband the SWG on Data collection Template for Bottom Fish and the SWG on VME ID field guide as their work is complete, and to disband the SWG on Spatial Management as it has been inactive for some time. The SSC BF-ME noted that the work of the SWG on Combined Bycatch Taxa List and Fish ID Guide is almost complete and agreed to combine this SWG into the SWG NPA-SA. Both the SWG NPA-SA and the SWG VME remain active.

Agenda Item 11. Review of CMMs 2021-05 and 2019-06 for bottom fisheries and protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems and CMM 2019-10 for sablefish

65. The SSC BF-ME reviewed and revised CMM 2021-05 (Annex K).

66. The SSC BF-ME reviewed and revised CMM 2019-06 (Annex L).

67. The SSC BF-ME reviewed CMM 2019-10 and determined that no changes are currently necessary.

Agenda Item 12. Other matters

12.1 Inter-sessional work and priority issues for next meeting

68. The SSC BF-ME discussed intersessional work and agreed priority issues for the next meeting as described under Agenda Item 12.

12.2 Election of SSC BF-ME Chair and vice-Chair

69. The SSC BF-ME re-elected Dr. Chris Rooper (Canada) to serve as its Chair and elected Dr. Felipe Carvalho (USA) to serve as its vice-Chair. The SSC BF-ME selected Dr. Kota Sawada (Japan) to serve as the new SWG NPA-SA Lead.

12.3 Update on PICES WG47 Seamount Ecology

70. The SC Chair presented a summary of the 2021 activities by PICES Working Group 47 (WG-47) on the ecology of seamounts (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-OP01). WG-47 convened two business meetings that focused on introductions of members and observers, discussions of WG-47's terms of reference and exchanging information and ideas about participants' seamount research activities. The participants shared common interests in areas such as identification of VME on seamounts, studying spatial ecology of seamount fishes and invertebrates, and

developing species distribution models for seamount taxa. WG-47 is convening a two-day workshop on “Distributions of pelagic, demersal, and benthic species associated with seamounts in the North Pacific Ocean and factors influencing their distributions” at 2022 PICES meeting in Busan, Korea. WG-47 is requesting that the NPFC co-sponsor this workshop by contributing the equivalent of \$5,000 USD.

71. The SSC BF-ME endorsed the request for the NPFC to co-sponsor the abovementioned PICES workshop.

12.4 Other issues

72. No other issues were discussed.

Agenda Item 13. Recommendations to the Scientific Committee

73. The SSC BF-ME agreed to:

(a) Task the SWG NPA-SA to:

- i. Continue joint work on life history based approach to stock assessment (higher priority)
- ii. Define spatial resolution of shared data for data template (higher priority)
- iii. Continue work on the fish ID guide (higher priority)
- iv. Update species summaries (higher priority)
- v. CPUE standardization (lower priority)

(b) Task the SWG VME to:

- i. Determine scientific basis for gear-specific encounter thresholds if possible (higher priority)
- ii. Determine scientific basis for move-on rules and size of the area for temporary closure (higher priority)
- iii. Bring together observation data on VME from visual survey sources (higher priority)
- iv. Refine quantitative definition of VME (higher priority)
- v. Consider VME indicator taxa list for additions/changes (higher priority)
- vi. Determine data requirements and spatial/temporal resolution for SAI assessment (lower priority)
- vii. Review literature on fisheries impacts on VME indicator taxa (lower priority)
- viii. Develop management objectives for recovering VME sites (lower priority)

- (c) Postpone the VME indicator taxa identification course and revisit the matter.

- (d) Endorse the proposed design and content of the fish identification guide (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP11).

- (e) Post the maps of bottom fishing footprints in the Members’ Area of the NPFC website.

- (f) Disband the SWG on Data collection Template for Bottom Fish, the SWG on VME ID field guide, and the SWG on Spatial Management, and to combine the SWG on Combined Bycatch Taxa List and Fish ID Guide into the SWG NPA-SA.

74. The SSC BF-ME recommends the following to the SC:

- (a) Adopt the species summaries of North Pacific armorhead (Annex D), splendid alfonsino (Annex E), sablefish (Annex F), and blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes (Annex G).
- (b) Adopt the Terms of Reference for stock assessment for NPA and SA (Annex I).
- (c) Endorse the updated 2021-2025 SSC BF-ME 5-Year Rolling Work Plan (NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP03 (Rev. 1))
- (d) Endorse the revised CMM 2021-05 (Annex K).
- (e) Endorse the revised CMM 2019-06 (Annex L).
- (f) Select Dr. Chris Rooper (Canada) to serve as Chair and Dr. Felipe Carvalho (USA) to serve as vice-Chair of the SSC BF-ME.
- (g) Select Dr. Kota Sawada (Japan) to serve as the new SWG NPA-SA Lead.
- (h) Recommend that the Commission co-sponsor the PICES WG-47 Workshop on “Distributions of pelagic, demersal, and benthic species associated with seamounts in the North Pacific Ocean and factors influencing their distributions” by contributing the equivalent of \$5,000 USD.

Agenda Item 14. Next meeting

75. The SSC BF-ME recommends holding a 3-day virtual meeting or a 2.5-day in-person meeting of the SSC BF-ME in 2022 and requests the guidance of the SC and Commission for determining the date, format and location of the meeting.

76. The SSC BF-ME recommends holding intersessional meetings of the SWG NPA-SA and SWG VME.

Agenda Item 15. Adoption of the Report

77. The report was adopted by consensus.

Agenda Item 16. Close of the Meeting

78. The meeting closed at 13:00 on 9 December 2021, Tokyo time.

Annexes:

Annex A – Agenda

Annex B – List of documents

Annex C –List of participants

Annex D – Species summary for North Pacific armorhead

Annex E – Species summary for splendid alfonsino

Annex F – Species summary for sablefish

Annex G – Species summary for blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes

Annex H – Data availability for North Pacific armorhead and splendid alfonsino

Annex I – Terms of Reference for a data limited approach to stock assessment for North Pacific armorhead and splendid alfonsino

Annex J – Members’ available VME related data

Annex K – Revised CMM 2021-05 - Conservation and Management Measure for Bottom Fisheries and Protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems in the Northwestern Pacific Ocean

Annex L – Revised CMM 2019-06 - Conservation and Management Measure for Bottom Fisheries and Protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems in the Northeastern Pacific Ocean

Agenda

Agenda Item 1. Opening of the Meeting

Agenda Item 2. Adoption of Agenda

Agenda Item 3. Summary of SSC BF-ME01 meeting

Agenda Item 4. Stock assessment and scientific advice on the management of North Pacific armorhead (NPA)

4.1 Review of Members fishing statistics for NPA in 2021

4.2 NPA monitoring survey and Adaptive Management Procedure (AMP)

4.2.1 Review of the results from 2021 monitoring survey

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Agenda Item 5. Stock assessment and scientific advice on the management of splendid alfonsino (SA)

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Agenda Item 6. Stock assessment and scientific advice on the management of sablefish

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7.1 Discussion of next steps in identification of data limited approaches to stock assessment for NPA and SA

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Agenda Item 8. Assessment and scientific advice on the management of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VME)

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List of documents

MEETING INFORMATION PAPERS

Symbol	Title
NPFC-2021-SC06-MIP01	Meeting Information
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-MIP02	Provisional Agenda
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-MIP03 (Rev. 3)	Annotated Indicative Schedule

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Symbol	Title
	Summary Footprint of Bottom Fisheries
	Template for collecting scientific observer data from bottom fisheries

WORKING PAPERS

Symbol	Title
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP01	Small Working Group on NPA and SA - Summary for 2021
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP02	Summary of research into the effects of oceanography on North Pacific Armorhead recruitment in the Emperor Seamounts
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP03 (Rev. 1)	Five-Year Work Plan of the SSC BF-ME
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP04	A brief summary of current Sablefish science and management in the eastern North Pacific including the NPFC Convention Area
NPFC-2021-BFME02-WP05	Predictive Habitat Models and Visual Surveys to Identify Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems on Seamounts in the North Pacific Fisheries Commission Convention Area
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP06	Species summary of North Pacific armorhead (<i>Pentaceros wheeleri</i>) in the Emperor seamounts
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP07	Species summary of Splendid alfonsino (<i>Beryx splendens</i>) in the Emperor seamounts
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP08	Preliminary analysis for estimating size at sexual maturity of Splendid alfonsino (<i>Beryx splendens</i>) in the Emperor seamounts
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP09 (Rev. 1)	Report of Japanese sea-floor visual survey in the

	southern Emperor Seamounts (southern-ES) in 2021
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP10	Small Working Group on VMEs - Summary for 2021
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP11	Provisional design and content of fish identification guide
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP12	Sablefish Species Summary
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP13	Blackspotted and Rougheye Rockfishes Species Summary
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP14	Catch size composition of North Pacific Armorhead (<i>Pentaceros wheeleri</i>) in the Emperor Seamounts by the Korean trawl fishery up to 2019
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP15	Synopsis of Literature Assessing the Impacts of Longline Hooks and Traps on the Seafloor – Contribution from Canada
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP16	Deep sea ecosystems of the Emperor Seamounts
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP17	Revised CMM 2021-05 for bottom fisheries and protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the northwestern Pacific Ocean
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-WP18	Revised CMM 2019-06 for bottom fisheries and protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the northeastern Pacific Ocean
NPFC-2020-SSC BFME01-IP02 (Rev. 1)	NPFC SC Project #10: International Course for NPFC Observers for VME Indicator Taxa Identification

INFORMATION PAPERS

Symbol	Title
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-IP01	SIMRAD's ITI fishing net monitoring system and Marport's Trawl Fish System used by Kaiyo Maru No.51 in the Emperor Seamount: Information for discussion on temporary measure of NPFC post-encounter measure
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-IP02 (Rev. 1)	Summary of bottom fishing footprint data shared by Members
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-IP03	Results of a monitoring survey for North Pacific armorhead in the Emperor Seamounts in 2021
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-IP04	Review of other RFMOs' practices regarding developing maps of combined fishing footprint

OBSERVER PAPERS

Document Number	Title
NPFC-2021-SSC BFME02-OP01	A summary of 2021 activities by PICES Working Group 47 (WG-47) on Ecology of Seamounts

List of participants

CHAIR

Chris ROOPER
chris.rooper@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

CANADA

Janelle CURTIS
Janelle.Curtis@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Jackson Wing Four CHU
jackson.chu@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Devon WARAWA
devon.warawa@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

CHINA

Qiuyun MA
qyma@shou.edu.cn

Libin DAI
644318716@qq.com

Kai CAI
846977742@qq.com

Dongyan HAN
dyhan@shou.edu.cn

Kindong RICHARD
kindong@shou.edu.cn

Jiaqi WANG
jq-wang@shou.edu.cn

JAPAN

Hideki NAKANO
hnakano@affrc.go.jp

Atsushi KAWABATA
abata@fra.affrc.go.jp

Naohiko AKIMOTO
naohiko@sol.dti.ne.jp

Takumi FUKUDA
takumi_fukuda720@maff.go.jp

Takaaki HASEGAWA
thasegawa9@affrc.go.jp

Taro ICHII
ichii@affrc.go.jp

Mai MIYAMOTO
miyamoto-mi@janus.co.jp

Yamaguchi MOTOOMI
yamaguchimo@affrc.go.jp

Takehiro OKUDA
okudy@affrc.go.jp

Yumiko OSAWA
yumosawa@affrc.go.jp

Kota SAWADA

kotasawada@affrc.go.jp

Sayako TAKEDA

sayako_takeda590@maff.go.jp

Kyutaro YASUMOTO

kyutaro_yasumoto890@maff.go.jp

KOREA

Kyumjoon PARK

mogas@korea.kr

Sanggyu SHIN

gyuyades82@gmail.com

RUSSIA

Oleg KATUGIN

oleg.katugin@tinro-center.ru

Dmitrii ANTONENKO

dmantonenko@yandex.ru

Tatiana DAUTOVA

tndaut@mail.ru

Oleg IVANOV

oleg.ivanov@tinro-center.ru

Vladimir KULIK

vladimir.kulik@tinro-center.ru

USA

Felipe CARVALHO

felipe.carvalho@noaa.gov

OBSERVERS

DEEP SEA CONSERVATION COALITION

Matthew GIANNI

matthewgianni@gmail.com

Amy BACO-TAYLOR

abacotaylor@fsu.edu

THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS

Raiana MCKINNEY

rmckinney@pewtrusts.org

RAPPORTEUR

Alex MEYER

meyer@urbanconnections.jp

SECRETARIAT

Dae-Yeon MOON

dymoon@npfc.int

Alex ZAVOLOKIN

azavolokin@npfc.int

Peter FLEWWELLING

pflewwelling@npfc.int

Yuko YOSHIMURA-TAKAMIYA

ytakamiya@npfc.int

Sungkuk KANG

skang@npfc.int

Species summary for North Pacific armorhead

North Pacific armorhead (*Pentaceros wheeleri*)

Common names: Pelagic armorhead, Slender armorhead (English); 五棘鯛 (Chinese); クサカリツボダイ (Japanese); 북방돔돔 (Korean); кабан-рыба (Russian)

Biological Information

North Pacific armorhead has a unique life history consisting of a pelagic larva phase and a demersal adult stage on the seamounts (Kiyota et al. 2016). Distribution of the larva includes Gulf of Alaska to North Pacific Ocean off central California and south of Japan, with center of abundance at the Emperor Seamounts. Following their settlements in the seamounts, adults make morphological changes from the “fat” type to the “lean” type concurrent with their dietary shifts. Vertical distribution of the adults ranges from 300-500 m. Juveniles at the epipelagic stage mainly feeds on copepods, shifting the targets towards fish and large crustaceans with growth.

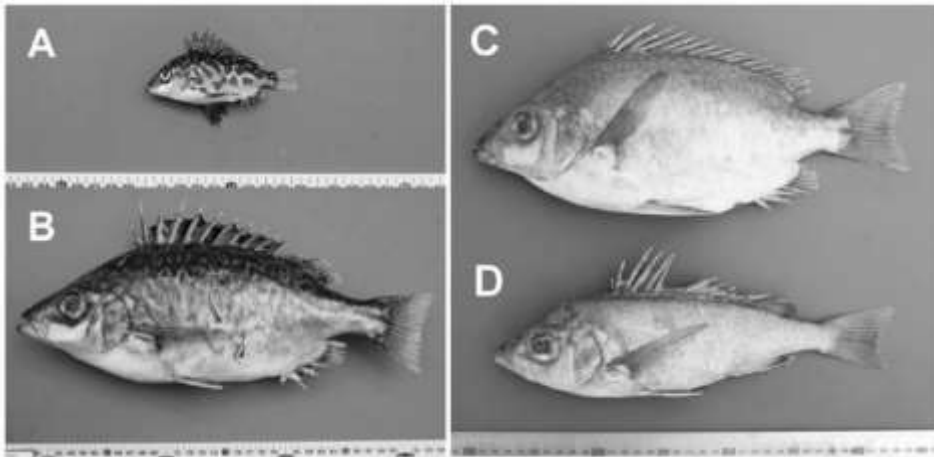


Figure 1: Photographs of North Pacific armorhead. A) Pelagic juvenile, B) pelagic subadult, C) demersal adult (fat type), D) demersal adult (lean type) (from Kiyota et al. 2016)

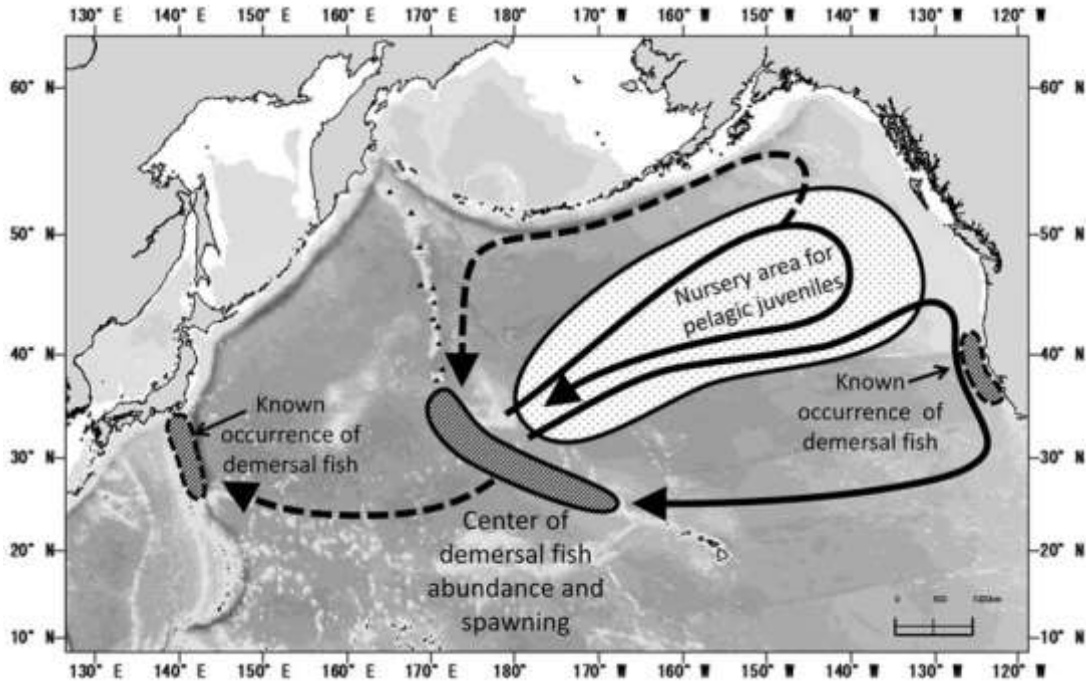


Figure 2: Known demersal habitats and hypothesized pelagic migration routes of North Pacific armorhead (Kiyota et al. 2016 Figure 4, modified from Boehlert and Sasaki 1988).

Fishery

Historical catches by Russia and Japan from the combined Emperor Seamounts were high and reached 100 thousand tons in 1970s, followed by a crash (Figure 3). Currently North Pacific armorhead is caught by Japan and Korea on the Emperor Seamounts using bottom trawls and gillnets. This fishery is a potential source of significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems due to bottom contact gear.

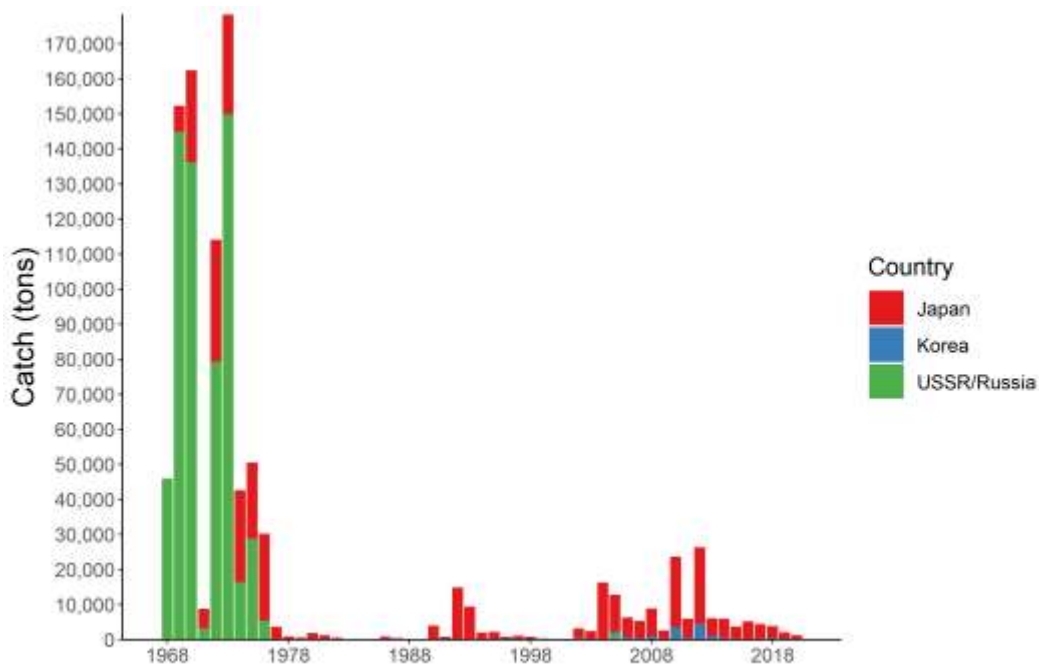


Figure 3: Historical trends of North Pacific armorhead catches in NPFC waters. The annual amounts of catch by each country are shown by the bar plot.

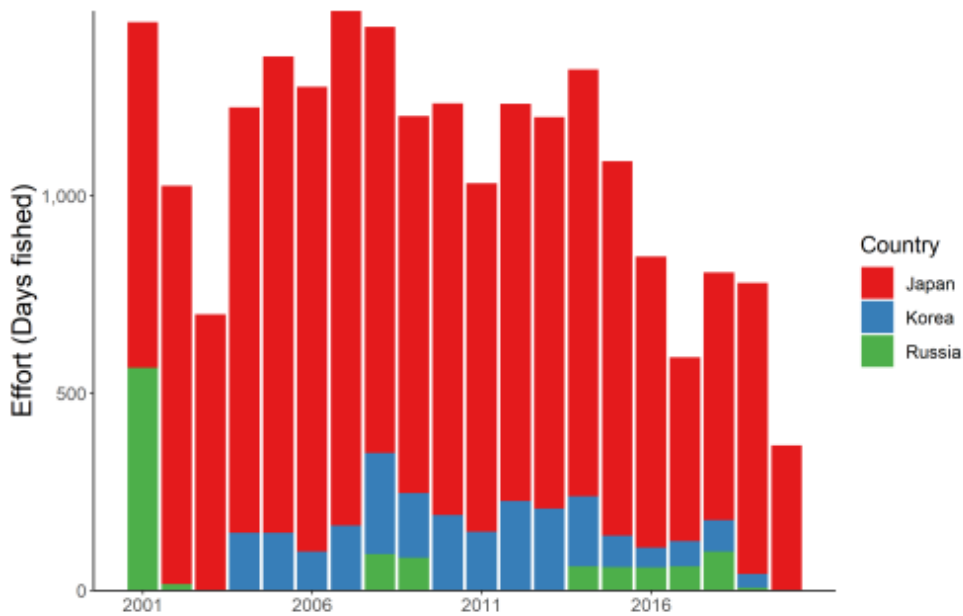


Figure 4. Historical fishing effort for North Pacific armorhead. The annual fishing efforts by each country are shown by barplot. The efforts are calculated by the total fishing days operated during the year

Assessment

There is no current or accepted assessment for North Pacific armorhead.

There are no biomass estimates available for this species in NPFC waters. An age- or length-structured stock assessment is unlikely to be feasible given the life history of North Pacific armorhead. Data limited approaches may be examined in the future.

Management

Active Management Measures

The following NPFC conservation and management measures pertain to this species:

- CMM 2021-05 For Bottom Fisheries and Protection of VMEs in the NW Pacific Ocean
- CMM 2019-06 For Bottom Fisheries and Protection of VMEs in the NE Pacific Ocean

Available from <https://www.npfc.int/active-conservation-and-management-measures>

Item	Status	Comment
Biological reference points	Not accomplished	Not established
Stock status	Unknown	Status determination criteria not established
Catch limit	Intermediate	Upper limit: 15,000 tons (only for Japan), No operation from November to December
Harvest control rule	Not accomplished	See below
Other	Intermediate	No expansion of fishing beyond established areas, No operation in the designated areas, No more increase in the fishing vessels, Restriction of trawl mesh size

In 2019, an adaptive management plan was implemented for North Pacific armorhead (NPFC-2019-SSC BF02-WP05, CMM 2019-05). This plan specifies data collection via an annual monitoring survey to be conducted in March-June each year on Koko, Yuryaku, Kammu and/or Colahan Seamounts. If the survey finds evidence of strong recruitment (see CMM 2021-05 and NPFC-2019-SSC BF02-IP01 for details) some areas in the Emperor Seamounts are closed and a 12,000 ton catch limit is encouraged. In low recruitment years, a 700 ton catch limit is encouraged.

Data Summary

Catch data

Data	Country	Source	Fishery	Year	Comments
Annual catch	Japan	Commercial	Trawl	1969-present	
		Commercial	Gillnet	1990-present	
	Korea	Commercial	Trawl	2004-2019	Catches are collected by electronic reporting system since 2015. Catches before 2015 are from the fishing catch provided by the fishery company
	Russia	Commercial	Trawl	1970-1987; 1997; 2001-2002; 2005-2006; 2011; 2013	Data coverage details to be reviewed
CPUE	Japan	Commercial	Trawl	1970-present	Possible impact by misreporting (NPFC-2018-TCC03-Final Report), Digitization of old (before 1989) data has not been completed
		Commercial	Gillnet	2008-present	
		Survey	Trawl	2019-present	
	Korea	Commercial	Trawl	2013-2019	One fishing vessel. Standardization?

