

Information Dissemination about the Ocean

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[Birth of the North Pacific Fisheries Commission \(NPFC\)](#)

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