Russia	Commercial	Trawl	2001-2002; 2005-2006; 2011; 2013	Data coverage details to be reviewed
	Survey	Trawl	1997	Data coverage details to be reviewed

Biological data

Data	Country	Year	Comments
Length	Japan	2009-present	Protocol revised (see NPFC-2018-SSC BF01-WP03)
	Korea	2013-2019	Data coverage review
	Russia	NA	Data coverage details to be reviewed
Age	Japan	NA	A preliminary daily ring analysis for ca. 300 fish
	Korea	2013-2017, 2019	Details to be reviewed
	Russia	NA	Data coverage details to be reviewed
Maturity	Japan	2013-present	
	Korea	2013-2019	Data coverage review
	Russia	1970-1987; 1997; 2011; 2013	Data coverage details to be reviewed

References

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- Kiyota M., Nishida K., Murakami C. and Yonezaki S. 2016. History, biology, and conservation of Pacific endemics 2. The North Pacific armorhead, *Pentaceros wheeleri* (Hardy, 1983) (Perciformes, Pentacerotidae). Pacific Science 70(1): 1-20.
- Sawada, K., Nishida, K., Yonezaki, S. and Kiyota, M. 2018. Review of biology and fisheries of splendid alfonsino *Beryx splendens*, especially in the Emperor seamounts area. NPFC-2018-SSCBF01-WP03. 26 pp.
- Technical and Compliance Committee. 2018. 3rd Meeting Report. NPFC-2018-TCC03-Final Report. 83 pp. (Available at www.npfc.int)

Species summary for splendid alfonsino

Splendid alfonsino (*Beryx splendens*)

Common names: Splendid alfonsino (English); 红眼金鲷 (Chinese); キンメダイ (Japanese); 빛금눈돔 (Korean); Низкотельный берикс (Russian)

Biological Information

Global distribution ranges from tropical to temperate oceans. Historical catch records in the Emperor Seamount suggest the distribution from Nintoku (45 °N) to Hancock (30 °N). Settlement occurs following a certain period of the pelagic life stage. Adults show a vertical distribution from 200 to 800 m with diel vertical migration, feeding on crustaceans, cephalopods, and fish during the night. Limited information is available for recruitment and reproduction processes in the Emperor Seamounts, whereas the population in the Japanese coast shows 4–5 years to sexually mature and spawning occurs during summer (Shotton 2016).

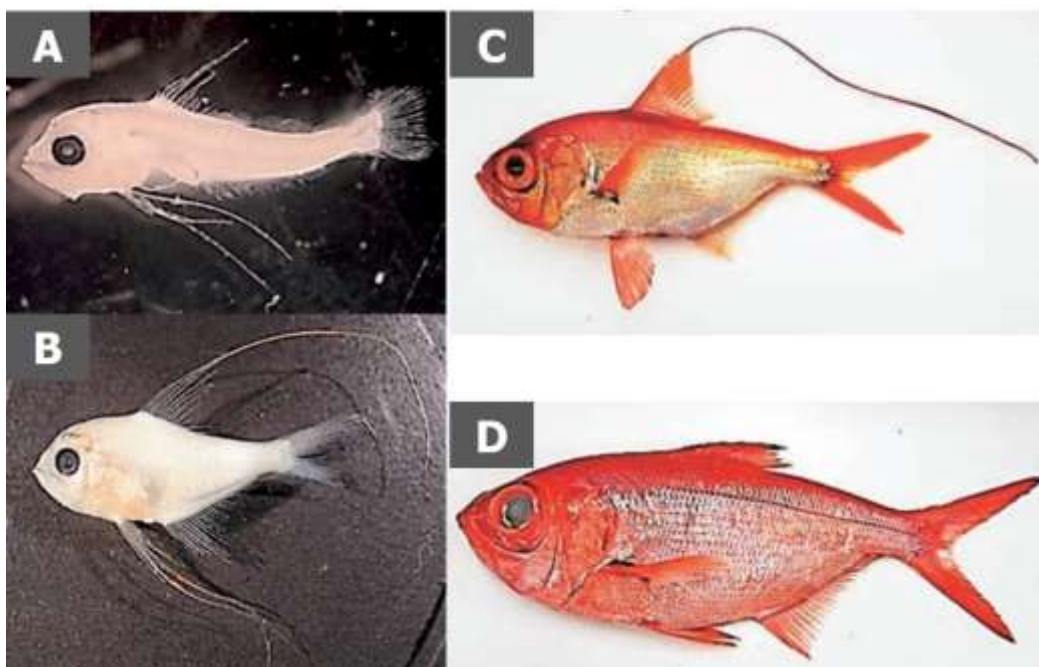


Figure 1: Photographs of splendid alfonsino on different developmental stages A) postlarva, B) juvenile, C) young, D) adult (from Watari et al. 2017)

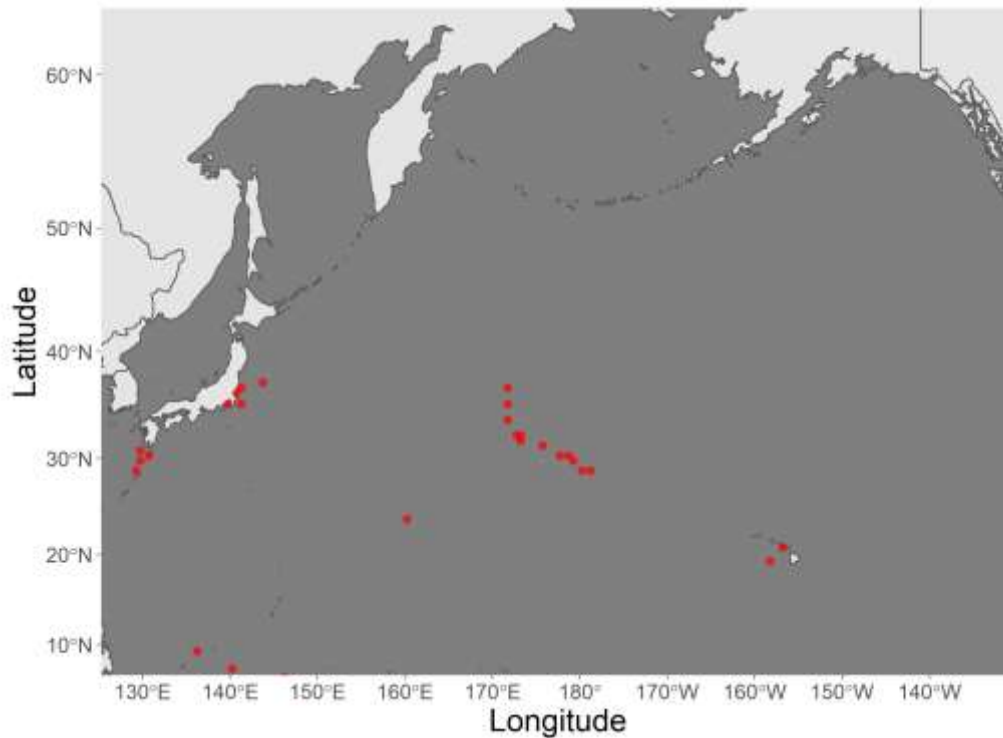


Figure 2: Known distribution of splendid alfonsino around NPFC waters. Points indicate observation data from original sources (AquaMaps 2019, October)

Fishery

Since the discovery of large populations of North Pacific armorhead in the Emperor Seamount in the late 1960s, splendid alfonsino has been exploited as an alternative resource to the armorhead due to the large temporal fluctuation of the armorhead population. The main fishing methods are bottom trawls and gillnets.

Historical catch record (Figure 3) shows the highest catch proportion by Japan, followed by Korea and Russia. Russia terminated their fishery nearly a decade ago. Fishing pressure somewhat reflects the recruitment condition of North Pacific armorhead. In 2010 and 2012, when high recruitment of the armorhead occurred, the annual catch decreased below 1,000 tons, whereas it increased up to 4,000 tons ever since then.

Size composition analysis from the catch data by Japanese trawlers suggests the substantial decrease in size of fish in catches over the past decade, raising the concern about recruitment overfishing (Sawada et al. 2018).

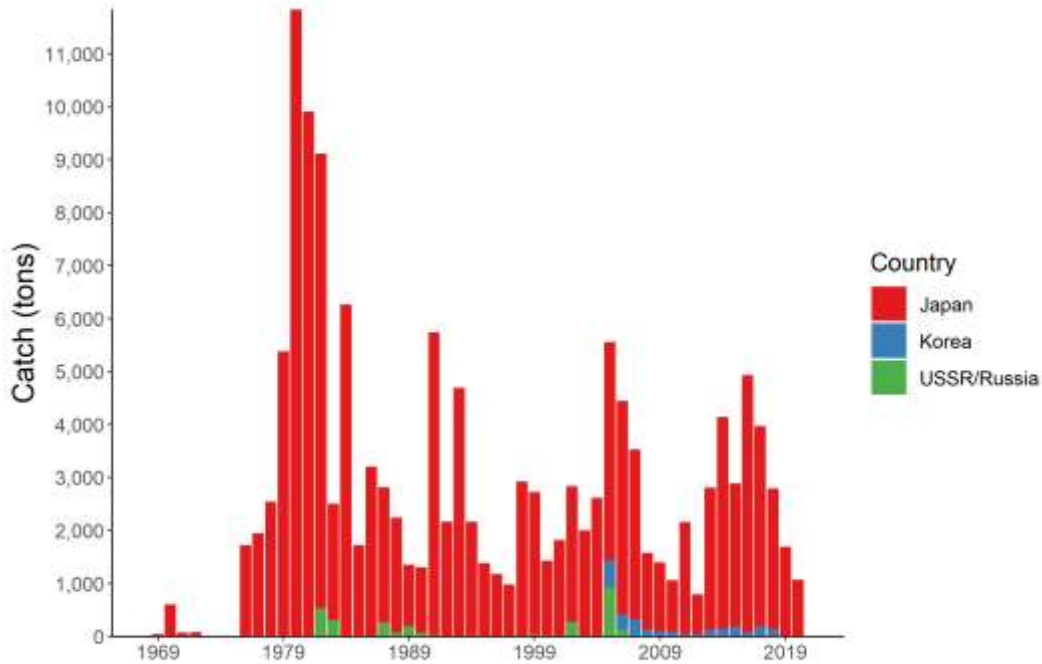


Figure 3: Historical trends of splendid alfonsino catches in NPFC waters. The annual amounts of catch by each country are shown by the bar plot.

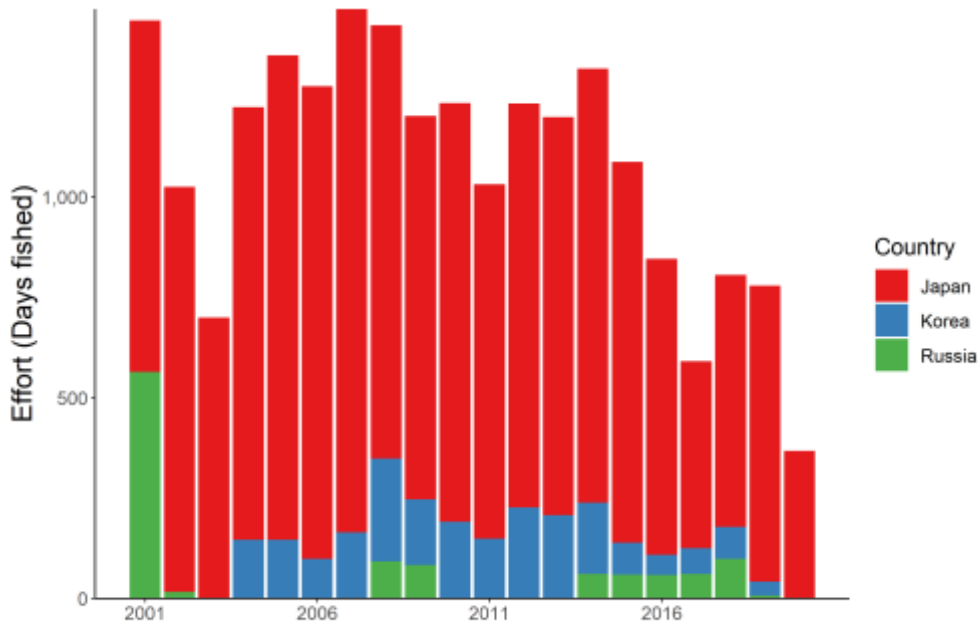


Figure 4. Historical fishing efforts for splendid alfonsino. The annual fishing efforts by each country are shown by barplot. The efforts are calculated by the total fishing days operated during the year

Assessment

There are no biomass estimates available for splendid alfonsino in NPFC waters.

An age- or length-structured stock assessment may be feasible given the life history of this species. Surplus production models developed by Japan in 2008 showed that the average fishing mortality is 20–28 % higher than the MSY level (Nishimura and Yatsu 2008). This analysis, however, remains unreliable as the estimated CPUE is biased due to target shifts between North Pacific armorhead and splendid alfonsino and the estimated intrinsic population growth rate parameter was too high for long-lived deep-sea fish.

Data limited approaches, such as YPR or SPR analysis that do not require detailed resource parameters or fishing data, should be explored in the future.

Management

Active Management Measures

The following NPFC conservation and management measures pertain to this species:

- CMM 2021-05 For Bottom Fisheries and Protection of VMEs in the NW Pacific Ocean
- CMM 2019-06 For Bottom Fisheries and Protection of VMEs in the NE Pacific Ocean

Available from <https://www.npfc.int/active-conservation-and-management-measures>

Item	Status	Comment
Biological reference points	Not accomplished	Not established
Stock status	Unknown	Status determination criteria not established
Catch limit	Intermediate	No operation from November to December
Harvest control rule	Not accomplished	Not established
Other	Intermediate	No expansion of fishing beyond established areas, No operation in the designated areas, No more increase in the fishing vessels, Restriction of trawl mesh size

Currently, there is no accepted harvest control rule for this species.

In 2016, the management measures were implemented, which includes limiting the fishing effort to the 2007's level, prohibiting fisheries from November to December (which corresponds to the spawning season for North Pacific armorhead) and not allowing fisheries in C-H Seamount and the southeastern part of Koko Seamount (for the protection of VMEs).

In 2019, an additional measure was adopted, which includes the regulation of the mesh size (trawl: > 10 cm) to protect juvenile fish. Effectiveness of this measure yet to be clearly demonstrated (Sawada and Ichii 2020).

Data Summary

Catch data

Data	Country	Source	Fishery	Year	Comments
Annual catch	Japan	Commercial	Trawl	1969-present	
		Commercial	Gillnet	1990-present	
	Korea	Commercial	Trawl	2004-2019	Catches are collected by electronic reporting system since 2015. Catches before 2015 are from the fishing catch provided by the fishery company
	Russia	Commercial	Trawl	1969-1988; 2002; 2005; 2006; 2010; 2011; 2013; 2019	Data coverage details to be reviewed
CPUE	Japan	Commercial	Trawl	1970-present	Possible impact by misreporting (NPFC-2018-TCC03-Final Report)
		Commercial	Gillnet	2008-present	
			Survey	Trawl	
	Korea	Commercial	Trawl	2013-2019	One fishing vessel. Standardization?
	Russia	Commercial	Trawl	1969-1988; 2010; 2019	Data coverage details to be reviewed

Survey	Trawl	1969-present	Data coverage details to be reviewed
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Biological data

Data	Country	Year	Comments
Length	Japan	2009-present	Protocol revised (see NPFC-2018-SSC BF01-WP03)
	Korea	2013-2019	Data coverage review
	Russia	NA	Data coverage details to be reviewed
Age	Japan	2013-present	Annual ring analysis
	Korea	2013-2017, 2019	Details to be reviewed
	Russia	NA	Data coverage details to be reviewed
Maturity	Japan	2013-present	
	Korea	2013-2017, 2019	Data coverage review
	Russia	1969-1988; 2010; 2011; 2013; 2019	Data coverage details to be reviewed

References

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- Kaschner, K., Kesner-Reyes, K., Garilao, C., Segschneider, J., Rius-Barile, J. Rees, T., & Froese, R. (2019, October). AquaMaps: Predicted range maps for aquatic species. Retrieved from <https://www.aquamaps.org>.
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Species summary for sablefish

Sablefish (*Anoplopoma fimbria*)

Common names:

Black cod (Canada and USA); ... (China); ギンダラ [Gindara] (Japan); 은대구 [Eun-Daegu] (Korea); угольная рыба [ugolnaya riba] (Russia); ... (Chinese Taipei).

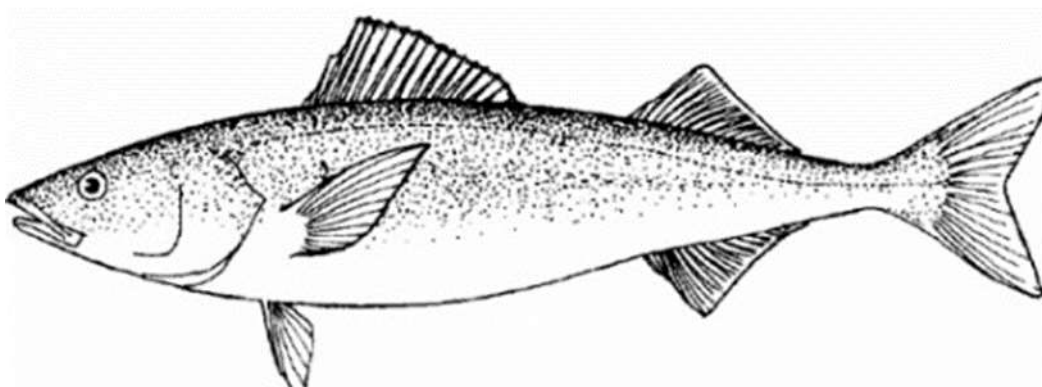


Figure 1. Sablefish (*Anoplopoma fimbria*).

Management

Active NPFC Management Measures

The following NPFC conservation and management measures (CMM) pertains to this species:

- CMM 2019-06 For Bottom Fisheries and Protection of VMEs in the NE Pacific Ocean
- CMM 2019-10 For Sablefish in the Northeastern Pacific Ocean

Available from <https://www.npfc.int/active-conservation-and-management-measures>.

Management Summary

The current management measure for sablefish specifies both catch and effort limits. The allowable catch of sablefish in the eastern portion of the Convention Area is based on a long-term mean of historical catches from seamounts by Canada. It allows for 34 mt to be landed each month for the 6 months of the fishing season (April to September). The fishery is also managed through input controls by only allowing a single vessel to fish in each month. The 1-3 Canadian vessels licensed to fish in the NPFC Convention Area are submitted to the NPFC Secretariat annually.

Table 1. Management Summary

Convention or Management Principle	Status	Comment or Consideration
Biological reference point(s)	Unknown	Established for USA and Canada assessments
Stock status	Known	Healthy (in USA and Canada assessments)
Catch limit	Known	Allowable catch of 34 mt per month (6 month season)
Harvest control rule	Undefined	Established for USA and Canada assessments
Other	Known	Effort control (single vessel per month)

Assessment

Although genetic and other evidence indicates there is a single stock of sablefish in the eastern North Pacific Ocean (including the NPFC Convention Area), three stock assessments are carried out in the three domestic jurisdictions Alaska (U.S.A.), British Columbia (Canada) and the U.S. West Coast (U.S.A.) where sablefish are harvested.

Canada uses a management strategy evaluation (MSE) process to generate recommended harvest each year. Underlying the MSE is a statistical catch-at-age structured operating model (stock assessment model) that gets updated on a 3 – 5 year cycle (DFO 2016, DFO 2020). The USA conducts two stock assessments (one for Alaska and one for the US West Coast). Both are conducted using age-structured models and are routinely updated. The current Alaska assessment (Goethel et al. 2020) and most recent USA West Coast assessment (Haltuch et al. 2019, Kapur et al. 2021) are available online.

Data

Surveys

Canada has conducted two longline trap surveys in British Columbia waters. From 1990-2009 a standardized trap survey was conducted at set stations annually. From 2003 to the present DFO conducts a stratified random trap survey along the outer shelf and slope of the BC coast. Both of these surveys generate a fishery independent CPUE as well as biological data that is used in the assessment. In Alaska, three survey indices are available for use in assessing the status of the sablefish population. There is a longline survey conducted at standard survey stations that provides a relative index of abundance. It has been conducted at depths from 200-1000 m annually since 1978 (cooperatively with Japan from 1978- 1994). Bottom trawl surveys are conducted annually or biennially in the three main ecosystems in Alaska since 1982. The U.S. West Coast primarily uses fishery independent survey data from the west coast groundfish bottom trawl survey conducted from 2003-2018 over depths of 55 to ~1300 m as an index of sablefish abundance. The bottom trawl

survey follows a random-stratified survey design with four vessels (in most years) conducting the survey annually. The trawl survey data is analyzed with the VAST model (Thorson 2019) to produce the index of abundance for sablefish.

There is currently no survey conducted in the eastern NPFC Convention Area that captures or monitors sablefish populations.

Fishery

The Canadian high seas Sablefish fishery typically operates at 1-4 seamounts in the commission area (Cobb, Eickleberg, Warwick and Brown Bear seamounts).

Historically other seamounts have been fished for sablefish both inside and outside Canada's EEZ. Fishing is conducted with longlined traps. Since 2014 a maximum of 3 vessels per year have been allowed to fish in NPFC waters. Historically the number of fishing vessels has averaged <3 per year (since 2008). The number of fishing days is the number of unique calendar days during which gear was set. The number of fishing days has averaged from about 25 to greater than 100, but in most years has averaged between 50 and 75 (Figure 2). In 2021 the number of unique vessels fishing in the convention area was 0 and the number of fishing days was 0.

Both Canada and the U.S.A. have large domestic fisheries that target sablefish inside their EEZ's. Sablefish is also captured as bycatch in domestic trawl fisheries in Canada and the U.S.A.

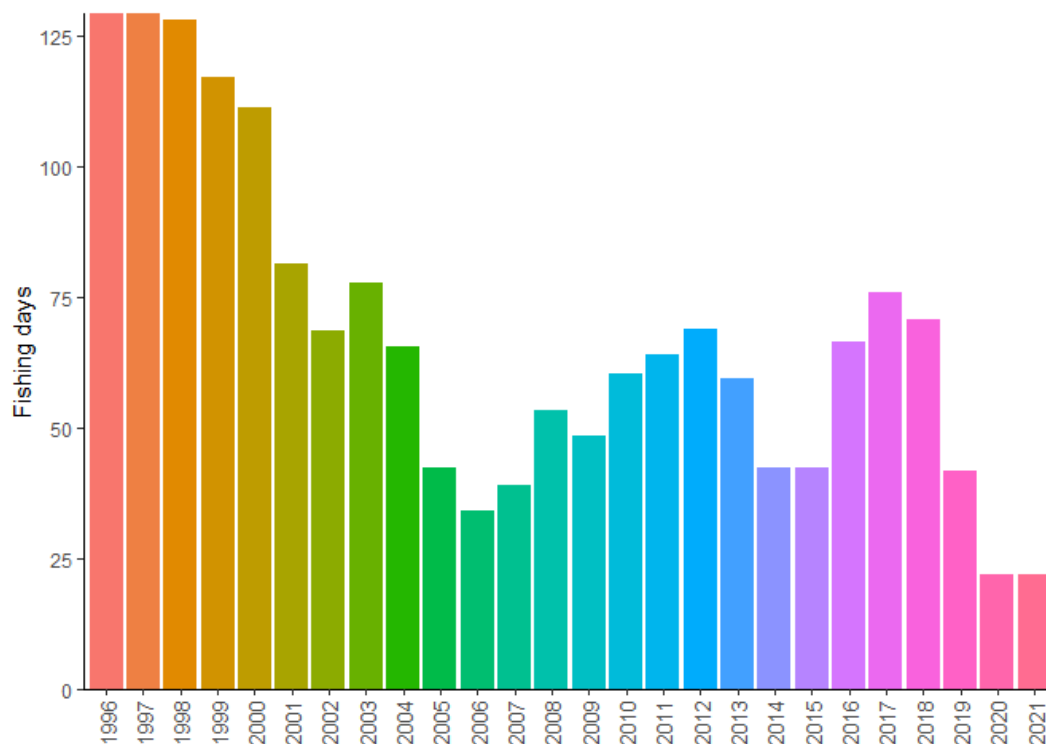


Figure 2. Fishing effort (in number of fishing days) for the sablefish longline trap fishery conducted in NPFC waters (1996-present). Data are averaged across 3 years to comply with data privacy restrictions.

Output controls limit the amount of fish that can be landed during a trip. Authorized vessels are subject to monthly vessel limits of 34 mt of Sablefish, 2.3 mt of combined Rougheye and Blackspotted rockfish and 0.45 mt of other rockfish, sole and flounder (all in round weight). These measures have been in place since 2011.

Catches of Sablefish from NPFC region seamounts has ranged from an average of about 10 mt per year in 2005-2008 to about 67 mt in 2017 (Figure 3). Average annual catches were relatively low from 2002 to 2016 at NPFC seamounts and then increased in 2017-2018, with a decline to low levels in the last years. This increase in part probably reflects shifting effort due to closures of seamounts within Canada’s EEZ. An examination of coastwide shifts in the spatial pattern of fishing effort showed that fishing effort has become concentrated on Cobb Seamount, with increasing effort in shallower waters relative to the past (Figure 4). The catch of sablefish from the Convention Area in 2021 was 0 mt.

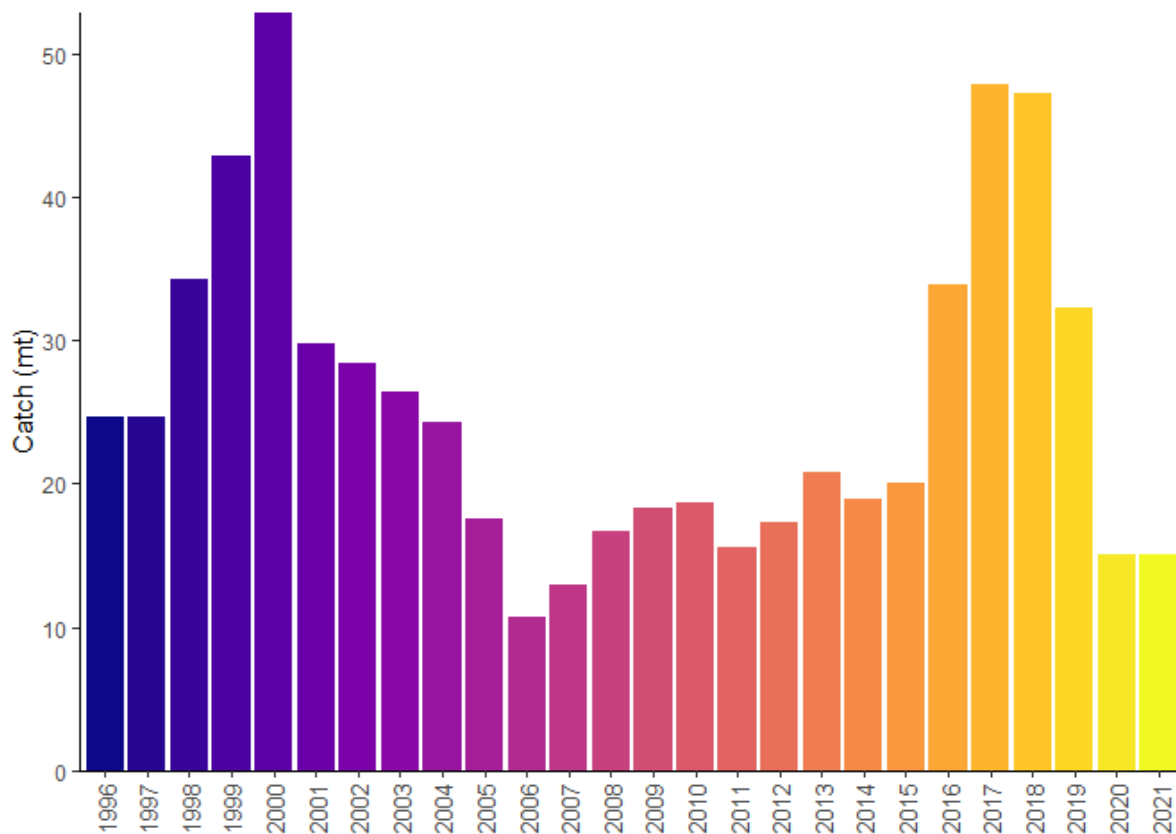


Figure 3. Landings of sablefish in the Canadian Sablefish fishery in NPFC region (1996-present). Data are averaged across 3 years to comply with data privacy restrictions.

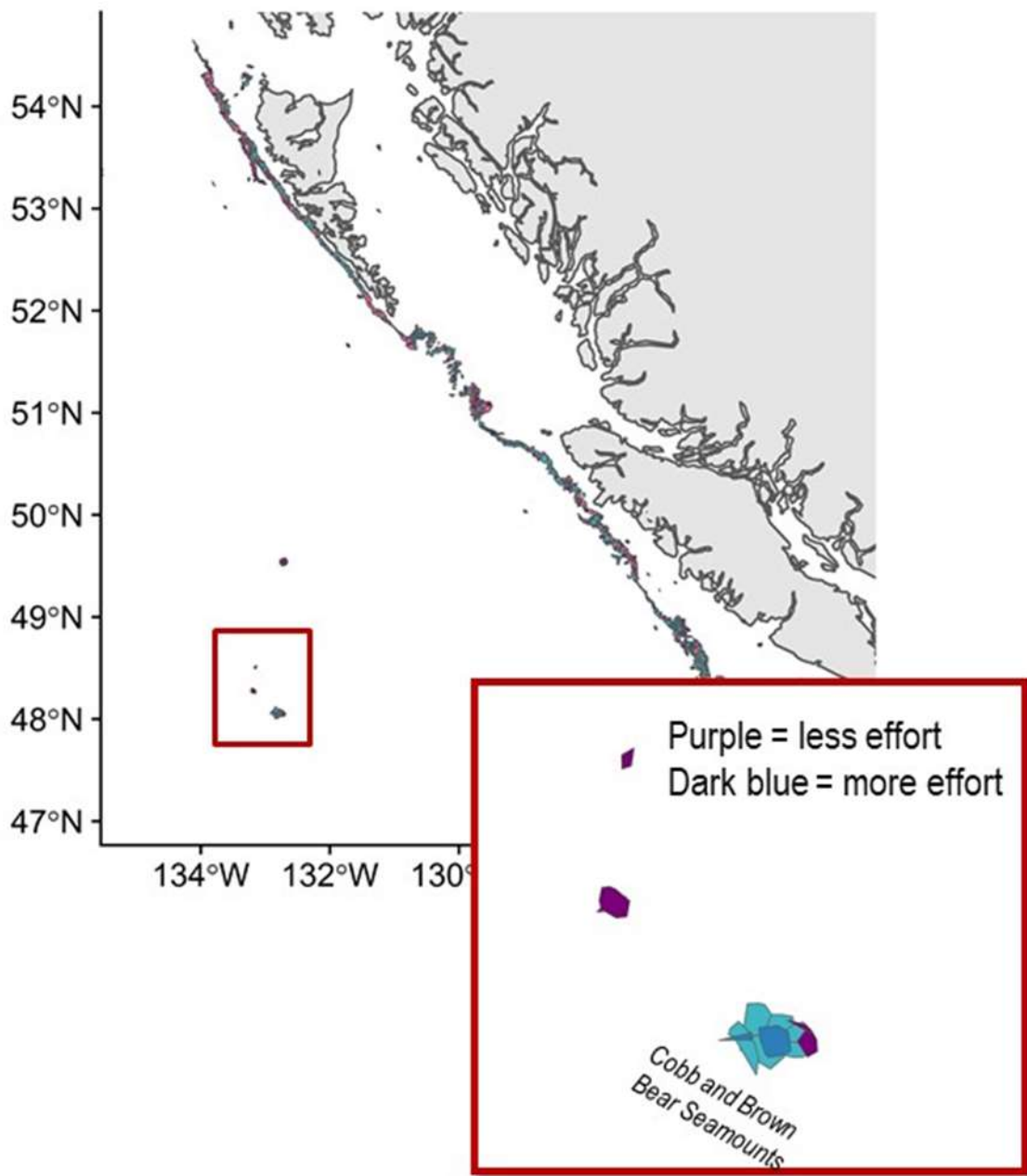


Figure 4. Relative change in spatial distribution of effort for Sablefish trap fishery from 2010-2017 to 2018-2019. Inset shows seamounts in the NPFC Convention Area.

Catch per unit of effort (mt/fishing days) for Sablefish has been increasing over the last 10 years (Figure 5), averaging 0.42 mt/fishing day (CV = 51%). CPUE was not calculated in 2021, but has generally been increasing since 2012.

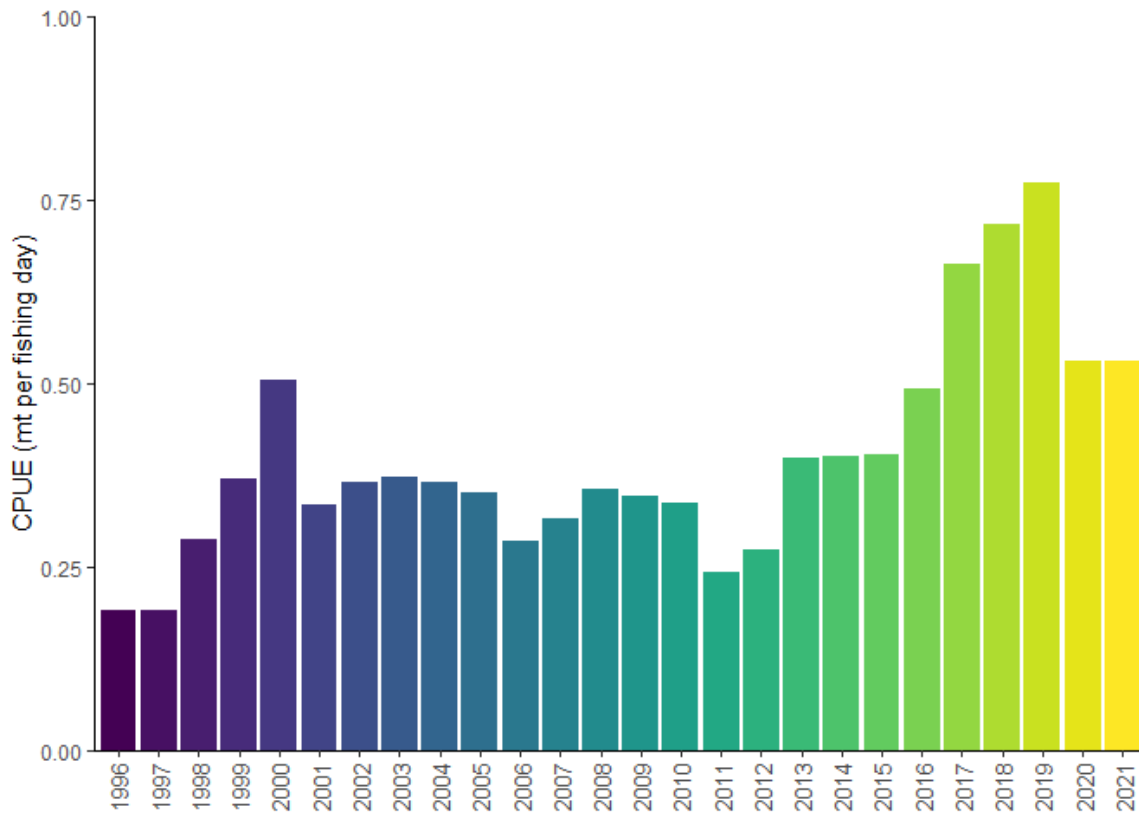


Figure 5. Catch per unit of effort for Canadian Sablefish fishery in NPFC region. Data are averaged across 3 years to comply with data privacy restrictions.

Biological collections

Under the seamount fishing protocol, 5 randomly selected fish per trip are saved by the vessel for sampling when it returns to port. These sablefish are sampled for length, weight and sex. Otoliths are collected for age estimation.

In 2020 due to COVID 19 restrictions, there were no biological samples collected from Sablefish captured in the Convention Area. Historical data will be provided to the NPFC Science Committee, when and as required, in conjunction with the NPFC's Interim Guidance for Management of Scientific Data Used in Stock Assessments.

Domestic fisheries in the U.S.A. and Canada also collect biological data. Data including length, weight and sex are collected from the scientific survey and by observers and dockside samplers from the commercial fisheries. Otoliths for estimating fish ages are also collected from both the surveys and the fisheries.

Table 2. Data availability from Members regarding sablefish

Data	Source	Years	Comment
Catch	Canada	1965-present	Catches from national waters and convention area
	USA	~1960-present	Catches in national waters
CPUE	Canada	~1988-present	not developed
	USA	~1988-present	
Survey	Canada	1990-2009	Longline trap standard survey
	Canada	2003-present	Longline trap random survey
	USA	1978-present	Alaska longline survey
	USA	1982-present	Alaska bottom trawl survey
	USA	2003-present	West Coast bottom trawl survey
Age data	Canada	variable	Commercial and survey catches including NPFC Convention Area
	USA	variable	Commercial and survey catches
Length data	Canada	variable	Commercial and survey catches including NPFC Convention Area
	USA	variable	Commercial and survey catches
Maturity/fecundity	Canada	variable	Commercial and survey catches in national waters
	USA	variable	Commercial and survey catches

Special Comments

None

Biological Information

Distribution

Sablefish are widely distributed throughout the Pacific Ocean from northern Mexico to the Gulf of Alaska, westward to the Aleutian, and northward into the Bering Sea (Figure 6; Wolotira et al. 1993). They are also found along the western margin of the Pacific Ocean from southern Japan through the Kamchatka Peninsula and northward into the Bering Sea. Adult sablefish occur along the continental slope, shelf gullies, and in deep fjords, generally at depths greater than 200 m. Juvenile sablefish spend their first two to three years on the continental shelf at shallower depths. Spawning is generally in the winter and spring (October-April) and occurs near the shelf break. Spawning timing generally occurs earlier in the south (October- February in California) and later in the north (January – April in Alaska). Eggs are found at depth and larvae are found in surface waters (Shotwell

et al. 2020).

Life history

Larval sablefish feed on zooplankton prey. Juveniles shift from pelagic to benthic prey including fishes and invertebrates. Adults consume mostly benthic fishes and invertebrates. Sablefish mature at 4 to 5 years. In the eastern Pacific, Sablefish have traditionally been thought to form two populations based on differences in growth rate, size at maturity, and tagging studies. The northern population inhabits Alaska and northern British Columbia waters and the southern population inhabits southern British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and California waters, with mixing of the two populations occurring off southwest Vancouver Island and northwest Washington. However, recent genetic work by Jasonowicz et al. (2017) found no population sub-structure throughout their range along the US West Coast to Alaska, and suggested that observed differences in growth and maturation rates may be due to phenotypic plasticity or are environmentally driven. Tagging evidence suggests that the sablefish inhabiting seamounts in the NPFC Convention Area are not distinct from the coast wide sablefish population.

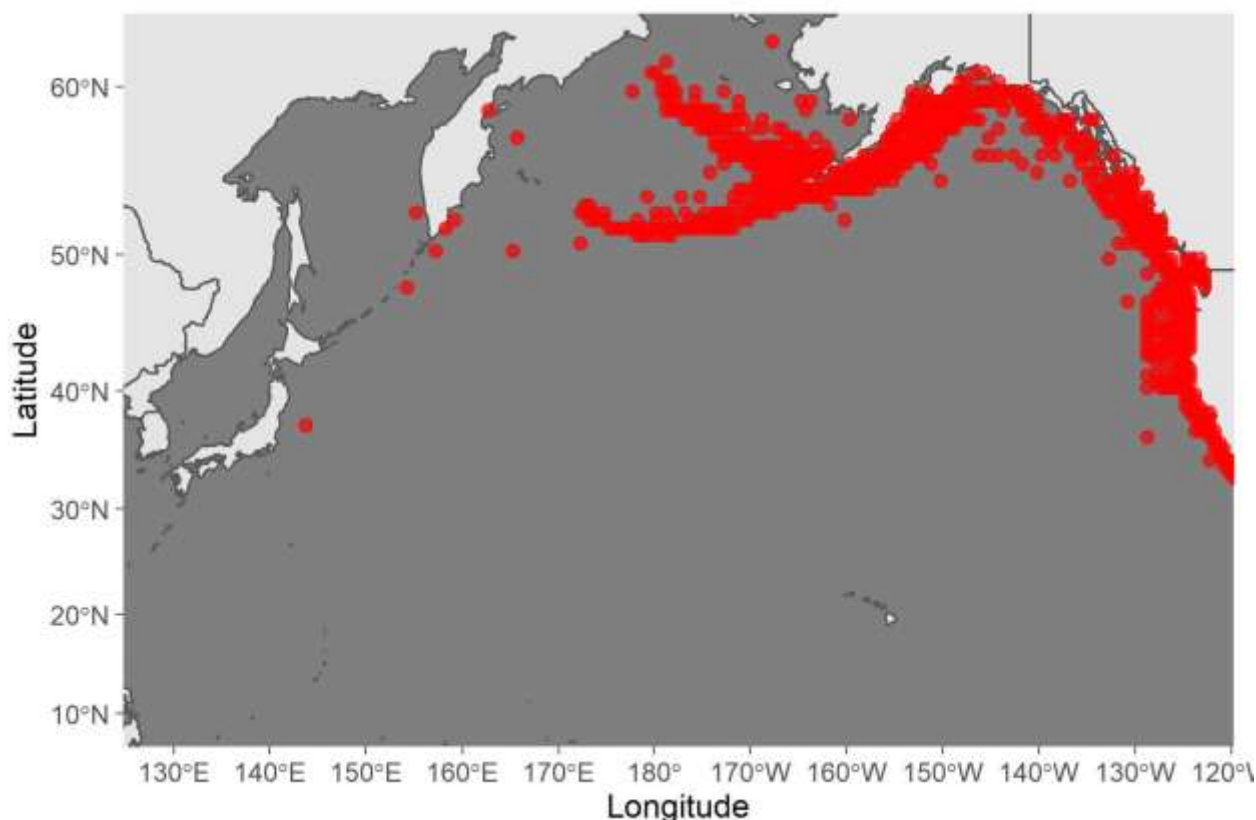


Figure 6. Map of distribution of sablefish in the North Pacific.

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Species summary for blackspotted and roughey rockfishes

Blackspotted and Roughey Rockfishes (*Sebastes melanostictus* and *Sebastes aleutianus*)

Common names:

Blackspotted Rockfishes

... (China); アラメヌケ [Aramenuke] (Japan); ... (Korea); (Russia); ... (Chinese Taipei).

Roughey Rockfishes

... (China); No common name (Japan); ... (Korea); (Russia); ... (Chinese Taipei).



Figure 1. Blackspotted rockfish (*Sebastes melanostictus*).

Management

Active NPFC Management Measures

The following NPFC conservation and management measures (CMM) pertains to these species:

- CMM 2019-06 For Bottom Fisheries and Protection of VMEs in the NE Pacific Ocean
- CMM 2019-10 For Sablefish in the Northeastern Pacific Ocean

Available from <https://www.npfc.int/active-conservation-and-management-measures>.

Management Summary

Blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes are captured in the longline trap fishery that targets sablefish (*Anaplopoma fimbria*) at seamounts in the eastern part of the NPFC Convention Area. The current management measure for blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes specifies both catch and effort limits. The allowable catch of blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes in the eastern portion of the Convention Area is based on a long-term mean of historical catches from seamounts by Canada. It allows for 2.3 mt to be landed each month for the 6 months of the fishing season (April to September). The fishery is also managed through input controls by only allowing a single vessel to fish in each month. The 1-3 Canadian vessels licensed to fish in the NPFC Convention Area are submitted to the NPFC Secretariat annually.

Table 3. Management Summary

Convention or Management Principle	Status	Comment or Consideration
Biological reference point(s)	Not accomplished	Not established
Stock status	Unknown	Status determination criteria not established
Catch limit	Known	Allowable catch of 2.3 mt per month (6 month season)
Harvest control rule	Not accomplished	Not established
Other	Known	Effort control (single vessel per month)

Assessment

No stock assessment is conducted for blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes in the NPFC Convention area.

It is unclear if the blackspotted and rougheye rockfish population on seamounts in the NPFC Convention Area is distinct from the population on the continental shelf of Canada. There is evidence of population structure in other regions, such as Alaska, where population trends and genetics indicate some structure on the order of ~1000 km (Shotwell and Hanselman 2019, Gharrett et al. 2007, Shotwell et al. 2014). This is about twice the distance from the continental shelf to the fished seamounts in the NPFC Convention Area, however there is potentially a large barrier to dispersal of deepwater between the shelf and the seamounts. There is no available tagging data to indicate whether the blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes at seamounts are connected to populations in domestic waters on the continental shelf. It is likely that the seamount populations are distinct stocks with distinct population trajectories.

Domestic stock assessments for blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes conducted in Canada assume there are two populations in domestic waters. These are assessed using a statistical catch at age model (DFO 2020). Assessments are also carried out in Alaska (Shotwell and Hanselman 2019, Spencer et al. 2018).

Data

Surveys

There is currently no survey conducted in the eastern NPFC Convention Area that captures or monitors blackspotted and rougheye rockfish populations.

Fishery

The Canadian high seas sablefish fishery typically operates at 1-4 seamounts in the commission area (Cobb, Eickleberg, Warwick and Brown Bear seamounts).

Historically other seamounts have been fished for blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes both inside and outside Canada's EEZ.

Fishing is conducted with longlined traps. Since 2014 a maximum of 3 vessels per year have been allowed to fish in NPFC waters. Historically the number of fishing vessels has averaged <3 per year (since 2008). The number of fishing days is the number of unique calendar days during which gear was set. The number of fishing days has averaged from about 25 to greater than 100, but in most years has averaged between 50 and 75 (Figure 2). In 2021 the number of unique vessels fishing in the convention area was 0 and the number of fishing days was 0.

Both Canada and the U.S.A. have domestic fisheries that target blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes inside their EEZ's. Blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes is also targeted in domestic trawl fisheries in Canada and the U.S.A.

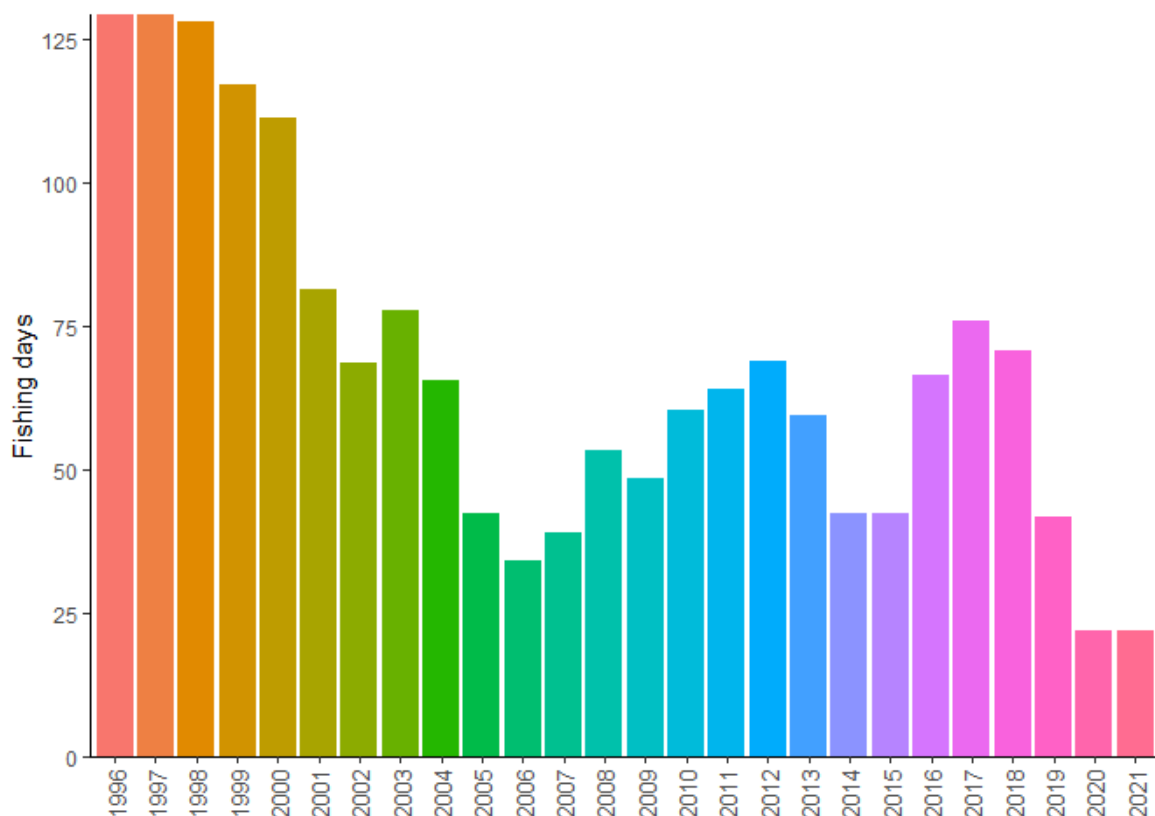


Figure 2. Fishing effort (in number of fishing days) for the sablefish longline trap fishery conducted in NPFC waters (1996-present). Data are averaged across 3 years to comply with data privacy restrictions.

Output controls limit the landings of combined roughey and blackspotted rockfish to 2.3 mt (in round weight). These measures have been in place since 2011.

Catches of blackspotted and roughey rockfishes from NPFC region seamounts has ranged from an average of about 0.5 mt per year in 1996-2014 to about 4 mt in 2017 (Figure 3). Average annual catches were relatively low from 1996 to 2016 at NPFC seamounts and then increased in 2017-2018, with a decline to low levels in the last years. This increase in part probably reflects shifting sablefish effort due to closures of seamounts within Canada’s EEZ. An examination of coastwide shifts in the spatial pattern of fishing effort showed that fishing effort has become concentrated on Cobb Seamount, with increasing effort in shallower waters perhaps reflecting increased targeting of blackspotted and roughey rockfishes relative to the past (Figure 4). The catch of blackspotted and roughey rockfishes from the Convention Area in 2021 was 0 mt.

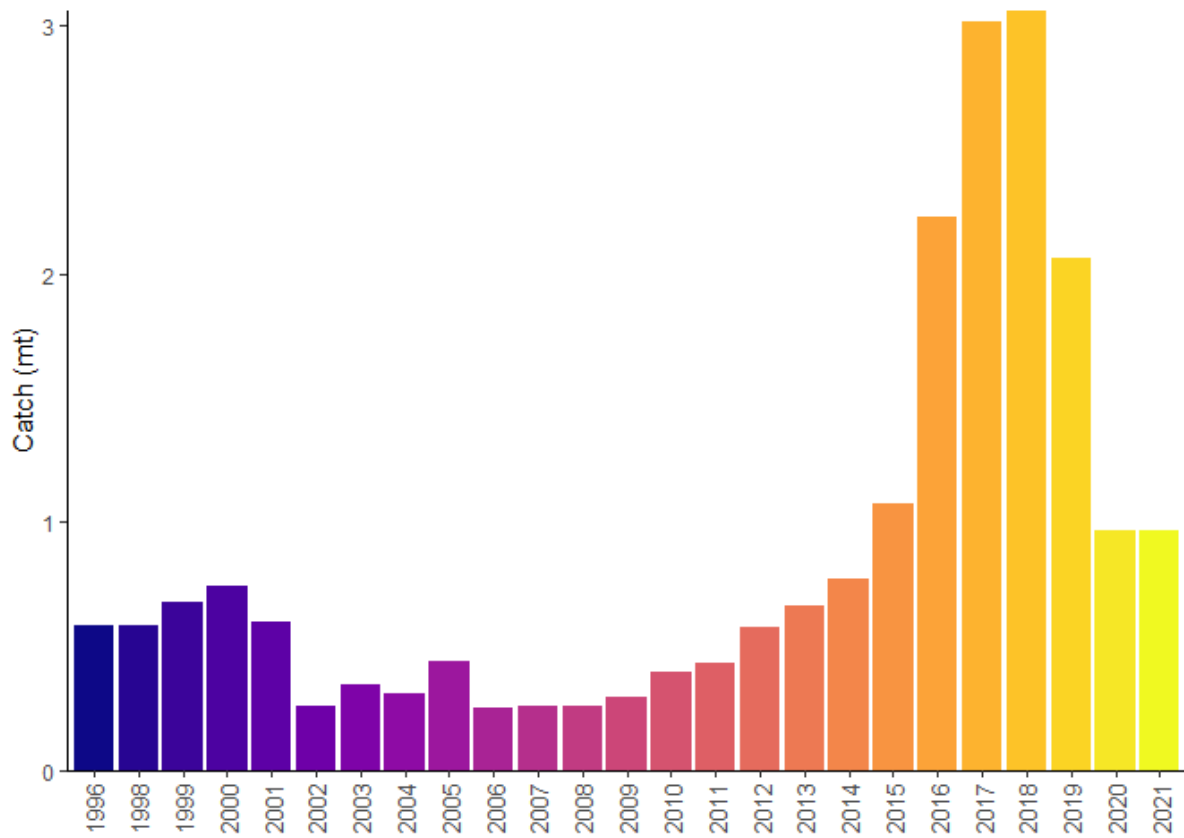


Figure 3. Landings of blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes in the Canadian Sablefish fishery in NPFC region (1996-present). Data are averaged across 3 years to comply with data privacy restrictions.

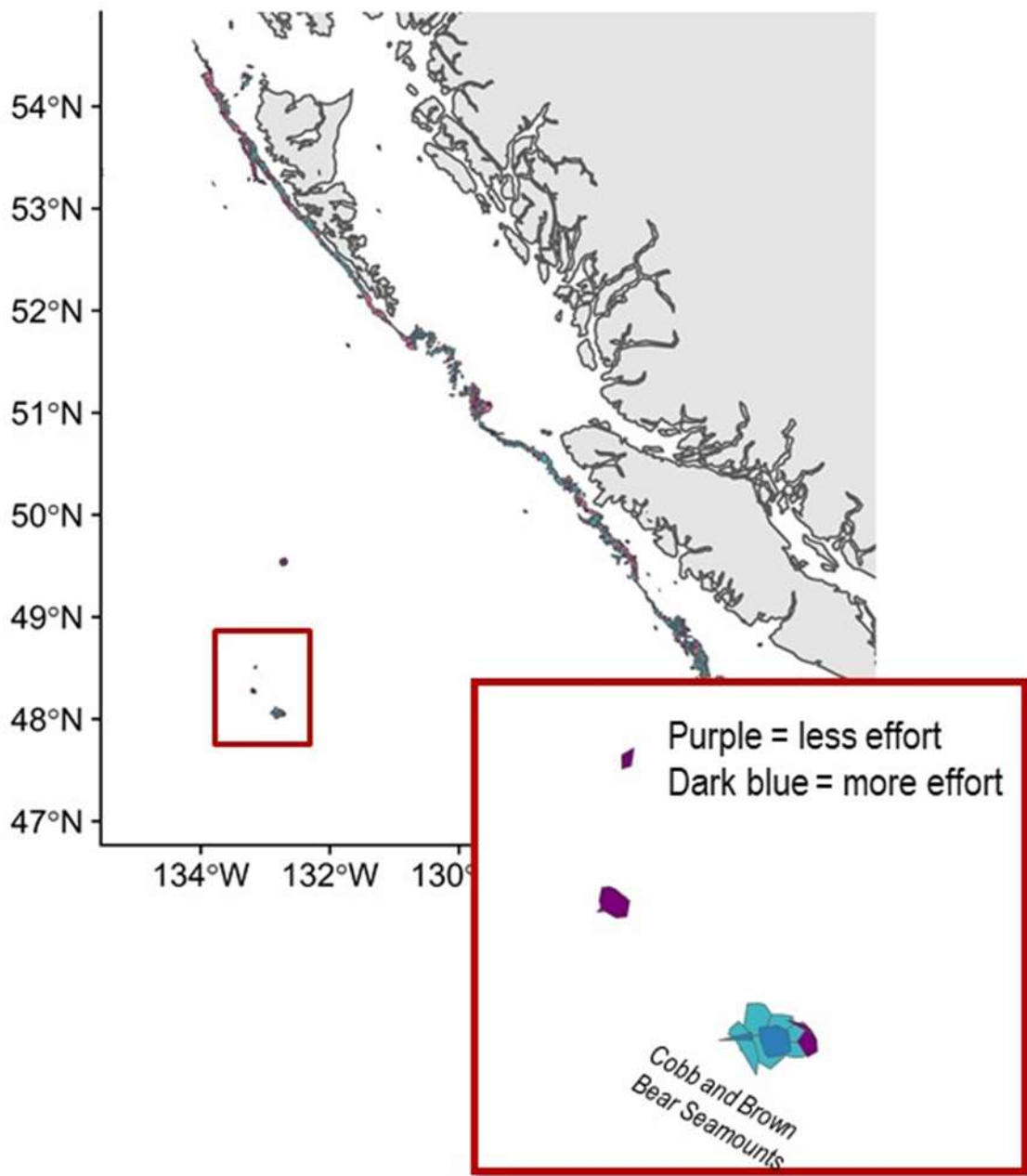


Figure 4. Relative change in spatial distribution of effort for Sablefish trap fishery from 2010-2017 to 2018-2019. Inset shows seamounts in the NPFC Convention Area.

Catch per unit of effort (mt/fishing days) for blackspotted and roughey rockfishes has been increasing over the last 10 years (Figure 5), averaging 0.02 mt/fishing day (CV = 102%). CPUE was not calculated in 2021 due to the absence of fishing in the Convention Area, but has generally been increasing since 2012.

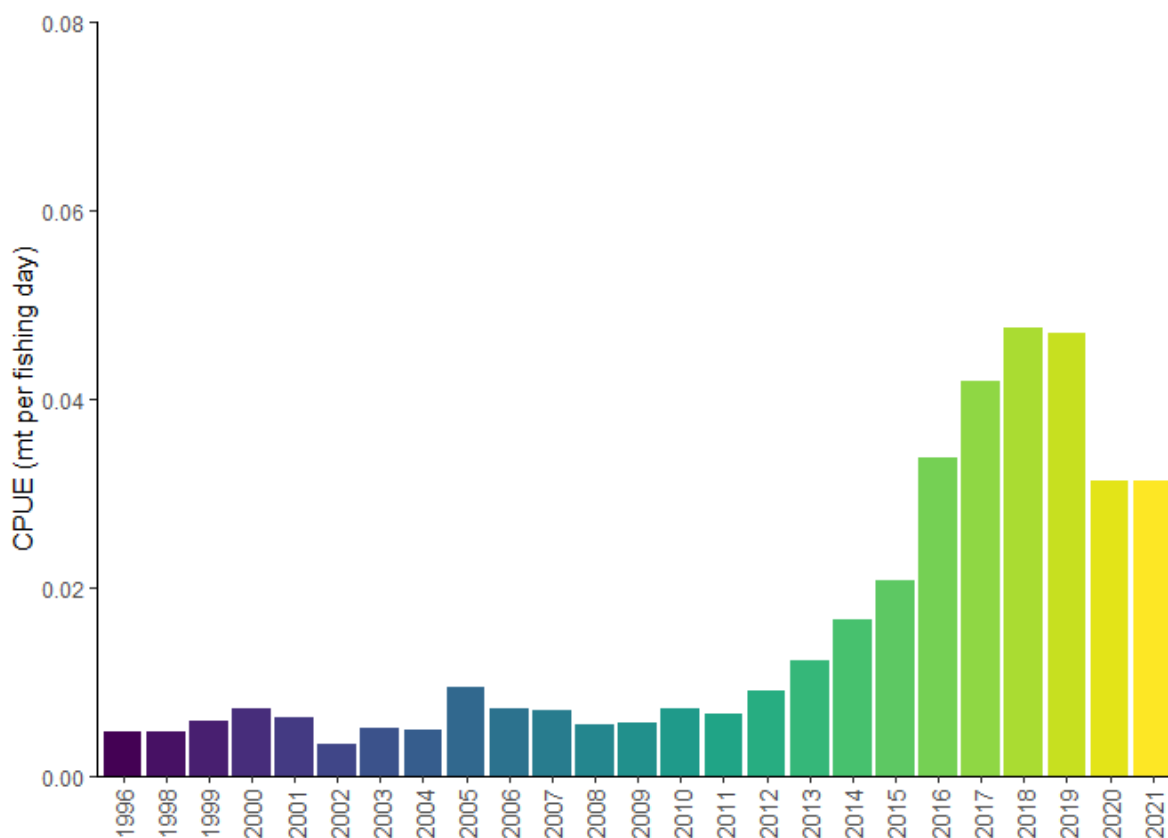


Figure 5. Catch per unit of effort for blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes in the Canadian Sablefish fishery in NPFC region. Data are averaged across 3 years to comply with data privacy restrictions.

Biological collections

No biological collections are taken from blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes captured in the NPFC Convention Area. Biological data are available from domestic fisheries and surveys in Canada.

Table 4. Data availability from Members regarding blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes

Data	Source	Years	Comment
Catch	Canada	1996-present	Catches from national waters and convention area
CPUE	Canada	1996-present	
Survey	None		Survey data are available from Canada and U.S.A. national waters
Age data	None		Data available from Canada and U.S.A. domestic fisheries and surveys

Data	Source	Years	Comment
Length data	None		Data available from Canada and U.S.A. domestic fisheries and surveys
Maturity/fecundity	None		Data available from Canada and U.S.A. domestic fisheries and surveys

Special Comments

None

Biological Information

Distribution

Blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes are widely distributed throughout the Pacific Ocean from California to the Gulf of Alaska, westward to the Aleutian, and northward into the Bering Sea (Figure 6; Love et al. 2002). They are also found along the western margin of the Pacific Ocean from the Kuril Islands through the Kamchatka Peninsula and northward into the Bering Sea. Adult blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes occur in rocky habitat along the continental slope, shelf gullies, and in deep fjords, generally at depths from 150 to 450 m (Love et al. 2002). Juvenile blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes are found at shallower depths (250-300 m) at the continental shelf break. Until recently, these species were considered a single species (rougheye rockfish; Orr and Hawkins 2008).

Life history

Blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes are extremely long-lived, with maximum ages > 200 years. They mature late at about 20 years of age. These characteristics make them vulnerable to overfishing. The species are live-bearing, extruding larvae generally in the spring (February-June). Blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes are benthic feeders, consuming mostly shrimps, crabs and fishes (Yang and Nelson 2000).

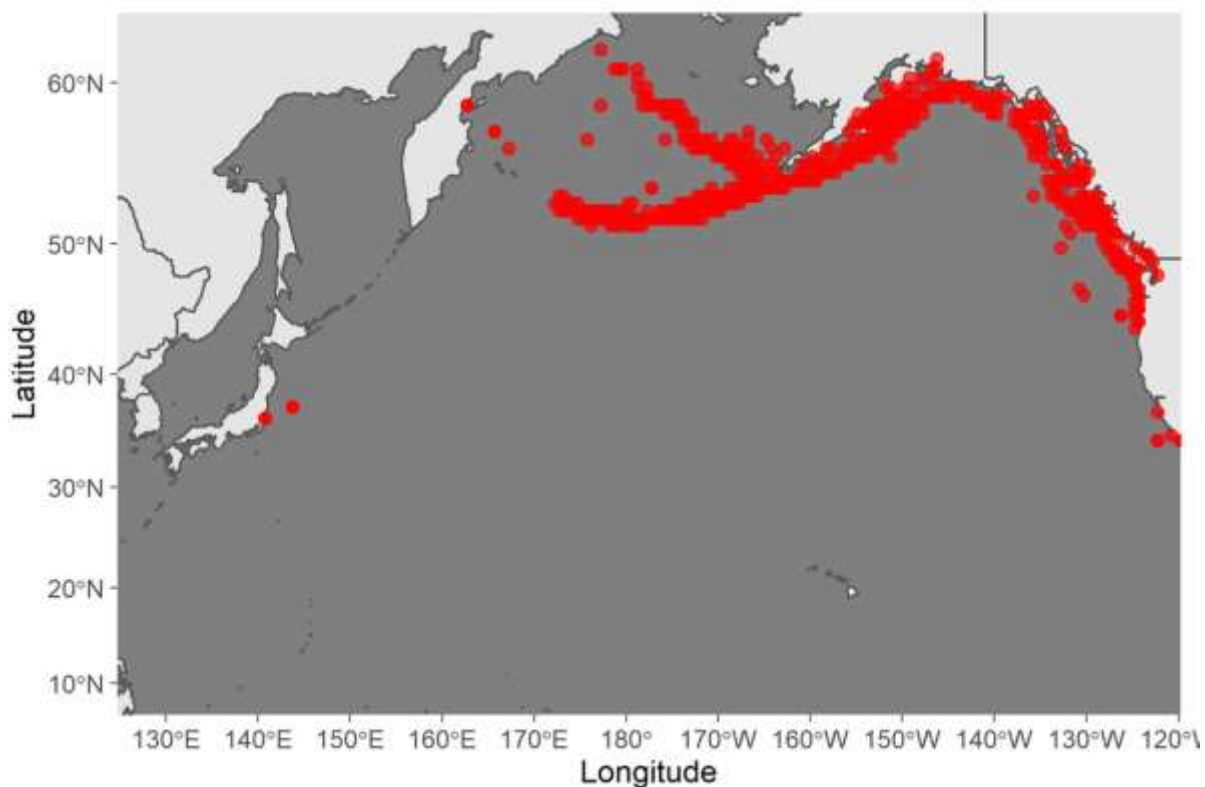


Figure 6. Map of distribution of blackspotted and rougheye rockfishes in the North Pacific.

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Data availability for North Pacific armorhead and splendid alfonsino

North Pacific Armorhead

Category and data sources	Description (including spatial or temporal resolution, if possible)	Years with available data	Average sample size/ year or data coverage	Potential issues to be reviewed
Japan				
Catch statistics				
Trawl Catch - Japan	Annual catch	1969-present	100% coverage	
Gillnet Catch - Japan	Annual catch	1990-present	100% coverage	
Trawl Catch - Korea	Official statistics, reports from annual report	Official statistics: 2004-2019	100% coverage	Catches are collected by electronic reporting system since 2015. Catches before 2015 are from the fishing catch provided by the fishery company
Trawl Fishery - Russia	Official statistics, scientific surveys, observer data	1970-1987; 1997; 2001-2002; 2005- 2006; 2011; 2013	100% coverage	Data coverage details to be reviewed
Size, age, composition data				

Length and body depth measurements, Fishery (gillnet and trawl) - Japan	Scientific observer data	June 2009-present-	ca. 11,000 fish per year	Protocol revised (see NPFC-2018-SSC BF01-WP03)
Length and body depth measurements, Survey (trawl) - Japan	Monitoring survey data	2019-present	ca. 800 fish per year	
Length and body depth measurements - Japan	Laboratory measurement data (observer sample, monitoring sample, on-board survey sample, R/V Kaiyo-maru sample)	2012-present	ca. 1,200 fish per year	
Length measurements, Fishery (trawl) – Korea	Measured by observers while onboard	2013-2019	80-1600 fish/year	Data coverage review
Length measurements - Russia	scientific surveys, observer data	1970-1987; 1997; 2011; 2013	Coverage=100%	Data coverage details to be reviewed
Body depth measurements - Russia	scientific surveys, observer data	1970-1987; 1997; 2011; 2013	Coverage=100%	Data coverage details to be reviewed
Aging - Japan	NA			A preliminary daily ring analysis for ca. 300 fish
Aging - Korea	Samples by observers	2013-2019	80-300 fish/year	Details to be reviewed
Catch at age (CAA) - Korea	Estimate CAA from the above data	2013-2019	Age-length key are to be developed	
Maturity - Japan	Gonad mass/ GSI (Observer sample measured in the laboratory)	2013-present	ca. 1,200 fish per year	

Maturity - Japan	Maturity stage from histological analysis (Observer sample analyzed in the laboratory)	2017, 2019	ca. 60 fish per year	
Maturity - Korea	Maturity measured by observers	2013-2019	80-300 fish/year	Data coverage review
Sex and maturity – Russia	scientific surveys, observer data Maturity stage, sex (gender) composition.	1970-1987; 1997; 2011; 2013	Coverage=100%	Data coverage details to be reviewed
Abundance indices (survey)				
Catch data, trawl - Japan	Monitoring survey data	2019-present	16 tows in 2019, 4 tows in 2020	Preliminary surveys in 2018 not included
Effort data, trawl - Japan	Monitoring survey data	2019-present	16 tows in 2019, 4 tows in 2020	Preliminary surveys in 2018 not included
Catch data - Russia Effort data - Russia	scientific surveys, observer data	1970-1987; 1997;		Data coverage details to be reviewed
Abundance indices (commercial)				
Catch data, trawl - Japan	Scientific observer data, shot-by-shot	June 2009-present	100% coverage	Possible impact by misreporting (NPFC-2018-TCC03-Final Report)

Effort data, trawl – Japan	Scientific observer data, shot-by-shot	June 2009-present	100% coverage	
Catch data, gillnet - Japan	Scientific observer data, shot-by-shot	2018-present	100% coverage	
Catch data, gillnet - Japan	Scientific observer data, daily	June 2009-2017	100% coverage	
Effort data, gillnet - Japan	Scientific observer data, shot-by-shot	June 2009-present	100% coverage	
Catch data, trawl - Japan	Logbook data, daily	1970-present	100% coverage since 1992, uncertain in older period	Digitization of old (before 1989) data has not been completed
Effort data, trawl - Japan	Logbook data, daily	1970-present	100% coverage since 1992, uncertain in older period	Digitization of old (before 1989) data has not been completed
Catch data, gillnet - Japan	Logbook data, daily	2008-present	100% coverage	
Effort data, gillnet - Japan	Logbook data, daily	2008-present	100% coverage	
Trawl - Korea	Logbook data available	2013-2019	Coverage =100%	One fishing vessel. Standardization?
Catch data, gear 1 - Russia	Official statistics, observer data	2001-2002; 2005-2006; 2011; 2013		Data coverage details to be reviewed
Effort data, gear 1 - Russia				

Splendid Alfonsino

Category and data sources	Description (including spatial or temporal resolution, if possible)	Years with available data	Average sample size/ year or data coverage	Potential issues to be reviewed
Japan				
Catch statistics				
Trawl - Japan	Annual catch	1969 to present	100% coverage	
Gillnet - Japan	Annual catch	1990 to present	100% coverage	
Trawl - Korea	Official statistics, reports from annual report	Official statistics: 2004-2019	Coverage=100%	Catches are collected by electronic reporting system since 2015. Catches before 2015 are from the fishing catch provided by the fishery company
Trawl Fishery - Russia Fishery B	Official statistics, scientific surveys, observer data	1969-1988; 2002; 2005; 2006; 2010; 2011; 2013; 2019	Coverage=100%	Data coverage details to be reviewed
Size, age, composition data				
Length measurements - Japan	Scientific observer data using punch cards	June 2009 to present-	ca. 37,000 fish pr year	see NPFC-2018-SSC BF01-WP03 Appendix
Length measurements - Japan	Monitoring survey data	2019	ca. 400 fish	SA not caught in 2020 monitoring surveys

Length measurements - Japan	Laboratory measurement data (observer sample, monitoring sample, on-board survey sample, R/V Kaiyo-maru sample)	2013 to present	ca. 1,400 fish per year	
Length measurements - Korea	Measured by observers while onboard	2013-2019	10-2000 fish/year	Data coverage review
Length measurements - Russia	scientific surveys, observer data	1969-1988; 2010; 2011; 2013; 2019	Coverage=100%	Data coverage details to be reviewed
Aging - Japan	Otolith annual rings (Observer and other samples analyzed in the laboratory)	2013 to present	ca. 900 fish per year	Need to correct the difference in reading protocols
Aging - Korea	Samples by observers	2013-2017, 2019	10-380 fish/year	Details to be reviewed
Catch at age (CAA) - Japan	NA			CAA can be estimated by creating age-length key from aging data
Catch at age (CAA) - Korea	Estimate CAA from the above data	2013-2017, 2019	Age-length key are to be developed	
Maturity - Japan	Gonad mass/ GSI (Observer sample measured in the laboratory)	2013 to present	ca 1,400 fish per year	
Maturity - Japan	Maturity stage from histological analysis (Observer and other samples analyzed in the laboratory)	2017 to present	ca. 45 fish per year	

Maturity - Korea	Maturity measured by observers	2013-2017, 2019	10-2000 fish/year	Data coverage review
Sex and maturity – Russia	scientific surveys, observer data Maturity stage, sex (gender) composition.	1969-1988; 2010; 2011; 2013; 2019	Coverage=100%	Data coverage details to be reviewed
Abundance indices (survey)				
Catch data - Japan	Monitoring survey data	2019 to present	16 tows in 2019, 4 tows in 2020	0 catch of SA in 2020 monitoring surveys Preliminary surveys in 2018 not included
Effort data - Japan	Monitoring survey data	2019 to present	16 tows in 2019, 4 tows in 2020	0 catch of SA in 2020 monitoring surveys Preliminary surveys in 2018 not included
Catch data - Russia Effort data - Russia	scientific surveys, observer data	1969-1988; 2010; 2019	Coverage=100%	Data coverage details to be reviewed
Abundance indices (commercial)				
Catch data, trawl - Japan	Scientific observer data, shot-by-shot	June 2009 to present	100% coverage	Possible impact by misreporting (NPFC-2018-TCC03-Final Report)
Effort data, trawl – Japan	Scientific observer data, shot-by-shot	June 2009 to present	100% coverage	

Catch data, gillnet - Japan	Scientific observer data, shot-by-shot	2018 to present	100% coverage	
Catch data, gillnet - Japan	Scientific observer data, daily	June 2009 to 2017	100% coverage	
Effort data, gillnet – Japan	Scientific observer data, shot-by-shot	June 2009 to present	100% coverage	
Catch data, trawl – Japan	Logbook data, daily	1970-present	100% coverage since 1992, uncertain in older period	Digitization of old (to 1988) data has not been completed
Effort data, trawl – Japan	Logbook data, daily	1970-present	100% coverage since 1992, uncertain in older period	Digitization of old (before 1989) data has not been completed
Catch data, gillnet - Japan	Logbook data, daily	2008-present	100% coverage	
Effort data, gillnet - Japan	Logbook data, daily	2008-present	100% coverage	
Trawl – Korea	Logbook data available	2013-2019	Coverage=100%	One fishing vessel. Standardization?

Terms of Reference for a data limited approach to stock assessment for North Pacific armorhead and splendid alfonsino

1. The same initial approach to data, analysis and assessment will be used for both North Pacific armorhead (NPA) and splendid alfonsino (SA)
2. Given the limited data available to assess NPA and SA a data limited approach that utilizes life-history information (size, maturity and age data) will be explored to generate population status for the two species
3. The SWG NPA-SA members will collaborate on the analyses
4. All members with bottom fish fisheries will contribute any available data on size, maturity and age of NPA and SA in accordance with the data sharing protocols and in the format provided in the accompanying table
5. The provided data will be used for the data-limited approach to NPA and SA stock assessment and will not be shared, distributed or used for other purposes without the consent of the data provider

Members' available VME related data

Table 1. Existing Data for Potential Combined Footprint and Effort Map of all Bottom Fisheries by Gear and Time.

Gear type	Time period	Temporal resolution	Spatial resolution
Eastern North Pacific			
CANADA			
Longline	Recent/current (1996-2018)	Set by set (1-2 days)	1'' x 1''
JAPAN			
Non-commercial			
RUSSIA			
Bottom Trawl (observer or fishery independent data)	1973- 1985, not annual	Set by set (finer than a day)	6''x 6''
USA			
TBD			
Western North Pacific			
JAPAN			
Trawl	Historical (1969-1981)	Month	1° (long) x 30' (lat)
	Historical (1989-present) – logbook data	Day	1° (long) x 30' (lat)
	Recent/current (from 2009) – scientific observer data	Haul by haul (finer than a day)	30'' x 30''
Gillnet	Historical (2000-present) – logbook data	Day	1° (long) x 30' (lat)
	Recent/current (from 2009) - scientific observer data	Set by set (finer than a day)	30'' x 30''

KOREA			
Trawl	Historical (2004-present)	Day	20'x 20'
	Recent/current (from 2014)	Haul by haul (finer than a day)	30'' x 30''
RUSSIA			
Longline (observer data)	Recent/current (from 2014)	Set by set (finer than a day)	6''x 6''
Bottom Trawl (observer or fishery independent data)	1969- 2019, not annual	Set by set (finer than a day)	6''x 6''

Table 2. Existing Taxa Data for Combined Assessment

Survey type	Gear type	Taxa resolution	Time period	Temporal resolution	Spatial resolution
Eastern NP					
CANADA					
Fisheries	Longline	≥species	Recent/current (1996-2018)	Set by set (1-2 days)	1' (long) x 1' (lat)
Fisheries independent	Underwater image survey	≥species	2012	~1 sec	<1' (long) x 1' (lat)
Eastern NP (outside CA)					
CANADA					
Fisheries independent adjacent to CA	Underwater image survey	≥species	2017-2018	~1 sec	<1' (long) x 1' (lat)
Western NP					
JAPAN					
Fisheries	Trawl, Gillnet	≥species	2009-2018 (continue)	Set by set	30" (long) x 30" (lat)
Fisheries independent	Beam trawl	≥species	2009-2018 (continue)	Set by set	30" (long) x 30" (lat)
Fisheries independent	Underwater image survey	≥species	2009-2018 (continue)	~1 sec	30" (long) x 30" (lat)
KOREA					
Fisheries	Trawl	≥species	2016-2018 (continue)	Haul by haul	30" (long) x 30" (lat)
USA					
Fisheries independent	Autonomous underwater vehicle	≥species	2014-2015		
	Submersible	≥species	2016-2017		

Table 3. Existing Multibeam Data for Combined Assessment

Seamount	Collected by	Survey and gear type	Time period	Spatial resolution	Back-scatter	Stored by	Publicly available?
Eastern NP							
Canada/ USA							
Cobb	United States	Survey RB0002; SeaBeam2112 onboard the NOAA Ship <i>RV Ronald Brown</i>	2000	20 m x 20 m	No	NOAA	Y website
Far Cobb	na						
Cobb South	na						
Western NP							
JAPAN							
C-H, Colahan, Kammu, part of Koko (ongoing)	National Fisheries University	EM710S MBES onboard the TV Koyomaru	2010-present	30" x 30"	Y	Fisheries Agency of Japan	Y

Potential data to be consolidated for predictive modeling

Input data: taxa (point data)

- Taxa abundance, presence-absence, or presence only data from
 - Fisheries bycatch
 - Science survey collections (e.g., university records; museum records)
 - Underwater-image derived data
- *Consideration: what is the probability of detecting presence (i.e., catchability or sampling effectiveness)
- *Consideration: taxa to be included, taxa resolution

Input data: environmental (continuous data)

- Anthropogenic

- Fisheries bycatch
- Naturalness (e.g., historic fishing)
- Location of fishing activity (consider gear type)
- Other local human impacts
- Benthic
 - Depth (e.g., at specific location; at-summit)
 - Substrate type (e.g., multibeam backscatter; online models)
 - Slope
 - Rugosity, roughness, complexity
 - Aspect
- Oceanographic (at-surface, at-depth, at-summit, and/or considering a temporal variability, such as annual mean)
 - Current flow strength
 - Current flow direction
 - Temperature (sea surface; at depth)
 - pH (alkalinity)
 - Salinity
 - Oxygen
 - Aragonite and calcite saturation states
 - Nitrate
 - Silicic acid
 - Primary productivity (chlorophyll a)
 - Particulate organic carbon
- Geographic
 - Biogeographic region
 - Locality (Eastness, Northness)
 - Isolation/proximity

Potential iterative predictive models

- Models used by Members
 - Marxan (i.e., decision-support tool)
 - Maxent (maximum entropy modelling)
 - Random Forest (can take both abundance & presence-absence data)
- Additional Models
 - GLM/GAM
 - Boosted regression models
 - Validation and sensitivity assessment (e.g., post hoc; independent data)

Revised CMM 2021-05 - Conservation and Management Measure for Bottom Fisheries and Protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems in the Northwestern Pacific Ocean

CMM 2021-05

(Entered into force 10 July 2021)

**CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURE
FOR BOTTOM FISHERIES AND PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE MARINE
ECOSYSTEMS IN THE NORTHWESTERN PACIFIC OCEAN**

The North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC),

Strongly supporting protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) and sustainable management of fish stocks based on the best scientific information available;

Recalling the United Nations General Assembly Resolutions (UNGA) on Sustainable Fisheries, particularly paragraphs 66 to 71 of the UNGA59/25 in 2004, paragraphs 69 to 74 of UNGA60/31 in 2005, and paragraphs 69 and 80 to 91 of UNGA61/105 in 2006;

Noting, in particular, paragraphs 66 and 69 of UNGA59/25 that call upon States to take action urgently to address the issue of bottom trawl fisheries on VMEs and to cooperate in the establishment of new regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements;

Recognizing further that fishing activities, including bottom fisheries, are an important contributor to the global food supply and that this must be taken into account when seeking to achieve sustainable fisheries and to protect VMEs;

Recognizing the importance of collecting scientific data to assess the impacts of these fisheries on marine species and VMEs;

Concerned about possible adverse impacts of unregulated expansion of bottom fisheries on marine species and VMEs in the western part of the Convention Area.

Adopts the following Conservation and Management Measure:

1. Scope

A. Coverage

These Measures are to be applied to all bottom fishing activities throughout the high seas areas of the Northwestern Pacific Ocean, defined, for the purposes of this document, as those occurring in the Convention Area as set out in Article 4 of the Convention text to the west of the line of 175 degrees W longitude (here in after called “the western part of the Convention Area”) including all such areas and marine species other than those species already covered by existing international fisheries management instruments, including bilateral agreements and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations or Arrangements.

B. Management target

Bottom fisheries conducted by vessels operating in the western part of the Convention Area.

2. General purpose

Sustainable management of fish stocks and protection of VMEs in the western part of the Convention Area.

The objective of these Measures is to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fisheries resources in the Convention Area while protecting the marine ecosystems of the North Pacific Ocean in which these resources occur.

These measures shall set out to prevent significant adverse impacts on VMEs in the Convention Area of the North Pacific Ocean, acknowledging the complex dependency of fishing resources and species belonging to the same ecosystem within VMEs.

The Commission shall re-evaluate, and as appropriate, revise, the definition based on further consideration of the work done through FAO and by NPFC.

3. Principles

The implementation of this CMM shall:

- (a) be based on the best scientific information available,
- (b) be in accordance with existing international laws and agreements including UNCLOS and other relevant international instruments,
- (c) establish appropriate and effective conservation and management measures,
- (d) be in accordance with the precautionary approach, and
- (e) incorporate an ecosystem approach to fisheries management.

4. Measures

Members of the Commission shall take the following measures in order to achieve sustainable management of fish stocks and protection of VMEs in the western part of the Convention Area:

- A. Limit fishing effort in bottom fisheries on the western part of the Convention Area to the level agreed in February 2007 in terms of the number of fishing vessels and other parameters which reflect the level of fishing effort, fishing capacity or potential impacts on marine ecosystems.
- B. Not allow bottom fisheries to expand into the western part of the Convention Area where no such fishing is currently occurring, in particular, by limiting such bottom fisheries to seamounts located south of 45 degrees North Latitude and refrain from bottom fisheries in other areas of the western part of the Convention Area covered by these measures and also not allow bottom fisheries to conduct fishing operation in areas deeper than 1,500m.
- C. Notwithstanding subparagraphs A and B above, exceptions to these restrictions may be provided in cases where it can be shown that any fishing activity beyond such limits or in any new areas would not have significant adverse impacts (SAIs) on marine species or any VME. Such fishing activity is subject to an exploratory fishery protocol (Annex 1).
- D. Any determinations pursuant to subparagraph C that any proposed fishing activity will not have SAIs on marine species or any VME are to be in accordance with the Science-based Standards and Criteria (Annex 2), which are consistent with the FAO International Guidelines for the Management of Deepsea Fisheries in the High Seas.
- E. Any determinations, by any flag State or pursuant to any subsequent arrangement for the management of the bottom fisheries in the areas covered by these measures, that fishing activity would not have SAIs on marine species or any VMEs, shall be made publicly available through agreed means.
- F. Prohibit its vessels from engaging in directed fishing on the following taxa: *Alcyonacea*, *Antipatharia*, *Gorgonacea*, and *Scleractinia* as well as any other indicator species for VMEs as may be identified from time to time by the SC and approved by the Commission.
- G. Further, considering accumulated information regarding fishing activities in the western part of the Convention Area, in areas where, in the course of fishing operations, cold

water corals more than 50Kg are encountered in one gear retrieval, Members of the Commission shall require vessels flying their flag to cease bottom fishing activities in that location. In such cases, the vessel shall not resume fishing activities until it has relocated a sufficient distance, which shall be no less than 2 nautical miles, so that additional encounters with VMEs are unlikely. All such encounters, including the location, gear type, date, time and name and weight of the VME indicator species, shall be reported to the Secretariat, through the Member, within one business day. The Executive Secretary shall, within one business day, immediately notify the other Members of the Commission and at the same time implement a temporary closure in the area to prohibit bottom fishing vessels from contacting the sea floor with their trawl nets, so that appropriate measures can be adopted in respect of the relevant site. Members shall inform their fleets and enforcement operations within one business day of the receipt of the notification from the Executive Secretary. It is agreed that the cold water corals include: *Alcyonacea*, *Antipatharia*, *Gorgonacea*, and *Scleractinia*.

Gbis Based on all the available data, including data on the VME encounter and distribution received from the fishing vessel(s), research survey data, visual survey data, and/or model results, the Scientific Committee (SC) shall assess and conclude if the area has a VME. If so, the SC shall recommend to the Commission that the temporary closure be made permanent, although the boundary of the closure may be adjusted, or suggest other appropriate measures. Otherwise, the Executive Secretary shall inform the Members that they may reopen the area to their vessels.

- H. C-H seamount and Southeastern part of Koko seamount, specifically for the latter seamount, the area South of 34 degrees 57 minutes North, East of the 400m isobaths, East of 171 degrees 54 minutes East, North of 34 degrees 50 minutes North, are closed precautionary for potential VME conservation. Fishing in these areas requires exploratory fishery protocol (Annex 1).
- I. Ensure that the distance between the footrope of the gill net and sea floor is greater than 70 cm.
- J. Apply a bottom fisheries closure from November to December.
- K. Limit annual catch of North Pacific armorhead to 15,000 tons for Japan.

- L. Development of new fishing activity for the North Pacific armorhead and splendid alfonsino in the Convention Area by Members without documented historical catch for North Pacific armorhead and splendid alfonsino in the Convention Area shall be determined in accordance with relevant provisions, including but not limited to Article 3, paragraph (h) and Article 7, subparagraphs 1(g) and (h) of the Convention.
- M. In years when strong recruitment of North Pacific armorhead is not detected (Annex 6), the Commission encourages Japan to limit the annual catch of North Pacific armorhead by vessels flying its flag to 500 tons, and encourages Korea to limit the annual catch of North Pacific armorhead by vessels flying its flag to 200 tons. The Commission encourages that catch overages for any given year be subtracted from the applicable annual catch limit in the following year, and that catch underages during any given year not be added to the applicable annual catch limit during the following year.
- N. Notwithstanding subparagraph K, when a strong recruitment of North Pacific armorhead is detected through the monitoring surveys as specified in Annex 6, the Commission encourages that Japan limit the annual catch of North Pacific armorhead by vessels flying its flag to 10,000 tons, and that Korea limit the annual catch of North Pacific armorhead by vessels flying its flag to 2,000 tons. The Commission encourages that catch overages for any given year be subtracted from the applicable annual catch limit in the following year, and that catch underages during any given year not be added to the applicable annual catch limit during the following year. During a year when high recruitment is detected, bottom fishing with trawl gear shall be prohibited in specific areas in the Emperor seamounts where half of the catch occurred in 2010 and 2012 (Annex 6). Determination of a strong recruitment year and of the specific areas where bottom fishing with trawl gear is prohibited shall be communicated to all Members and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties following the procedure specified in Annex 6.
- O. Catch in the monitoring surveys shall not be included in the catch limits specified in paragraphs M and N but shall be reported to the Secretariat.
- P. Fishing activity for the North Pacific armorhead and splendid alfonsino in the Convention Area by Members with documented historical catch for North Pacific armorhead and splendid alfonsino in the Convention Area is not precluded.

- Q. Members shall require vessels flying their flags to use trawl nets with mesh size greater than or equal to 130mm of stretched mesh with 5kg tension in the codend when conducting fishing activities for North Pacific armorhead or splendid alfonsino.
- R. Task the Scientific Committee with reviewing the appropriate methods for establishing catch limits, and the adequacy and practicability of the adaptive management plan described in subparagraphs K, L, M, N, O, P, Q and Annex 6 from time to time and recommending revisions and actions, if necessary.
- S. Prohibit its bottom fishing vessels from contacting the sea floor with their trawl nets in the following two sites with VME indicator species. A Member of the Commission whose fishing vessels entered these areas shall report to the TCC as to how it ensured the compliance of this measure.

Sites with VME indicator species (Areas surrounded by the straight lines linking the 4 geographical points below)

Northwestern part of Koko Seamount	35-44.75 N 171-07.60 E	35-44.75 N 171-07.80 E
	35-43.80 N 171-07.80 E	35-43.80 N 171-08.00 E
Northern Ridge of Colahan Seamount	31-03.85 N 175-53.40 E	31-03.85 N 175-53.65 E
	31-03.5 N 175-53.50 E	31-03.05 N 175-53.85 E

5. Contingent Action

Members of the Commission shall submit to the SC their assessments of the impacts of fishing activity on marine species or any VMEs, including the proposed management measures to prevent such impact. Such submissions shall include all relevant data and information in support of any such assessment. Procedures for such reviews including procedures for the provision of advice and recommendations from the SC to the submitting Member are attached (Annex 3). Members will only authorize bottom fishing activity pursuant to para 4 (C).

6. Scientific Information

To facilitate the scientific work associated with the implementation of these measures, each Member of the Commission shall undertake:

A. Reporting of information for purposes of defining the footprint

In implementing paragraphs 4A and 4B, the Members of the Commission shall provide for each year, the number of vessels by gear type, size of vessels (tons), number of fishing days or days on the fishing grounds, total catch by species, and areas fished (names of

seamounts) to the Secretariat. The Secretariat shall circulate the information received to the other Members consistent with the approved Regulations for Management of Scientific Data and Information. To support assessments of the fisheries and refinement of conservation and management measures, Members of the Commission are to provide updated information on an annual basis.

B. Collection of information

(i) Collection of scientific information from each bottom fishing vessel operating in the western part of the Convention Area.

(a) Catch and effort data

(b) Related information such as time, location, depth, temperature, etc.

(ii) As appropriate, the collection of information from research vessels operating in the western part of the Convention Area.

(a) Physical, chemical, biological, oceanographic, meteorological, etc.

(b) Ecosystem surveys.

(c) Seabed mapping (e.g. multibeam or other echosounder); seafloor images by drop camera, remotely operated underwater vehicle (ROV) and/or autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV).

(iii) Collection of observer data

Duly designated observers from the flag member shall collect information from bottom fishing vessels operating in the western part of the Convention Area. Observers shall collect data in accordance with Annex 5. Each Member of the Commission shall submit the reports to the Secretariat in accordance with Annex 4. The Secretariat shall compile this information on an annual basis and make it available to the Members of the Commission.

7. Control of bottom fishing vessels

To strengthen its control over bottom fishing vessels flying its flag, each Member of the Commission shall ensure that all such vessels operating in the western part of the Convention Area be equipped with an operational vessel monitoring system.

8. Observers

All vessels authorized to bottom fishing in the western part of the Convention Area shall carry an observer on board.

EXPLORATORY FISHERY PROTOCOL IN THE NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN

1. From 1 January 2009, all bottom fishing activities in new fishing areas and areas where fishing is prohibited in a precautionary manner or with bottom gear not previously used in the existing fishing areas, are to be considered as “exploratory fisheries” and to be conducted in accordance with this protocol.
2. Precautionary conservation and management measures, including catch and effort controls, are essential during the exploratory phase of deep sea fisheries. Implementation of a precautionary approach to sustainable exploitation of deep sea fisheries shall include the following measures:
 - (i) precautionary effort limits, particularly where reliable assessments of sustainable exploitation rates of target and main by-catch species are not available;
 - (ii) precautionary measures, including precautionary spatial catch limits where appropriate, to prevent serial depletion of low-productivity stocks;
 - (iii) regular review of appropriate indices of stock status and revision downwards of the limits listed above when significant declines are detected;
 - (iv) measures to prevent significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems; and
 - (v) comprehensive monitoring of all fishing effort, capture of all species and interactions with VMEs.
3. When a member of the Commission would like to conduct exploratory fisheries, it is to follow the following procedure:
 - (i) Prior to the commencement of fishing, the member of the Commission is to circulate the information and assessment in Appendix 1.1 to the members of the Scientific Committee (SC) for review and to all members of the Commission for information, together with the impact assessment. Such information is to be provided to the other members at least 30 days in advance of the meeting at which the information shall be reviewed.
 - (ii) The assessment in (i) above is to be conducted in accordance with the procedure set forth in “Science-based Standards and Criteria for Identification of VMEs and Assessment of Significant Adverse Impacts on VMEs and Marine Species (Annex 2)”, with the understanding that particular care shall be taken in the evaluation of risks of the significant adverse impact on vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs), in line with the precautionary approach.
 - (iii) The SC is to review the information and the assessment submitted in (i) above in accordance with “SC Assessment Review Procedures for Bottom Fishing Activities (Annex 3).”

(iv) The exploratory fisheries are to be permitted only where the assessment concludes that they would not have significant adverse impacts (SAIs) on marine species or any VMEs and on the basis of comments and recommendations of SC. Any determinations, by any Member of the Commission or the SC, that the exploratory fishing activities would not have SAIs on marine species or any VMEs, shall be made publicly available through the NPFC website.

4. The member of the Commission is to ensure that all vessels flying its flag conducting exploratory fisheries are equipped with a satellite monitoring device and have an observer on board at all times.
5. Within 3 months of the end of the exploratory fishing activities or within 12 months of the commencement of fishing, whichever occurs first, the member of the Commission is to provide a report of the results of such activities to the members of the SC and all members of the Commission. If the SC meets prior to the end of this 12-month period, the member of the Commission is to provide an interim report 30 days in advance of the SC meeting. The information to be included in the report is specified in Appendix 1.2.
6. The SC is to review the report in 5 above and decide whether the exploratory fishing activities had SAIs on marine species or any VME. The SC then is to send its recommendations to the Commission on whether the exploratory fisheries can continue and whether additional management measures shall be required if they are to continue. The Commission is to strive to adopt conservation and management measures to prevent SAIs on marine species or any VMEs. If the Commission is not able to reach consensus on any such measures, each fishing member of the Commission is to adopt measures to avoid any SAIs on VMEs.
7. Members of the Commission shall only authorize continuation of exploratory fishing activity, or commencement of commercial fishing activity, under this protocol on the basis of comments and recommendations of the SC.

7.8. The same encounter protocol should be applied in both fished and unfished areas specified in Annex 2, paragraph 4(1)(a).

Appendix 1.1

Information to be provided before exploratory fisheries start

1. A harvesting plan
 - Name of vessel

- Flag member of vessel
- Description of area to be fished (location and depth)
- Fishing dates
- Anticipated effort
- Target species
- Bottom fishing gear-type used
- Area and effort restrictions to ensure that fisheries occur on a gradual basis in a limited geographical area.

2. A mitigation plan

- Measures to prevent SAIs to VMEs that may be encountered during the fishery

3. A catch monitoring plan

- Recording/reporting of all species brought onboard to the lowest possible taxonomic level
- 100% satellite monitoring
- 100% observer coverage

4. A data collection plan

- Data is to be collected in accordance with “Type and Format of Scientific Observer Data to be Collected” (Annex 5)

Appendix 1.2

Information to be included in the report

- Name of vessel
- Flag member of vessel
- Description of area fished (location and depth)
- Fishing dates
- Total effort
- Bottom fishing gear-type used
- List of VME encountered (the amount of VME indicator species for each encounter specifying the location: longitude and latitude)
- Mitigation measures taken in response to the encounter of VME
- List of all organisms brought onboard
- List of VMEs indicator species brought onboard by location: longitude and latitude

SCIENCE-BASED STANDARDS AND CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFICATION OF VMES AND ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE IMPACTS ON VMES AND MARINE SPECIES

1. Introduction

Members of the Commission have hereby established science-based standards and criteria to guide their implementation of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 61/105 and the measures adopted by the Members in respect of bottom fishing activities in the North Pacific Ocean (NPO). In this regard, these science-based standards and criteria are to be applied to identify vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) and assess significant adverse impacts (SAIs) of bottom fishing activities on such VMEs or marine species and to promote the long-term sustainability of deep sea fisheries in the Convention Area. The science-based standards and criteria are consistent with the FAO International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries in the High Seas, taking into account the work of other RFMOs implementing management of deep-sea bottom fisheries in accordance with UNGA Resolution 61/105. The standards and criteria are to be modified from time to time as more data are collected through research activities and monitoring of fishing operations.

2. Purpose

- (1) The purpose of the standards and criteria is to provide guidelines for each member of the Commission in identifying VMEs and assessing SAIs of individual bottom fishing activities¹ on VMEs or marine species in the Convention Area. Each member of the Commission, using the best information available, is to decide which species or areas are to be categorized as VMEs, identify areas where VMEs are known or likely to occur, and assess whether individual bottom fishing activities would have SAIs on such VMEs or marine species. The results of these tasks are to be submitted to and reviewed by the Scientific Committee with a view to reaching a common understanding among the members of the Commission.
- (2) For the purpose of applying the standards and criteria, the bottom fisheries are defined as follows:

¹ “individual bottom fishing activities” means fishing activities by each fishing gear. For example, if ten fishing vessels operate bottom trawl fishing in a certain area, the impacts of the fishing activities of these vessels on the ecosystem are to be assessed as a whole rather than on a vessel-by-vessel basis. It should be noted that if the total number or capacity of the vessels using the same fishing gear has increased, the impacts of the fishing activities are to be assessed again.

- (a) The fisheries are conducted in the Convention Area;
- (b) The total catch (everything brought up by the fishing gear) includes species that can only sustain low exploitation rates; and
- (c) The fishing gear is likely to contact the seafloor during the normal course of fishing operations.

3. Definition of VMEs

- (1) Although Paragraph 83 of UNGA Resolution 61/105 refers to seamounts, hydrothermal vents and cold-water corals as examples of VMEs, there is no definitive list of specific species or areas that are to be regarded as VMEs.
- (2) Vulnerability is related to the likelihood that a population, community or habitat will experience substantial alteration by fishing activities and how much time will be required for its recovery from such alteration. The most vulnerable ecosystems are those that are both easily disturbed and are very slow to recover or may never recover. The vulnerabilities of populations, communities and habitats are to be assessed relative to specific threats. Some features, particularly ones that are physically fragile or inherently rare may be vulnerable to most forms of disturbance, but the vulnerability of some populations, communities and habitats may vary greatly depending on the type of fishing gear used or the kind of disturbance experienced. The risks to a marine ecosystem are determined by its vulnerability, the probability of a threat occurring and the mitigation means applied to the threat. Accordingly, the FAO Guidelines only provide examples of potential vulnerable species groups, communities and habitats as well as features that potentially support them (Annex 2.1).
- (3) A marine ecosystem is to be classified as vulnerable based on its characteristics. The following list of characteristics is used as criteria in the identification of VMEs.
 - (a) Uniqueness or rarity - an area or ecosystem that is unique or that contains rare species whose loss could not be compensated for by other similar areas. These include:
 - (i) Habitats that contain endemic species;
 - (ii) Habitats of rare, threatened or endangered species that occur in discrete areas;
 - (iii) Nurseries or discrete feeding, breeding, or spawning areas.
 - (b) Functional significance of the habitat – discrete areas or habitats that are necessary for the survival, function, spawning/reproduction or recovery of fish stocks, particular life-history stages (e.g. nursery grounds or rearing areas), or of rare, threatened or endangered marine species.
 - (c) Fragility – an ecosystem that is highly susceptible to degradation by anthropogenic activities

- (d) Life-history traits of component species that make recovery difficult – ecosystems that are characterized by populations or assemblages of species with one or more of the following characteristics:
 - (i) Slow growth rates
 - (ii) Late age of maturity
 - (iii) Low or unpredictable recruitment
 - (iv) Long-lived
 - (e) Structural complexity – an ecosystem that is characterized by complex physical structures created by significant concentrations of biotic and abiotic features. In these ecosystems, ecological processes are usually highly dependent on these structured systems. Further, such ecosystems often have high diversity, which is dependent on the structuring organisms.
- (4) Management response may vary, depending on the size of the ecological unit in the Convention Area. Therefore, the spatial extent of the ecological unit is to be decided first. That is, whether the ecological unit is the entire Area, or the current fishing ground, namely, the Emperor Seamount and Northern Hawaiian Ridge area (hereinafter called “the ES-NHR area”), or a group of the seamounts within the ESNHR area, or each seamount in the ES-NHR area, is to be decided using the above criteria.

4. Identification of potential VMEs

(1) Fished seamounts

(a) Identification of fished seamounts

It is reported that four types of fishing gear are currently used by the members of the Commission in the ES-NHR area, namely, bottom trawl, bottom gillnet, bottom longline and pot. A fifth type of fishing gear (coral drag) was used in the ES-NHR area from the mid-1960s to the late 1980s and is possibly still used by non-members of the Commission. These types of fishing gear are usually used on the top or slope of seamounts, which could be considered VMEs. It is therefore necessary to identify the footprint of the bottom fisheries (fished seamounts) based on the available fishing record. The following seamounts have been identified as fished seamounts: Suiko, Showa, Youmei, Nintoku, Jingu, Ojin, Northern Koko, Koko, Kinmei, Yuryaku, Kammu, Colahan, and CH. Since the use of most of these gears in the ES-NHR area dates back to the late 1960s and 1970s, it is important to establish, to the extent practicable, a time series of where and when these gears have been used in order to assess potential long-term effects on any existing VMEs.

Fishing effort may not be evenly distributed on each seamount since fish aggregation may occur only at certain points of the seamount and some parts of the seamount may

be physically unsuitable for certain fishing gears. Thus, it is important to know actual fished areas within the same seamount so as to know the gravity of the impact of fishing activities on the entire seamount.

Due consideration is to be given to the protection of commercial confidentiality when identifying actual fishing grounds.

(b) Assessment on whether a specific seamount that has been fished is a VME

After identifying the fished seamounts or fished areas of seamounts, it is necessary to assess whether each fished seamount is a VME or contains VMEs in accordance with the criteria in 3 above, individually or in combination using the best available scientific and technical information as well as Annex 2.1. A variety of data would be required to conduct such assessment, including pictures of seamounts taken by an ROV camera or drop camera, biological samples collected through research activities and observer programs, and detailed bathymetry map. Where site-specific information is lacking, other information that is relevant to inferring the likely presence of VMEs is to be used. [The flow chart to identify data that can be used to identify VMEs is attached in Annex 2.3.](#)

(2) New fishing areas

Any place other than the fished seamounts above is to be regarded as a new fishing area. If a member of the Commission is considering fishing in a new fishing area, such a fishing area is to be subject to, in addition to these standards and criteria, an exploratory fishery protocol (Annex 1).

5. Assessment of SAIs on VMEs or marine species

(1) Significant adverse impacts are those that compromise ecosystem integrity (i.e., ecosystem structure or function) in a manner that: (i) impairs the ability of affected populations to replace themselves; (ii) degrades the long-term natural productivity of habitats; or (iii) causes, on more than a temporary basis, significant loss of species richness, habitat or community types. Impacts are to be evaluated individually, in combination and cumulatively.

(2) When determining the scale and significance of an impact, the following six factors are to be considered:

- (a) The intensity or severity of the impact at the specific site being affected;
- (b) The spatial extent of the impact relative to the availability of the habitat type affected;
- (c) The sensitivity/vulnerability of the ecosystem to the impact;
- (d) The ability of an ecosystem to recover from harm, and the rate of such recovery;

- (e) The extent to which ecosystem functions may be altered by the impact; and
- (f) The timing and duration of the impact relative to the period in which a species needs

the habitat during one or more life-history stages.

(3) Temporary impacts are those that are limited in duration and that allow the particular ecosystem to recover over an acceptable timeframe. Such timeframes are to be decided on a case-by-case basis and be on the order of 5-20 years, taking into account the specific features of the populations and ecosystems.

(4) In determining whether an impact is temporary, both the duration and the frequency with which an impact is repeated is to be considered. If the interval between the expected disturbances of a habitat is shorter than the recovery time, the impact is to be considered more than temporary.

(5) Each member of the Commission is to conduct assessments to establish if bottom fishing activities are likely to produce SAIs in a given seamount or other VMEs. Such an impact assessment is to address, *inter alia*:

- (a) Type of fishing conducted or contemplated, including vessel and gear types, fishing areas, target and potential bycatch species, fishing effort levels and duration of fishing;
- (b) Best available scientific and technical information on the current state of fishery resources, and baseline information on the ecosystems, habitats and communities in the fishing area, against which future changes are to be compared;
- (c) Identification, description and mapping of VMEs known or likely to occur in the fishing area;
- (d) The data and methods used to identify, describe and assess the impacts of the activity, identification of gaps in knowledge, and an evaluation of uncertainties in the information presented in the assessment;
- (e) Identification, description and evaluation of the occurrence, scale and duration of likely impacts, including cumulative impacts of activities covered by the assessment on VMEs and low-productivity fishery resources in the fishing area;
- (f) Risk assessment of likely impacts by the fishing operations to determine which impacts are likely to be SAIs, particularly impacts on VMEs and low-productivity fishery resources (Risk assessments are to take into account, as appropriate, differing conditions prevailing in areas where fisheries are well established and in areas where fisheries have not taken place or only occur occasionally);
- (g) The proposed mitigation and management measures to be used to prevent SAIs on VMEs and ensure long-term conservation and sustainable utilization of low-productivity fishery resources, and the measures to be used to monitor effects of the fishing operations.

(6) Impact assessments are to consider, as appropriate, the information referred to in these Standards and Criteria, as well as relevant information from similar or related fisheries, species and ecosystems.

(7) Where an assessment concludes that the area does not contain VMEs or that significant adverse impacts on VMEs or marine species are not likely, such assessments are to be repeated when there have been significant changes to the fishery or other activities in the area, or when natural processes are thought to have undergone significant changes.

6. Proposed conservation and management measures to prevent SAIs

As a result of the assessment in 5 above, if it is considered that individual fishing activities are causing or likely to cause SAIs on VMEs or marine species, the member of the Commission is to adopt appropriate conservation and management measures to prevent such SAIs. The member of the Commission is to clearly indicate how such impacts are expected to be prevented or mitigated by the measures.

7. Precautionary approach

If after assessing all available scientific and technical information, the presence of VMEs or the likelihood that individual bottom fishing activities would cause SAIs on VMEs or marine species cannot be adequately determined, members of the Commission are only to authorize individual bottom fishing activities to proceed in accordance with:

- (a) Precautionary, conservation and management measures to prevent SAIs;
- (b) Measures to address unexpected encounters with VMEs in the course of fishing operations;
- (c) Measures, including ongoing scientific research, monitoring and data collection, to reduce the uncertainty; and
- (d) Measures to ensure long-term sustainability of deep sea fisheries.

8. Template for assessment report

Annex 2.2 is a template for individual member of the Commission to formulate reports on identification of VMEs and impact assessment.

Annex 2.1

Examples of potential vulnerable species groups, communities and habitats as well as features that potentially support them

The following examples of species groups, communities, habitats and features often display characteristics consistent with possible VMEs. Merely detecting the presence of an element itself is not sufficient to identify a VME. That identification is to be made on a case-by-case basis through application of relevant provisions of the Standards and Criteria, particularly Sections 3, 4 and 5.

Examples of species groups, communities and habitat forming species that are documented or considered sensitive and potentially vulnerable to deep-sea fisheries in the high-seas, and which may contribute to forming VMEs:	
a.	certain cold-water corals, e.g., reef builders and coral forest including: stony corals (scleractinia), alcyonaceans and gorgonians (octocorallia), black corals (antipatharia), and hydrocorals (stylasteridae),
b.	Some types of sponge dominated communities,
c.	communities composed of dense emergent fauna where large sessile protozoans (xenophyphores) and invertebrates (e.g., hydroids and bryozoans) form an important structural component of habitat, and
d.	seep and vent communities comprised of invertebrate and microbial species found nowhere else (i.e., endemic).

Examples of topographical, hydrophysical or geological features, including fragile geological structures, that potentially support the species groups or communities referred to above:

- a. submerged edges and slopes (e.g., corals and sponges)
- b. summits and flanks of seamounts, guyots, banks, knolls, and hills (e.g., corals, sponges and xenophyphores)
- c. canyons and trenches (e.g., burrowed clay outcrops, corals),
- d. hydrothermal vents (e.g., microbial communities and endemic invertebrates), and
- e. cold seeps (e.g., mud volcanoes, microbes, hard substrates for sessile invertebrates).

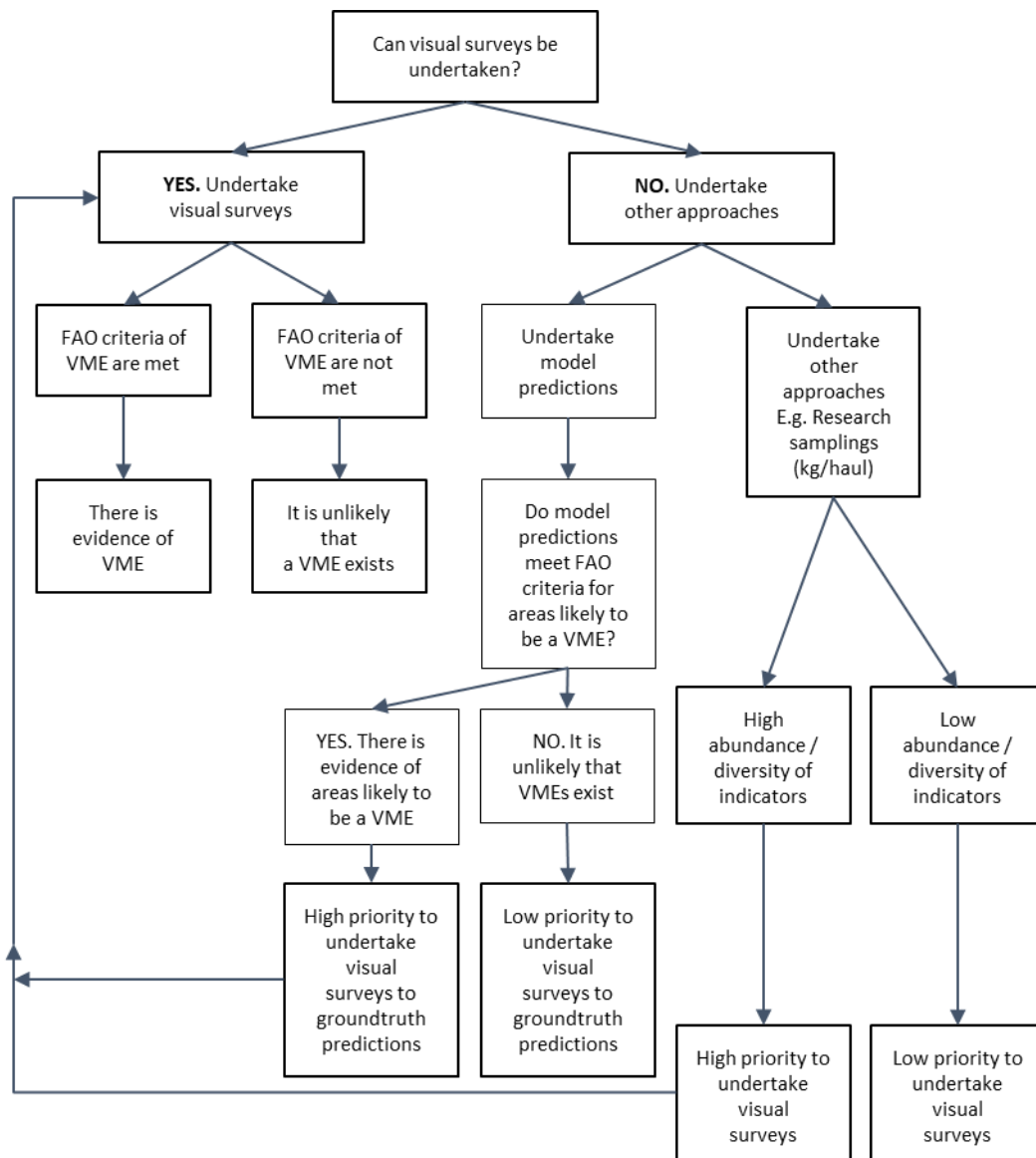
Annex 2.2

Template for reports on identification of VMEs and assessment of impacts caused by individual fishing activities on VMEs or marine species

1. Name of the member of the Commission
2. Name of the fishery (e.g., bottom trawl, bottom gillnet, bottom longline, pot)
3. Status of the fishery (existing fishery or exploratory fishery)
4. Target species
5. Bycatch species
6. Recent level of fishing effort (every year at least since 2002)

- (1) Number of fishing vessels
 - (2) Tonnage of each fishing vessel
 - (3) Number of fishing days or days on the fishing ground
 - (4) Fishing effort (total operating hours for trawl, # of hooks per day for long-line, # of pots per day for pot, total length of net per day for gillnet)
 - (5) Total catch by species
 - (6) Names of seamounts fished or to be fished
7. Fishing period
 8. Analysis of status of fishery resources
 - (1) Data and methods used for analysis
 - (2) Results of analysis
 - (3) Identification of uncertainties in data and methods, and measures to overcome such uncertainties
 9. Analysis of status of bycatch species resources
 - (1) Data and methods used for analysis
 - (2) Results of analysis
 - (3) Identification of uncertainties in data and methods, and measures to overcome such uncertainties
 10. Analysis of existence of VMEs in the fishing ground
 - (1) Data and methods used for analysis
 - (2) Results of analysis
 - (3) Identification of uncertainties in data and methods, and measures to overcome such uncertainties
 11. Impact assessment of fishing activities on VMEs or marine species including cumulative impacts, and identification of SAIs on VMEs or marine species, as detailed in Section 5 above, Assessment of SAIs on VMEs or marine species
 12. Other points to be addressed
 13. Conclusion (whether to continue or start fishing with what measures, or stop fishing).

Flow chart to identify data that can be used to identify VMEs in the NPFC Convention Area



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ASSESSMENT REVIEW PROCEDURES FOR BOTTOM
FISHING ACTIVITIES**

1. The Scientific Committee (SC) is to review identifications of vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) and assessments of significant adverse impact on VMEs, including proposed management measures intended to prevent such impacts submitted by individual Members.
2. Members of the Commission shall submit their identifications and assessments to members of the SC at least 21 days prior to the SC meeting at which the review is to take place. Such submissions shall include all relevant data and information in support of such determinations.
3. The SC will review the data and information in each assessment in accordance with the Science-based Standards and Criteria for Identification of VMEs and Assessment of Significant Adverse Impacts on VMEs and Marine Species (Annex 2), previous decisions of the Commission, and the FAO Technical Guidelines for the Management of Deep Sea Fisheries in the High Seas, paying special attention to the assessment process and criteria specified in paragraphs 47-49 of the Guidelines.
4. In conducting the review above, the SC will give particular attention to whether the deep-sea bottom fishing activity would have a significant adverse impact on VMEs and marine species and, if so, whether the proposed management measures would prevent such impacts.
5. Based on the above review, the SC will provide advice and recommendations to the submitting Members on the extent to which the assessments and related determinations are consistent with the procedures and criteria established in the documents identified above; and whether additional management measures will be required to prevent SAIs on VMEs.
6. Such recommendations will be reflected in the report of the SC meeting at which the assessments are considered.

FORMAT OF NATIONAL REPORT SECTIONS ON DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SCIENTIFIC OBSERVER PROGRAMMES

Report Components

Annual Observer Programme implementation reports should form a component of annual National Reports submitted by members to the Scientific Committee. These reports should provide a brief overview of observer programmes conducted in the NPFC Convention Area. Observer programme reports should include the following sections:

A. Observer Training

An overview of observer training conducted, including:

- Overview of training programme provided to scientific observers.
- Number of observers trained.

B. Scientific Observer Programme Design and Coverage

Details of the design of the observer programme, including:

- Which fleets, fleet components or fishery components were covered by the programme.
- How vessels were selected to carry observers within the above fleets or components.
- How was observer coverage stratified: by fleets, fisheries components, vessel types, vessel sizes, vessel ages, fishing areas and seasons.

Details of observer coverage of the above fleets, including:

- Components, areas, seasons and proportion of total catches of target species, specifying units used to determine coverage.
- Total number of observer employment days, and number of actual days deployed on observation work.

C. Observer Data Collected

List of observer data collected against the agreed range of data set out in Annex 5, including:

- Effort Data: Amount of effort observed (vessel days, net panels, hooks, etc), by area and season and % observed out of total by area and seasons
- Catch Data: Amount of catch observed of target and by-catch species, by area and season, and % observed out of total estimated catch by species, area and seasons
- Length Frequency Data: Number of fish measured per species, by area and season.
- Biological Data: Type and quantity of other biological data or samples (otoliths, sex, maturity, etc.) collected per species.

- The size of length-frequency and biological sub-samples relative to unobserved quantities.

D. Detection of Fishing in Association with Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems

- Information about VME encounters (species and quantity in accordance with Annex 5, H, 2).

E. Tag Return Monitoring

- Number of tags returns observed, by fish size class and area.

F. Problems Experienced

- Summary of problems encountered by observers and observer managers that could affect the NPFC Observer Programme Standards and/or each member's national observer programme developed under the NPFC standards.

**NPFC BOTTOM FISHERIES OBSERVER PROGRAMME STANDARDS: SCIENTIFIC
COMPONENT**

TYPE AND FORMAT OF SCIENTIFIC OBSERVER DATA TO BE COLLECTED

A. Vessel & Observer Data to be collected for Each Trip

1. Vessel and observer details are to be recorded only once for each observed trip.
2. The following observer data are to be collected for each observed trip:
 - (a) NPFC vessel ID.
 - (b) Observer's name.
 - (c) Observer's organisation.
 - (d) Date observer embarked (UTC date).
 - (e) Port of embarkation.
 - (f) Date observer disembarked (UTC date).
 - (g) Port of disembarkation.

B. Catch & Effort Data to be collected for Trawl Fishing Activity

1. Data are to be collected on an un-aggregated (tow by tow) basis for all observed trawls.
2. The following data are to be collected for each observed trawl tow:
 - (a) Tow start date (UTC).
 - (b) Tow start time (UTC).
 - (c) Tow end date (UTC).
 - (d) Tow end time (UTC).
 - (e) Tow start position (Lat/Lon, 1 minute resolution).
 - (f) Tow end position (Lat/Lon, 1 minute resolution).
 - (g) Type of trawl, bottom or mid-water.
 - (h) Type of trawl, single, double or triple.
 - (i) Height of net opening (m).
 - (j) Width of net opening (m).
 - (k) Mesh size of the cod-end net (stretched mesh, mm) and mesh type (diamond, square, etc).
 - (l) Gear depth (of footrope) at start of fishing (m).
 - (m) Bottom (seabed) depth at start of fishing (m).
 - (n) Gear depth (of footrope) at end of fishing (m).
 - (o) Bottom (seabed) depth at end of fishing (m).

- (p) Status of the trawl operation (no damage, lightly damaged*, heavily damaged*, other (specify)).
*Degree may be evaluated by time for repairing (≤ 1 hr or > 1 hr).
- (q) Duration of estimated period of seabed contact (minute)
- (r) Intended target species.
- (s) Catch of all species retained on board, split by species, in weight (to the nearest kg).
- (t) Estimate of the amount (weight or volume) of all living marine resources discarded, split by species.
- (u) Record of the numbers by species of all marine mammals, seabirds or reptiles caught.

C. Catch & Effort Data to be collected for Bottom Gillnet Fishing Activity

1. Data are to be collected on an un-aggregated (set by set) basis for all observed bottom gillnet sets.
2. The following data are to be collected for each observed bottom gillnet set:
 - (a) Set start date (UTC).
 - (b) Set start time (UTC).
 - (c) Set end date (UTC).
 - (d) Set end time (UTC).
 - (e) Set start position (Lat/Lon, 1 minute resolution).
 - (f) Set end position (Lat/Lon, 1 minute resolution).
 - (g) Net panel ("tan") length (m).
 - (h) Net panel ("tan") height (m).
 - (i) Net mesh size (stretched mesh, mm) and mesh type (diamond, square, etc)
 - (j) Bottom depth at start of setting (m).
 - (k) Bottom depth at end of setting (m).
 - (l) Number of net panels for the set.
 - (m) Number of net panels retrieved.
 - (n) Number of net panels actually observed during the haul.
 - (o) Actually observed catch of all species retained on board, split by species, in weight (to the nearest kg).
 - (p) An estimation of the amount (numbers or weight) of marine resources discarded, split by species, during the actual observation.
 - (q) Record of the actually observed numbers by species of all marine mammals, seabirds or reptiles caught.
 - (r) Intended target species.
 - (s) Catch of all species retained on board, split by species, in weight (to the nearest kg).

- (t) Estimate of the amount (weight or volume) of all marine resources discarded* and dropped off, split by species. * Including those retained for scientific samples.
- (u) Record of the numbers by species of all marine mammals, seabirds or reptiles caught (including those discarded and dropped-off).

D. Catch & Effort Data to be collected for Bottom Long Line Fishing Activity

1. Data are to be collected on an un-aggregated (set by set) basis for all observed longline sets.
2. The following fields of data are to be collected for each set:
 - (a) Set start date (UTC).
 - (b) Set start time (UTC).
 - (c) Set end date (UTC).
 - (d) Set end time (UTC).
 - (e) Set start position (Lat/Lon, 1 minute resolution).
 - (f) Set end position (Lat/Lon, 1 minute resolution).
 - (g) Total length of longline set (m).
 - (h) Number of hooks or traps for the set.
 - (i) Bottom (seabed) depth at start of set.
 - (j) Bottom (seabed) depth at end of set.
 - (k) Number of hooks or traps actually observed during the haul.
 - (l) Intended target species.
 - (m) Actually observed catch of all species retained on board, split by species, in weight (to the nearest kg).
 - (n) An estimation of the amount (numbers or weight) of marine resources discarded* or dropped-off, split by species, during the actual observation. * Including those retained for scientific samples.
 - (o) Record of the actually observed numbers by species of all marine mammals, seabirds or reptiles caught (including those discarded and dropped-off).

E. Length-Frequency Data to Be Collected

1. Representative and randomly distributed length-frequency data (to the nearest mm, with record of the type of length measurement taken) are to be collected for representative samples of the target species and other main by-catch species. Total weight of length-frequency samples should be recorded, and observers may be required to also determine sex of measured fish to generate length-frequency data stratified by sex. The length-frequency data may be used as potential indicators of ecosystem changes (for example, see: Gislason, H. et al. (2000. ICES J Mar Sci 57: 468-475), Yamane et al. (2005. ICES J Mar Sci, 62: 374-379), and Shin, Y-J. et al. (2005. ICES J Mar Sci, 62: 384-396)).

2. The numbers of fish to be measured for each species and distribution of samples across area and month strata should be determined, to ensure that samples are properly representative of species distributions and size ranges.

F. Biological sampling to be conducted (optional for gillnet and long line fisheries)

1. The following biological data are to be collected for representative samples of the main target species and, time permitting, for other main by-catch species contributing to the catch:
 - (a) Species
 - (b) Length (to the nearest mm), with record of the type of length measurement used.
 - (c) Length and depth in case of North Pacific armorhead.
 - (d) Sex (male, female, indeterminate, not examined)
 - (e) Maturity stage (immature, mature, ripe, ripe-running, spent)
2. Representative stratified samples of otoliths are to be collected from the main target species and, time permitting, from other main by-catch species regularly occurring in catches. All otoliths to be collected are to be labelled with the information listed in 1 above, as well as the date, vessel name, observer name and catch position.
3. Where specific trophic relationship projects are being conducted, observers may be requested to also collect stomach samples from certain species. Any such samples collected are also to be labelled with the information listed in 1 above, as well as the date, vessel name, observer name and catch position.
4. Observers may also be required to collect tissue samples as part of specific genetic research programmes implemented by the SC.
5. Observers are to be briefed and provided with written length-frequency and biological sampling protocols and priorities for the above sampling specific to each observer trip.

G. Data to be collected on Incidental Captures of Protected Species

1. Flag members operating observer programs are to develop, in cooperation with the SC, lists and identification guides of protected species or species of concern (seabirds, marine mammals or marine reptiles) to be monitored by observers.
2. The following data are to be collected for all protected species caught in fishing operations:
 - (a) Species (identified as far as possible, or accompanied by photographs if identification is difficult).
 - (b) Count of the number caught per tow or set.
 - (c) Life status (vigorous, alive, lethargic, dead) upon release.
 - (d) Whole specimens (where possible) for onshore identification. Where this is not possible, observers may be required to collect sub-samples of identifying parts, as specified in biological sampling protocols.

H. Detection of Fishing in Association with Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems

1. The SC is to develop a guideline, species list and identification guide for benthic species (e.g. sponges, sea fans, corals) whose presence in a catch will indicate that fishing occurred in association with a vulnerable marine ecosystem (VME). All observers on vessels are to be provided with copies of this guideline, species list and ID guide.
2. For each observed fishing operation, the following data are to be collected for all species caught, which appear on the list of vulnerable benthic species:
 - (a) Species (identified as far as possible or accompanied by a photograph where identification is difficult).
 - (b) An estimate of the quantity (weight (kg) or volume (m³)) of each listed benthic species caught in the fishing operation.
 - (c) An overall estimate of the total quantity (weight (kg) or volume (m³)) of all invertebrate benthic species caught in the fishing operation.
 - (d) Where possible, and particularly for new or scarce benthic species which do not appear in ID guides, whole samples should be collected and suitable preserved for identification on shore.

I. Data to be collected for all Tag Recoveries

1. The following data are to be collected for all recovered fish, seabird, mammal or reptile tags:
 - (a) Observer name.
 - (b) Vessel name.
 - (c) Vessel call sign.
 - (d) Vessel flag.
 - (e) Collect, label (with all details below) and store the actual tags for later return to the tagging agency.
 - (f) Species from which tag recovered.
 - (g) Tag colour and type (spaghetti, archival).
 - (h) Tag numbers (The tag number is to be provided for all tags when multiple tags were attached to one fish. If only one tag was recorded, a statement is required that specifies whether or not the other tag was missing)
 - (i) Date and time of capture (UTC).
 - (j) Location of capture (Lat/Lon, to the nearest 1 minute)
 - (k) Animal length / size (to the nearest cm) with description of what measurement was taken (such as total length, fork length, etc).
 - (l) Sex (F=female, M=male, I=indeterminate, D=not examined)
 - (m) Whether the tags were found during a period of fishing that was being observed (Y/N)

(n) Reward information (e.g. name and address where to send reward)

(It is recognised that some of the data recorded here duplicates data that already exists in the previous categories of information. This is necessary because tag recovery information may be sent separately to other observer data.)

J. Hierarchies for Observer Data Collection

1. Trip-specific or programme-specific observer task priorities may be developed in response to specific research programme requirements, in which case such priorities should be followed by observers.
2. In the absence of trip- or programme-specific priorities, the following generalised priorities should be followed by observers:
 - (a) Fishing Operation Information
 - All vessel and tow / set / effort information.
 - (b) Monitoring of Catches
 - Record time, proportion of catch (e.g. proportion of trawl landing) or effort (e.g. number of hooks), and total numbers of each species caught.
 - Record numbers or proportions of each species retained or discarded.
 - (c) Biological Sampling
 - Length-frequency data for target species.
 - Length-frequency data for main by-catch species.
 - Identification and counts of protected species.
 - Basic biological data (sex, maturity) for target species.
 - Check for presence of tags.
 - Otoliths (and stomach samples, if being collected) for target species.
 - Basic biological data for by-catch species.
 - Biological samples of by-catch species (if being collected)
 - Photos
3. The monitoring of catches and biological sampling procedures should be prioritised among species groups as follows:

Species	Priority (1 highest)
Primary target species (such as North Pacific armorhead and splendid alfonsino)	1
Other species typically within top 10 in the fishery (such as mirror dory, and oreos)	2

Protected species	3
All other species	4

The allocation of observer effort among these activities will depend on the type of operation and setting. The size of sub-samples relative to unobserved quantities (e.g. number of hooks/panels examined for species composition relative to the number of hooks/panels retrieved) should be explicitly recorded under the guidance of member country observer programmes.

K. Coding Specifications to be used for Recording Observer Data

1. Unless otherwise specified for specific data types, observer data are to be collected in accordance with the same coding specifications as specified in this Annex.
2. Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) is to be used to describe times.
3. Degrees and minutes are to be used to describe locations.
4. The following coding schemes are to be used:
 - (a) Species are to be described using the FAO 3 letter species codes or, if species do not have a FAO code, using scientific names.
 - (b) Fishing methods are to be described using the International Standard Classification of Fishing Gear (ISSCFG - 29 July 1980) codes.
 - (c) Types of fishing vessel are to be described using the International Standard Classification of Fishery Vessels (ISSCFV) codes.
5. Metric units of measure are to be used, specifically:
 - (a) Kilograms are to be used to describe catch weight.
 - (b) Metres are to be used to describe height, width, depth, beam or length.
 - (c) Cubic metres are to be used to describe volume.
 - (d) Kilowatts are to be used to describe engine power.

**Implementation of the Adaptive Management for North Pacific armorhead
(in 2021)**

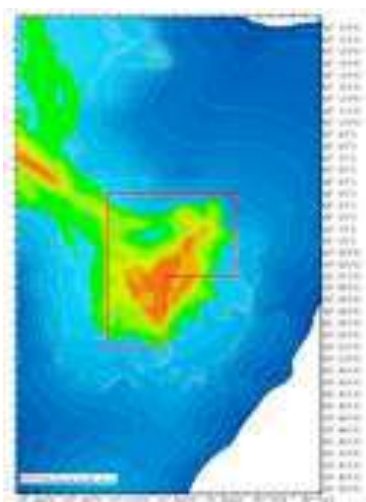
1. Monitoring survey for the detection of strong recruitment of North Pacific armorhead

(1) Location of monitoring surveys

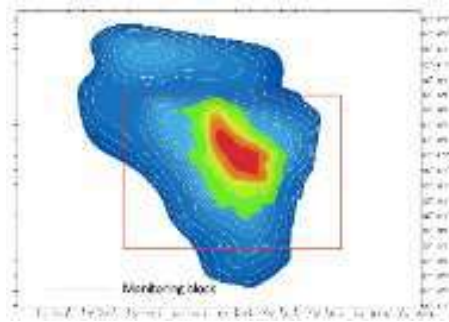
Monitoring surveys for the detection of strong recruitment of North Pacific armorhead will be conducted by trawl fishing vessels in the pre-determined four (24) monitoring blocks of Koko (South eastern), Yuryaku, Kammu (North western) and/or Colahan seamounts.

Monitoring blocks

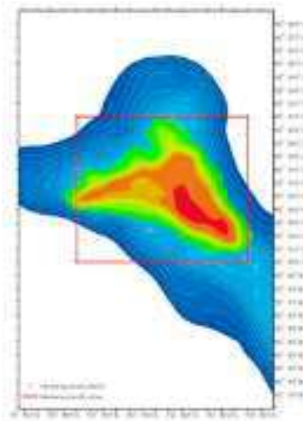
(1) Koko seamount ($34^{\circ}51' - 35^{\circ}04'N$, $171^{\circ}49' - 172^{\circ}00' E$)



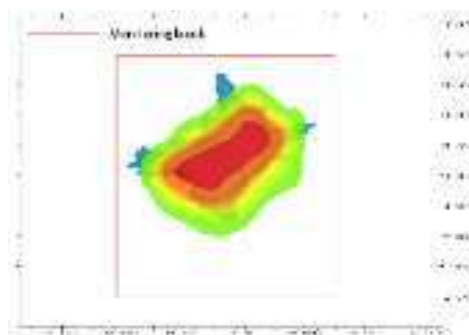
(2) Yuryaku seamount ($32^{\circ}35' - 32^{\circ}45'N$, $172^{\circ}10' - 172^{\circ}24'E$)



(3) Kammu seamount (32°10'–32°21'N, 172°44'–172°57'E)



(4) Colahan seamount (30°57'–31°05'N, 175°50'–175°57'E)



(2) Schedule for monitoring surveys

Monitoring surveys will be conducted from March 1st to June 30th each year, with at least a one week interval between monitoring surveys. For each survey, a trawl fishing vessel will conduct a monitoring survey in one of the four monitoring blocks that is the nearest from the location of the trawl fishing vessel at the time of prior notification in (4) below. The base schedule for monitoring surveys will be notified to the Executive Secretary by the end of February of each year. The base schedule may be revised during the year subject to prior notification to the Executive Secretary.

(3) Data to be collected during monitoring surveys

For each monitoring survey, a trawl net will be towed for one hour. A scientific observer onboard the trawl fishing vessel will calculate nominal-CPUE (kg/hour) of North Pacific armorhead. The scientific observer will also calculate fat index* (FI) of randomly sampled 100 individuals of North Pacific armorhead by measuring fork length (FL) and body height (BH) of each individual.

(*fat index (FI) = body height (BH) / fork length (FL))

(4) Prior notifications and survey results

At least three (3) days before each survey, a prior notification with monitoring date/time, location and trawl fishing vessel name will be provided by the flag state of the trawl fishing vessel to the Executive Secretary.

No later than three (3) days after each survey, the survey result including date/time, location, catch, nominal-CPUE (kg/hour) and percentage of fish with fat index (FI)>0.3 will be provided by the flag state to the Executive Secretary.

The Executive Secretary will circulate these prior notifications and survey results to all Members of the Commission without delay.

1. Areas where bottom fishing with trawl gear is prohibited when high recruitment is detected

(1) Criteria for a high recruitment

It is considered that high recruitment has occurred if the following criteria are met in four (4) consecutive monitoring surveys.

- Nominal CPUE > 10t/h
- Individuals of fat index (FI)> 0.3 account for 80% or more

(2) Areas where bottom fishing with trawl gear is prohibited

Bottom fishing with trawl gear shall be prohibited in the following two (2) seamount areas (*) during the year when high recruitment is detected. In such a case, all monitoring surveys scheduled during the year will be cancelled.

- Northern part of Kammu seamount (north of 32°10.0' N)
- Yuryaku seamount

(*) The catch of North Pacific armorhead in the above two seamounts accounts for a half of the total catch in the entire Emperor Seamounts area based on the catch records in 2010 and 2012.

(3) Notification by the Secretariat

When the criteria for high recruitment are met as defined in 2(1) above, the Executive Secretary will notify all Members of the Commission of the fact with a defined date/time from which bottom fishing with trawl gear is prohibited in the areas as defined in 2(2) above until the end of the year.

Revised CMM 2019-06 - Conservation and Management Measure for Bottom Fisheries and Protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems in the Northeastern Pacific Ocean

CMM 2019-06

(Entered into force 29 November 2019)

**CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURE
FOR BOTTOM FISHERIES AND PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE MARINE
ECOSYSTEMS IN THE NORTHEASTERN PACIFIC OCEAN**

The North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC):

Seeking to ensure the long term conservation and sustainable use of the fishery resources of the Northeastern Pacific Ocean and, in so doing, protect the vulnerable marine ecosystems that occur there, in accordance with the Sustainable Fisheries Resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) including, in particular, paragraphs 66 to 71 of the UNGA59/25 in 2004, paragraphs 69 to 74 of UNGA60/31 in 2005, paragraphs 69 and 80 to 91 of UNGA61/105 in 2006, and paragraphs 113 to 124 of UNGA64/72 in 2009;

Recalling that paragraph 85 of UNGA 61/105 calls upon participants in negotiations to establish regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements with the competence to regulate bottom fisheries to adopt permanent measures in respect of the area of application of the instruments under negotiation;

Noting that North Pacific Fisheries Commission has previously adopted interim measures for the Northeastern Pacific Ocean;

Conscious of the need to adopt permanent measures for the Northeastern Pacific Ocean to ensure that this area is not left as the only major area of the Pacific Ocean where no such measures are in place;

Hereby adopt the following Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) for bottom fisheries of the Northeastern Pacific Ocean while working to develop and implement other permanent management arrangements to govern these and other fisheries in the North Pacific Ocean.

Scope

1. These Measures are to be applied to all bottom fishing activities throughout the high seas

areas of the Northeastern Pacific Ocean, defined, for the purposes of this document, as those occurring in the Convention Area as set out in Article 4 of the Convention text to the east of the line of 175 degrees W longitude (here in after called “the eastern part of the Convention Area”) including all such areas and marine species other than those species already covered by existing international fisheries management instruments, including bilateral agreements and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations or Arrangements.

For the purpose of these Measures, the term vulnerable marine ecosystems is to be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with the International Guidelines on the Management of Deep Sea Fisheries on the High Seas adopted by the FAO on 29 August 2008 (see Annex 2 for further details).

2. The implementation of these Measures shall:
 - a. be based on the best scientific information available in accordance with existing international laws and agreements including UNCLOS and other relevant international instruments,
 - b. establish appropriate and effective conservation and management measures,
 - c. be in accordance with the precautionary approach, and
 - d. incorporate an ecosystem approach to fisheries management.

3. Actions by Members of the Commission

Members of the Commission will take the following actions in respect of vessels operating under its Flag or authority in the area covered by these Measures:

- a. Conduct the assessments called for in paragraph 83(a) of UNGA Resolution 61/105, in a manner consistent with the FAO Guidelines and the Standards and Criteria included in Annex 2;
- b. Submit to the SC their assessments conducted pursuant to subparagraph (a) of this paragraph, including all relevant data and information in support of any such assessment, and receive advice and recommendations from the SC, in accordance with the procedures in Annex 3;
- c. Taking into account all advice and recommendations received from the SC, determine whether the fishing activity or operations of the vessel in question are likely to have a significant adverse impact on any vulnerable marine ecosystem;
- d. If it is determined that the fishing activity or operations of the vessel or vessels in question would have a significant adverse impact on vulnerable marine ecosystems, adopt conservation and management measures to prevent such impacts on the basis of advice and recommendations of the SC, which are subject to adoption by the Commission;

- e. Ensure that if any vessels are already engaged in bottom fishing, that such assessments have been carried out in accordance with paragraph 119(a)/UNGA RES 2009, the determination called for in subparagraph (c) of this paragraph has been rendered and, where appropriate, managements measures have been implemented in accordance with the advice and recommendations of the SC, which are subject to adoption by the Commission;
- f. Further ensure that they will only authorize fishing activities on the basis of such assessments and any comments and recommendations from the SC;
- g. Prohibit its vessels from engaging in directed fishing on the following orders: *Alcyonacea*, *Antipatharia*, *Gorgonacea*, and *Scleractinia* as well as any other indicator species for vulnerable marine ecosystems as may be identified from time to time by the SC and approved by the Commission;
- h. In respect of areas where vulnerable marine ecosystems are known to occur or are likely to occur, based on the best available scientific information, ensure that bottom fishing activities do not proceed unless conservation and management measures have been established to prevent significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems;
- i. Limit fishing effort in bottom fisheries on the Eastern part of the Convention Area to the level of a historical average (baseline to be determined through consensus in the SC based on information to be provided by Members) in terms of the number of fishing vessels and other parameters which reflect the level of fishing effort, fishing capacity or potential impacts on marine ecosystems dependent on new SC advice;
- j. Further, considering accumulated information regarding fishing activities in the Eastern part of the Convention Area, in areas where, in the course of fishing operations, cold water corals or other indicator species as identified by the SC that exceed 50Kg are encountered in one gear retrieval, Members of the Commission shall require vessels flying their flag to cease bottom fishing activities in that location. In such cases, the vessel shall not resume fishing activities until it has relocated a sufficient distance, which shall be no less than 2 nautical miles, so that additional encounters with VMEs are unlikely. All such encounters, including the location, gear type, date, time and name and weight of the VME indicator species ~~in question~~, shall be reported to the Secretariat, through the Member, within one business day, as soon as possible, The Executive Secretary ~~who~~ shall notify the other Members of the Commission and at the same time implement a temporary closure in the area to prohibit its bottom fishing vessels from contacting the sea floor with their trawl nets, so that appropriate measures can be adopted in respect of the relevant site. Members shall inform their fleets and enforcement operations within one business day of the receipt of the notification from the Executive Secretary. It is agreed that the cold water corals include: *Alcyonacea*, *Antipatharia*, *Gorgonacea*, and *Scleractinia*, as well as any other indicator species for vulnerable marine ecosystems as may be identified from time to time by the SC and

approved by the Commission.

j.k. Based on all the available data, including data on the VME encounter and distribution received from the fishing vessel(s), research survey data, visual survey data, and/or model results, the Scientific Committee (SC) shall assess and conclude if the area has a VME. If so, the SC shall recommend to the Commission that the temporary closure be made permanent, although the boundary of the closure may be adjusted, or suggest other appropriate measures. Otherwise, the Executive Secretary shall inform the Members that they may reopen the area to their vessels.

4. All assessments and determinations by any Member as to whether fishing activity would have significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems, as well as measures adopted in order to prevent such impacts, will be made publicly available through agreed means.

Control of Bottom Fishing Vessels

5. Members will exercise full and effective control over each of their bottom fishing vessels operating in the high seas of the Northeastern Pacific Ocean, including by means of fishing licenses, authorizations or permits, and maintenance of a record of these vessels as outlined in the Convention and applicable CMM.
6. New and exploratory fishing will be subject to the exploratory fishery protocol included as Annex 1.

Scientific Committee (SC)

7. Scientific Committee will provide scientific support for the implementation of these CMMs.

Scientific Information

8. The Members shall provide all available information as required by the Commission for any current or historical fishing activity by their flag vessels, including the number of vessels by gear type, size of vessels (tons), number of fishing days or days on the fishing grounds, total catch by species, areas fished (names or coordinates of seamounts), and information from scientific observer programmes (see Annexes 4 and 5) to the NPFC Secretariat as soon as possible and no later than one month prior to SC meeting. The Secretariat will make such information available to SC.
9. Scientific research activities for stock assessment purposes are to be conducted in accordance with a research plan that has been provided to SC prior to the commencement of such activities.

EXPLORATORY FISHERY PROTOCOL IN THE NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN

1. From 1 January 2009, all bottom fishing activities in new fishing areas and areas where fishing is prohibited in a precautionary manner or with bottom gear not previously used in the existing fishing areas, are to be considered as “exploratory fisheries” and to be conducted in accordance with this protocol.

2. Precautionary conservation and management measures, including catch and effort controls, are essential during the exploratory phase of deep sea fisheries. Implementation of a precautionary approach to sustainable exploitation of deep sea fisheries shall include the following measures:

- i. precautionary effort limits, particularly where reliable assessments of sustainable exploitation rates of target and main by-catch species are not available;
- ii. precautionary measures, including precautionary spatial catch limits where appropriate, to prevent serial depletion of low-productivity stocks;
- iii. regular review of appropriate indices of stock status and revision downwards of the limits listed above when significant declines are detected;
- iv. measures to prevent significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems; and
- v. comprehensive monitoring of all fishing effort, capture of all species and interactions with VMEs.

3. When a member of the Commission would like to conduct exploratory fisheries, it is to follow the following procedure:

(1) Prior to the commencement of fishing, the member of the Commission is to circulate the information and assessment in Appendix 1.1 to the members of the Scientific Committee (SC) for review and to all members of the Commission for information, together with the impact assessment. Such information is to be provided to the other members at least 30 days in advance of the meeting at which the information shall be reviewed.

(2) The assessment in (1) above is to be conducted in accordance with the procedure set forth in “Science-based Standards and Criteria for Identification of VMEs and Assessment of Significant Adverse Impacts on VMEs and Marine Species (Annex 2)”, with the understanding that particular care shall be taken in the evaluation of risks of the significant adverse impact on vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs), in line with the precautionary approach.

(3) The SC is to review the information and the assessment submitted in (1) above in accordance with “SC Assessment Review Procedures for Bottom Fishing Activities (Annex 3).”

(4) The exploratory fisheries are to be permitted only where the assessment concludes that they would not have significant adverse impacts (SAIs) on marine species or any VMEs and on the basis of comments and recommendations of SC. Any determinations, by any Member of the Commission or the SC, that the exploratory fishing activities would not have SAIs on marine species or any VMEs, shall be made publicly available through the NPFC website.

4. The member of the Commission is to ensure that all vessels flying its flag conducting exploratory fisheries are equipped with a satellite monitoring device and have an observer on board at all times.

5. Within 3 months of the end of the exploratory fishing activities or within 12 months of the commencement of fishing, whichever occurs first, the member of the Commission is to provide a report of the results of such activities to the members of the SC and all members of the Commission. If the SC meets prior to the end of this 12-month period, the member of the Commission is to provide an interim report 30 days in advance of the SC meeting. The information to be included in the report is specified in Appendix 1.2.

6. The SC is to review the report in 5 above and decide whether the exploratory fishing activities had SAIs on marine species or any VME. The SC then is to send its recommendations to the Commission on whether the exploratory fisheries can continue and whether additional management measures shall be required if they are to continue. The Commission is to strive to adopt conservation and management measures to prevent SAIs on marine species or any VMEs. If the Commission is not able to reach consensus on any such measures, each fishing member of the Commission is to adopt measures to avoid any SAIs on VMEs.

7. Members of the Commission shall only authorize continuation of exploratory fishing activity, or commencement of commercial fishing activity, under this protocol on the basis of comments and recommendations of the SC.

8. The same encounter protocol should be applied in both fished and unfished areas specified in Annex 2, paragraph 4(1)(a).

Appendix 1.1

Information to be provided before exploratory fisheries start

1. A harvesting plan

- Name of vessel
- Flag member of vessel
- Description of area to be fished (location and depth)
- Fishing dates
- Anticipated effort
- Target species
- Bottom fishing gear-type used
- Area and effort restrictions to ensure that fisheries occur on a gradual basis in a limited geographical area.

2. A mitigation plan

- Measures to prevent SAIs to VMEs that may be encountered during the fishery

3. A catch monitoring plan

- Recording/reporting of all species brought onboard to the lowest possible taxonomic level
- 100% satellite monitoring
- 100% observer coverage

4. A data collection plan

- Data is to be collected in accordance with “Type and Format of Scientific Observer Data to be Collected” (Annex 5)

Appendix 1.2

Information to be included in the report

- Name of vessel
- Flag member of vessel
- Description of area fished (location and depth)
- Fishing dates
- Total effort
- Bottom fishing gear-type used
- List of VME encountered (the amount of VME indicator species for each encounter specifying the location: longitude and latitude)
- Mitigation measures taken in response to the encounter of VME
- List of all organisms brought onboard
- List of VMEs indicator species brought onboard by location: longitude and latitude

SCIENCE-BASED STANDARDS AND CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFICATION OF VMES AND ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE IMPACTS ON VMES AND MARINE SPECIES

1. Introduction

Members of the Commission have hereby established science-based standards and criteria to guide their implementation of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 61/105 and the measures adopted by the Members in respect of bottom fishing activities in the North Pacific Ocean (NPO). In this regard, these science-based standards and criteria are to be applied to identify vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) and assess significant adverse impacts (SAIs) of bottom fishing activities on such VMEs or marine species and to promote the long-term sustainability of deep sea fisheries in the Convention Area. The science-based standards and criteria are consistent with the FAO International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries in the High Seas, taking into account the work of other RFMOs implementing management of deep-sea bottom fisheries in accordance with UNGA Resolution 61/105. The standards and criteria are to be modified from time to time as more data are collected through research activities and monitoring of fishing operations.

2. Purpose

(1) The purpose of the standards and criteria is to provide guidelines for each member of the Commission in identifying VMEs and assessing SAIs of individual bottom fishing activities² on VMEs or marine species in the Convention Area. Each member of the Commission, using the best information available, is to decide which species or areas are to be categorized as VMEs, identify areas where VMEs are known or likely to occur, and assess whether individual bottom fishing activities would have SAIs on such VMEs or marine species. The results of these tasks are to be submitted to and reviewed by the Scientific Committee with a view to reaching a common understanding among the members of the Commission.

² “individual bottom fishing activities” means fishing activities by each fishing gear. For example, if ten fishing vessels operate bottom trawl fishing in a certain area, the impacts of the fishing activities of these vessels on the ecosystem are to be assessed as a whole rather than on a vessel-by-vessel basis. It should be noted that if the total number or capacity of the vessels using the same fishing gear has increased, the impacts of the fishing activities are to be assessed again.

(2) For the purpose of applying the standards and criteria, the bottom fisheries are defined as follows:

- (a) The fisheries are conducted in the Convention Area;
- (b) The total catch (everything brought up by the fishing gear) includes species that can only sustain low exploitation rates; and
- (c) The fishing gear is likely to contact the seafloor during the normal course of fishing operations

3. Definition of VMEs

(1) Although Paragraph 83 of UNGA Resolution 61/105 refers to seamounts, hydrothermal vents and cold water corals as examples of VMEs, there is no definitive list of specific species or areas that are to be regarded as VMEs.

(2) Vulnerability is related to the likelihood that a population, community or habitat will experience substantial alteration by fishing activities and how much time will be required for its recovery from such alteration. The most vulnerable ecosystems are those that are both easily disturbed and are very slow to recover, or may never recover. The vulnerabilities of populations, communities and habitats are to be assessed relative to specific threats. Some features, particularly ones that are physically fragile or inherently rare may be vulnerable to most forms of disturbance, but the vulnerability of some populations, communities and habitats may vary greatly depending on the type of fishing gear used or the kind of disturbance experienced. The risks to a marine ecosystem are determined by its vulnerability, the probability of a threat occurring and the mitigation means applied to the threat. Accordingly, the FAO Guidelines only provide examples of potential vulnerable species groups, communities and habitats as well as features that potentially support them (Annex 2.1).

(3) A marine ecosystem is to be classified as vulnerable based on its characteristics. The following list of characteristics is used as criteria in the identification of VMEs.

- (a) Uniqueness or rarity - an area or ecosystem that is unique or that contains rare species whose loss could not be compensated for by other similar areas. These include:
 - (i) Habitats that contain endemic species;
 - (ii) Habitats of rare, threatened or endangered species that occur in discrete areas;
 - (iii) Nurseries or discrete feeding, breeding, or spawning areas
- (b) Functional significance of the habitat – discrete areas or habitats that are necessary for the survival, function, spawning/reproduction or recovery of fish stocks, particular life-history stages (e.g. nursery grounds or rearing areas), or of rare, threatened or

endangered marine species.

(c) Fragility – an ecosystem that is highly susceptible to degradation by anthropogenic activities

(d) Life-history traits of component species that make recovery difficult – ecosystems that are characterized by populations or assemblages of species with one or more of the following characteristics:

- (i) Slow growth rates
- (ii) Late age of maturity
- (iii) Low or unpredictable recruitment
- (iv) Long-lived

(e) Structural complexity – an ecosystem that is characterized by complex physical structures created by significant concentrations of biotic and abiotic features. In these ecosystems, ecological processes are usually highly dependent on these structured systems. Further, such ecosystems often have high diversity, which is dependent on the structuring organisms.

(4) Management response may vary, depending on the size of the ecological unit in the Convention Area. Therefore, the spatial extent of the ecological unit is to be decided first. For example, whether the ecological unit is a group of seamounts, or an individual seamount in the Convention Area, is to be decided using the above criteria.

4. Identification of potential VMEs

(1) Fished seamounts

(a) Identification of fished seamounts

It is reported that two types of fishing gear are currently used by members of the Commission in the NE area, namely long-line hook and long-line trap. The footprint of the bottom fisheries (fished seamounts) is identified based on the available fishing record. The following seamounts have been identified as fished seamounts at some point in the past: Brown Bear, Cobb, Warwick, Eickelberg, Pathfinder, Miller, Murray, Cowie, Surveyor, Pratt, and Durgin. It is important to establish, to the extent practicable, a time series of where and when these gears have been used in order to assess potential long-term effects on any existing VMEs.

Fishing effort may not be evenly distributed on each seamount since fish aggregation may occur only at certain points of the seamount and some parts of the seamount may be physically unsuitable for certain fishing gears. Thus, it is important to know actual fished areas within the same seamount so as to know the gravity of the impact of fishing

activities on the entire seamount.

Due consideration is to be given to the protection of commercial confidentiality when identifying actual fishing grounds.

(b) Assessment on whether a specific seamount that has been fished is a VME

After identifying the fished seamounts or fished areas of seamounts, it is necessary to assess whether each fished seamount is a VME or contains VMEs in accordance with the criteria in 3 above, individually or in combination using the best available scientific and technical information as well as Annex 2.1. A variety of data would be required to conduct such assessment, including pictures of seamounts taken by an ROV camera or drop camera, biological samples collected through research activities and observer programs, and detailed bathymetry map. Where site-specific information is lacking, other information that is relevant to inferring the likely presence of VMEs is to be used. [The flow chart to identify data that can be used to identify VMEs is attached in Annex 2.3.](#)

(2) New fishing areas

Any place other than the fished seamounts above is to be regarded as a new fishing area. If a member of the Commission is considering fishing in a new fishing area, such a fishing area is to be subject to, in addition to these standards and criteria, an exploratory fishery protocol (Annex 1).

5. Assessment of SAIs on VMEs or marine species

(1) Significant adverse impacts are those that compromise ecosystem integrity (i.e., ecosystem structure or function) in a manner that: (i) impairs the ability of affected populations to replace themselves; (ii) degrades the long-term natural productivity of habitats; or (iii) causes, on more than a temporary basis, significant loss of species richness, habitat or community types. Impacts are to be evaluated individually, in combination and cumulatively.

(2) When determining the scale and significance of an impact, the following six factors are to be considered:

- (a) The intensity or severity of the impact at the specific site being affected;
- (b) The spatial extent of the impact relative to the availability of the habitat type affected;
- (c) The sensitivity/vulnerability of the ecosystem to the impact;
- (d) The ability of an ecosystem to recover from harm, and the rate of such recovery;
- (e) The extent to which ecosystem functions may be altered by the impact; and
- (f) The timing and duration of the impact relative to the period in which a species needs

the habitat during one or more life-history stages.

(3) Temporary impacts are those that are limited in duration and that allow the particular ecosystem to recover over an acceptable timeframe. Such timeframes are to be decided on a case-by-case basis and be on the order of 5-20 years, taking into account the specific features of the populations and ecosystems.

(4) In determining whether an impact is temporary, both the duration and the frequency with which an impact is repeated is to be considered. If the interval between the expected disturbances of a habitat is shorter than the recovery time, the impact is to be considered more than temporary.

(5) Each member of the Commission is to conduct assessments to establish if bottom fishing activities are likely to produce SAIs in a given seamount or other VMEs. Such an impact assessment is to address, *inter alia*:

- (a) Type of fishing conducted or contemplated, including vessel and gear types, fishing areas, target and potential bycatch species, fishing effort levels and duration of fishing;
- (b) Best available scientific and technical information on the current state of fishery resources, and baseline information on the ecosystems, habitats and communities in the fishing area, against which future changes are to be compared;
- (c) Identification, description and mapping of VMEs known or likely to occur in the fishing area;
- (d) The data and methods used to identify, describe and assess the impacts of the activity, identification of gaps in knowledge, and an evaluation of uncertainties in the information presented in the assessment
- (e) Identification, description and evaluation of the occurrence, scale and duration of likely impacts, including cumulative impacts of activities covered by the assessment on VMEs and low-productivity fishery resources in the fishing area;
- (f) Risk assessment of likely impacts by the fishing operations to determine which impacts are likely to be SAIs, particularly impacts on VMEs and low-productivity fishery resources (Risk assessments are to take into account, as appropriate, differing conditions prevailing in areas where fisheries are well established and in areas where fisheries have not taken place or only occur occasionally);
- (g) The proposed mitigation and management measures to be used to prevent SAIs on VMEs and ensure long-term conservation and sustainable utilization of low-productivity fishery resources, and the measures to be used to monitor effects of the fishing operations.

(6) Impact assessments are to consider, as appropriate, the information referred to in these Standards and Criteria, as well as relevant information from similar or related fisheries, species and ecosystems.

(7) Where an assessment concludes that the area does not contain VMEs or that significant adverse impacts on VMEs or marine species are not likely, such assessments are to be repeated when there have been significant changes to the fishery or other activities in the area, or when natural processes are thought to have undergone significant changes.

6. Proposed conservation and management measures to prevent SAIs

As a result of the assessment in 5 above, if it is considered that individual fishing activities are causing or likely to cause SAIs on VMEs or marine species, the member of the Commission is to adopt appropriate conservation and management measures to prevent such SAIs. The member of the Commission is to clearly indicate how such impacts are expected to be prevented or mitigated by the measures.

7. Precautionary approach

If after assessing all available scientific and technical information, the presence of VMEs or the likelihood that individual bottom fishing activities would cause SAIs on VMEs or marine species cannot be adequately determined, members of the Commission are only to authorize individual bottom fishing activities to proceed in accordance with:

- (a) Precautionary, conservation and management measures to prevent SAIs;
- (b) Measures to address unexpected encounters with VMEs in the course of fishing operations;
- (c) Measures, including ongoing scientific research, monitoring and data collection, to reduce the uncertainty; and
- (d) Measures to ensure long-term sustainability of deep sea fisheries.

8. Template for assessment report

Annex 2.2 is a template for individual member of the Commission to formulate reports on identification of VMEs and impact assessment.

ANNEX 2.1

EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL VULNERABLE SPECIES GROUPS, COMMUNITIES AND HABITATS AS WELL AS FEATURES THAT POTENTIALLY SUPPORT THEM

The following examples of species groups, communities, habitats and features often display

characteristics consistent with possible VMEs. Merely detecting the presence of an element itself is not sufficient to identify a VME. That identification is to be made on a case-by-case basis through application of relevant provisions of the Standards and Criteria, particularly Sections 3, 4 and 5.

Examples of species groups, communities and habitat forming species that are documented or considered sensitive and potentially vulnerable to deep-sea fisheries in the high-seas, and which may contribute to forming VMEs:	
a.	certain coldwater corals, e.g., reef builders and coral forest including: stony corals (scleractinia), alcyonaceans and gorgonians (octocorallia), black corals (antipatharia), and hydrocorals (stylasteridae),
b.	Some types of sponge dominated communities,
c.	communities composed of dense emergent fauna where large sessile protozoans (xenophyphores) and invertebrates (e.g., hydroids and bryozoans) form an important structural component of habitat, and
d.	seep and vent communities comprised of invertebrate and microbial species found nowhere else (i.e., endemic).

Examples of topographical, hydrophysical or geological features, including fragile geological structures, that potentially support the species groups or communities, referred to above:	
a.	submerged edges and slopes (e.g., corals and sponges),
b.	summits and flanks of seamounts, guyots, banks, knolls, and hills (e.g., corals, sponges, xenophyphores),
c.	canyons and trenches (e.g., burrowed clay outcrops, corals),
d.	hydrothermal vents (e.g., microbial communities and endemic invertebrates), and
e.	cold seeps (e.g., mud volcanoes, microbes, hard substrates for sessile invertebrates).

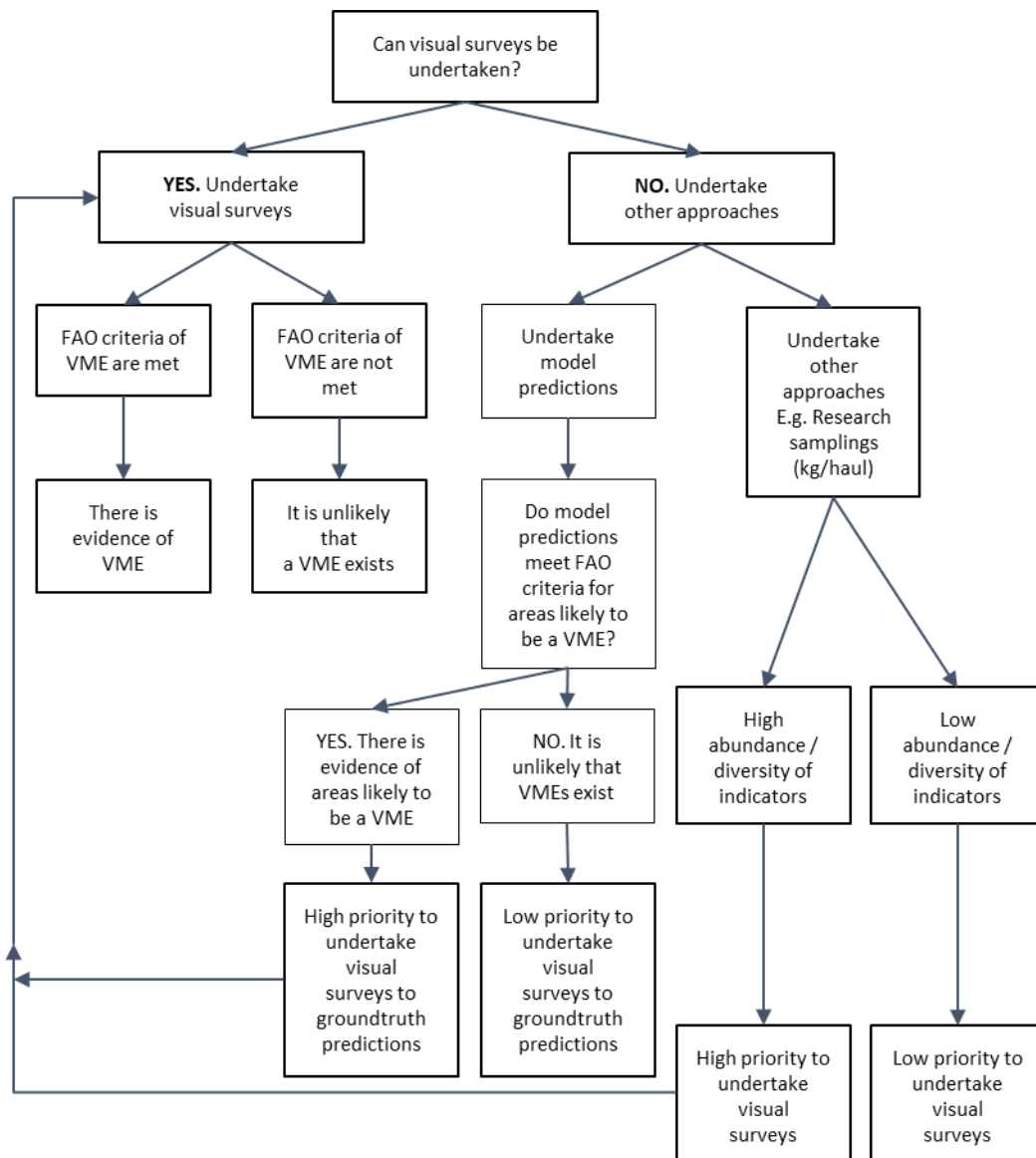
ANNEX 2.2

TEMPLATE FOR REPORTS ON IDENTIFICATION OF VMEs AND ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS CAUSED BY INDIVIDUAL FISHING ACTIVITIES ON VMEs OR MARINE SPECIES

1. Name of the member of the Commission
2. Name of the fishery (e.g., bottom trawl, bottom gillnet, bottom longline, pot)

3. Status of the fishery (existing fishery or exploratory fishery)
4. Target species
5. Bycatch species
6. Recent level of fishing effort (every year at least since 2002)
 - (1) Number of fishing vessels
 - (2) Tonnage of each fishing vessel
 - (3) Number of fishing days or days on the fishing ground
 - (4) Fishing effort (total operating hours for trawl, # of hooks per day for long-line, # of pots per day for pot, total length of net per day for gillnet)
 - (5) Total catch by species
 - (6) Names of seamounts fished or to be fished
7. Fishing period
8. Analysis of status of fishery resources
 - (1) Data and methods used for analysis
 - (2) Results of analysis
 - (3) Identification of uncertainties in data and methods, and measures to overcome such uncertainties
9. Analysis of status of bycatch species resources
 - (1) Data and methods used for analysis
 - (2) Results of analysis
 - (3) Identification of uncertainties in data and methods, and measures to overcome such uncertainties
10. Analysis of existence of VMEs in the fishing ground
 - (1) Data and methods used for analysis
 - (2) Results of analysis
 - (3) Identification of uncertainties in data and methods, and measures to overcome such uncertainties
11. Impact assessment of fishing activities on VMEs or marine species including cumulative impacts, and identification of SAIs on VMEs or marine species, as detailed in Section 5 above, Assessment of SAIs on VMEs or marine species
12. Other points to be addressed
13. Conclusion (whether to continue or start fishing with what measures, or stop fishing).

Flow chart to identify data that can be used to identify VMEs in the NPFC Convention Area



SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ASSESSMENT REVIEW PROCEDURES FOR BOTTOM FISHING ACTIVITIES

1. The Scientific Committee (SC) is to review identifications of vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) and assessments of significant adverse impact on VMEs, including proposed management measures intended to prevent such impacts submitted by individual Members.
2. Members of the Commission shall submit their identifications and assessments to members of the SC at least 21 days prior to the SC meeting at which the review is to take place. Such submissions shall include all relevant data and information in support of such determinations.
3. The SC will review the data and information in each assessment in accordance with the Science-based Standards and Criteria for Identification of VMEs and Assessment of Significant Adverse Impacts on VMEs and Marine Species (Annex 2), previous decisions of the Commission, and the FAO Technical Guidelines for the Management of Deep Sea Fisheries in the High Seas, paying special attention to the assessment process and criteria specified in paragraphs 47-49 of the Guidelines.
4. In conducting the review above, the SC will give particular attention to whether the deep-sea bottom fishing activity would have a significant adverse impact on VMEs and marine species and, if so, whether the proposed management measures would prevent such impacts.
5. Based on the above review, the SC will provide advice and recommendations to the submitting Members on the extent to which the assessments and related determinations are consistent with the procedures and criteria established in the documents identified above; and whether additional management measures will be required to prevent SAIs on VMEs.
6. Such recommendations will be reflected in the report of the SC meeting at which the assessments are considered.

FORMAT OF NATIONAL REPORT SECTIONS ON DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SCIENTIFIC OBSERVER PROGRAMMES

Report Components

Annual Observer Programme implementation reports should form a component of annual National Reports submitted by members to the Scientific Committee. These reports should provide a brief overview of observer programmes conducted in the NPFC Convention Area. Observer programme reports should include the following sections:

A. Observer Training

An overview of observer training conducted, including:

- Overview of training programme provided to scientific observers.
- Number of observers trained.

B. Scientific Observer Programme Design and Coverage

Details of the design of the observer programme, including:

- Which fleets, fleet components or fishery components were covered by the programme.
- How vessels were selected to carry observers within the above fleets or components.
- How was observer coverage stratified: by fleets, fisheries components, vessel types, vessel sizes, vessel ages, fishing areas and seasons.

Details of observer coverage of the above fleets, including:

- Components, areas, seasons and proportion of total catches of target species, specifying units used to determine coverage.
- Total number of observer employment days, and number of actual days deployed on observation work.

C. Observer Data Collected

List of observer data collected against the agreed range of data set out in Annex 5, including:

- Effort Data: Amount of effort observed (vessel days, net panels, hooks, etc), by area and season and % observed out of total by area and seasons

- Catch Data: Amount of catch observed of target and by-catch species, by area and season, and % observed out of total estimated catch by species, area and seasons
- Length Frequency Data: Number of fish measured per species, by area and season.
- Biological Data: Type and quantity of other biological data or samples (otoliths, sex, maturity, etc) collected per species.
- The size of length-frequency and biological sub-samples relative to unobserved quantities.

D. Detection of Fishing in Association with Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems

- Information about VME encounters (species and quantity in accordance with Annex 5, H, 2).

E. Tag Return Monitoring

- Number of tags returns observed, by fish size class and area.

F. Problems Experienced

- Summary of problems encountered by observers and observer managers that could affect the NPFC Observer Programme Standards and/or each member's national observer programme developed under the NPFC standards.

**NPFC BOTTOM FISHERIES
OBSERVER PROGRAMME STANDARDS: SCIENTIFIC COMPONENT**

TYPE AND FORMAT OF SCIENTIFIC OBSERVER DATA TO BE COLLECTED

A. Vessel & Observer Data to be collected for Each Trip

1. Vessel and observer details are to be recorded only once for each observed trip.
2. The following observer data are to be collected for each observed trip:
 - a) NPFC vessel ID
 - b) Observer's name.
 - c) Observer's organisation.
 - d) Date observer embarked (UTC date).
 - e) Port of embarkation.
 - f) Date observer disembarked (UTC date).
 - g) Port of disembarkation.

B. Catch & Effort Data to be collected for Trawl Fishing Activity

1. Data are to be collected on an un-aggregated (tow by tow) basis for all observed trawls.
2. The following data are to be collected for each observed trawl tow:
 - a) Tow start date (UTC).
 - b) Tow start time (UTC).
 - c) Tow end date (UTC).
 - d) Tow end time (UTC).
 - e) Tow start position (Lat/Lon, 1 minute resolution).
 - f) Tow end position (Lat/Lon, 1 minute resolution).
 - g) Type of trawl, bottom or mid-water.
 - h) Type of trawl, single, double or triple.
 - i) Height of net opening (m).
 - j) Width of net opening (m).
 - k) Mesh size of the cod-end net (stretched mesh, mm) and mesh type (diamond, square, etc).
 - l) Gear depth (of footrope) at start of fishing (m).

- m) Bottom (seabed) depth at start of fishing (m).
- n) Gear depth (of footrope) at end of fishing (m).
- o) Bottom (seabed) depth at end of fishing (m).
- p) Status of the trawl operation (no damage, lightly damaged*, heavily damaged*, other (specify)). *Degree may be evaluated by time for repairing (≤ 1 hr or > 1 hr)
- q) Duration of estimated period of seabed contact (minute)
- r) Intended target species.
- s) Catch of all species retained on board, split by species, in weight (to the nearest kg).
- t) Estimate of the amount (weight or volume) of all living marine resources discarded, split by species.
- u) Record of the numbers by species of all marine mammals, seabirds or reptiles caught.

C. Catch & Effort Data to be collected for Bottom Gillnet Fishing Activity

1. Data are to be collected on an un-aggregated (set by set) basis for all observed bottom gillnet sets.
2. The following data are to be collected for each observed bottom gillnet set:
 - a) Set start date (UTC).
 - b) Set start time (UTC).
 - c) Set end date (UTC).
 - d) Set end time (UTC).
 - e) Set start position (Lat/Lon, 1 minute resolution).
 - f) Set end position (Lat/Lon, 1 minute resolution).
 - g) Net panel ("tan") length (m).
 - h) Net panel ("tan") height (m).
 - i) Net mesh size (stretched mesh, mm) and mesh type (diamond, square, etc)
 - j) Bottom depth at start of setting (m).
 - k) Bottom depth at end of setting (m).
 - l) Number of net panels for the set.
 - m) Number of net panels retrieved.
 - n) Number of net panels actually observed during the haul.
 - o) Actually observed catch of all species retained on board, split by species, in weight (to the nearest kg).
 - p) An estimation of the amount (numbers or weight) of marine resources discarded, split by species, during the actual observation.

- q) Record of the actually observed numbers by species of all marine mammals, seabirds or reptiles caught.
- r) Intended target species.
- s) Catch of all species retained on board, split by species, in weight (to the nearest kg).
- t) Estimate of the amount (weight or volume) of all marine resources discarded* and dropped-off, split by species. * Including those retained for scientific samples.
- u) Record of the numbers by species of all marine mammals, seabirds or reptiles caught (including those discarded and dropped-off).

D. Catch & Effort Data to be collected for Bottom Long Line Fishing Activity

1. Data are to be collected on an un-aggregated (set by set) basis for all observed longline sets.
2. The following fields of data are to be collected for each set:
 - a) Set start date (UTC).
 - b) Set start time (UTC).
 - c) Set end date (UTC).
 - d) Set end time (UTC).
 - e) Set start position (Lat/Lon, 1 minute resolution).
 - f) Set end position (Lat/Lon, 1 minute resolution).
 - g) Total length of longline set (m).
 - h) Number of hooks or traps for the set.
 - i) Bottom (seabed) depth at start of set.
 - j) Bottom (seabed) depth at end of set.
 - k) Number of hooks or traps actually observed during the haul.
 - l) Intended target species.
 - m) Actually observed catch of all species retained on board, split by species, in weight (to the nearest kg).
 - n) An estimation of the amount (numbers or weight) of marine resources discarded* or dropped-off, split by species, during the actual observation. * Including those retained for scientific samples.
 - o) Record of the actually observed numbers by species of all marine mammals, seabirds or reptiles caught (including those discarded and dropped-off).

E. Length-Frequency Data to Be Collected

1. Representative and randomly distributed length-frequency data (to the nearest mm, with record of the type of length measurement taken) are to be collected for representative samples of the target species and other main by-catch species. Total weight of length-frequency samples should be recorded, and observers may be required to also determine sex of measured fish to generate length-frequency data stratified by sex. The length-frequency data may be used as potential indicators of ecosystem changes (for example, see: Gislason, H. et al. (2000. ICES J Mar Sci 57: 468-475), Yamane et al. (2005. ICES J Mar Sci, 62: 374-379), and Shin, Y-J. et al. (2005. ICES J Mar Sci, 62: 384-396)).
2. The numbers of fish to be measured for each species and distribution of samples across area and month strata should be determined, to ensure that samples are properly representative of species distributions and size ranges.

F. Biological sampling to be conducted (optional for gillnet and long line fisheries)

1. The following biological data are to be collected for representative samples of the main target species and, time permitting, for other main by-catch species contributing to the catch:
 - a) Species
 - b) Length (to the nearest mm), with record of the type of length measurement used.
 - c) Length and depth in case of North Pacific armorhead.
 - d) Sex (male, female, indeterminate, not examined)
 - e) Maturity stage (immature, mature, ripe, ripe-running, spent)
2. Representative stratified samples of otoliths are to be collected from the main target species and, time permitting, from other main by-catch species regularly occurring in catches. All otoliths to be collected are to be labelled with the information listed in 1 above, as well as the date, vessel name, observer name and catch position.
3. Where specific trophic relationship projects are being conducted, observers may be requested to also collect stomach samples from certain species. Any such samples collected are also to be labelled with the information listed in 1 above, as well as the date, vessel name, observer name and catch position.
4. Observers may also be required to collect tissue samples as part of specific genetic research programmes implemented by the SC.

5. Observers are to be briefed and provided with written length-frequency and biological sampling protocols and priorities for the above sampling specific to each observer trip.

G. Data to be collected on Incidental Captures of Protected Species

1. Flag members operating observer programs are to develop, in cooperation with the SC, lists and identification guides of protected species or species of concern (seabirds, marine mammals or marine reptiles) to be monitored by observers.
2. The following data are to be collected for all protected species caught in fishing operations:
 - a) Species (identified as far as possible, or accompanied by photographs if identification is difficult).
 - b) Count of the number caught per tow or set.
 - c) Life status (vigorous, alive, lethargic, dead) upon release.
 - d) Whole specimens (where possible) for onshore identification. Where this is not possible, observers may be required to collect sub-samples of identifying parts, as specified in biological sampling protocols.

H. Detection of Fishing in Association with Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems

1. The SC is to develop a guideline, species list and identification guide for benthic species (e.g. sponges, sea fans, corals) whose presence in a catch will indicate that fishing occurred in association with a vulnerable marine ecosystem (VME). All observers on vessels are to be provided with copies of this guideline, species list and ID guide.
2. For each observed fishing operation, the following data are to be collected for all species caught, which appear on the list of vulnerable benthic species:
 - a) Species (identified as far as possible, or accompanied by a photograph where identification is difficult).
 - b) An estimate of the quantity (weight (kg) or volume (m³)) of each listed benthic species caught in the fishing operation.
 - c) An overall estimate of the total quantity (weight (kg) or volume (m³)) of all invertebrate benthic species caught in the fishing operation.
 - d) Where possible, and particularly for new or scarce benthic species which do not appear in ID guides, whole samples should be collected and suitable preserved for identification on shore.

I. Data to be collected for all Tag Recoveries

1. The following data are to be collected for all recovered fish, seabird, mammal or reptile tags:
 - a) Observer name.
 - b) Vessel name.
 - c) Vessel call sign.
 - d) Vessel flag.
 - e) Collect, label (with all details below) and store the actual tags for later return to the tagging agency.
 - f) Species from which tag recovered.
 - g) Tag colour and type (spaghetti, archival).
 - h) Tag numbers (The tag number is to be provided for all tags when multiple tags were attached to one fish. If only one tag was recorded, a statement is required that specifies whether or not the other tag was missing)
 - i) Date and time of capture (UTC).
 - j) Location of capture (Lat/Lon, to the nearest 1 minute)
 - k) Animal length / size (to the nearest cm) with description of what measurement was taken (such as total length, fork length, etc).
 - l) Sex (F=female, M=male, I=indeterminate, D=not examined)
 - m) Whether the tags were found during a period of fishing that was being observed (Y/N)
 - n) Reward information (e.g. name and address where to send reward)

(It is recognised that some of the data recorded here duplicates data that already exists in the previous categories of information. This is necessary because tag recovery information may be sent separately to other observer data.)

J. Hierarchies for Observer Data Collection

2. Trip-specific or programme-specific observer task priorities may be developed in response to specific research programme requirements, in which case such priorities should be followed by observers.
3. In the absence of trip- or programme-specific priorities, the following generalised priorities should be followed by observers:
 - a) Fishing Operation Information
 - All vessel and tow / set / effort information.

b) Monitoring of Catches

- Record time, proportion of catch (e.g. proportion of trawl landing) or effort (e.g. number of hooks), and total numbers of each species caught.
- Record numbers or proportions of each species retained or discarded.

c) Biological Sampling

- Length-frequency data for target species.
- Length-frequency data for main by-catch species.
- Identification and counts of protected species.
- Basic biological data (sex, maturity) for target species.
- Check for presence of tags.
- Otoliths (and stomach samples, if being collected) for target species.
- Basic biological data for by-catch species.
- Biological samples of by-catch species (if being collected)
- Photos

4. The monitoring of catches and biological sampling procedures should be prioritised among species groups as follows:

Species	Priority (1 highest)
Primary target species (such as North Pacific armorhead and splendid alfonsino)	1
Other species typically within top 10 in the fishery (such as mirror dory, and oreos)	2
Protected species	3
All other species	4

The allocation of observer effort among these activities will depend on the type of operation and setting. The size of sub-samples relative to unobserved quantities (e.g. number of hooks/panels examined for species composition relative to the number of hooks/panels retrieved) should be explicitly recorded under the guidance of member country observer programmes.

K. Coding Specifications to be used for Recording Observer Data

1. Unless otherwise specified for specific data types, observer data are to be collected in accordance with the same coding specifications as specified in this Annex.
2. Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) is to be used to describe times.
3. Degrees and minutes are to be used to describe locations.
4. The following coding schemes are to be used:
 - a. Species are to be described using the FAO 3 letter species codes or, if species do not have a FAO code, using scientific names.
 - b. Fishing methods are to be described using the International Standard Classification of Fishing Gear (ISSCFG - 29 July 1980) codes.
 - c. Types of fishing vessel are to be described using the International Standard Classification of Fishery Vessels (ISSCFV) codes.
5. Metric units of measure are to be used, specifically:
 - a. Kilograms are to be used to describe catch weight.
 - b. Metres are to be used to describe height, width, depth, beam or length.
 - c. Cubic metres are to be used to describe volume.
 - d. Kilowatts are to be used to describe engine power.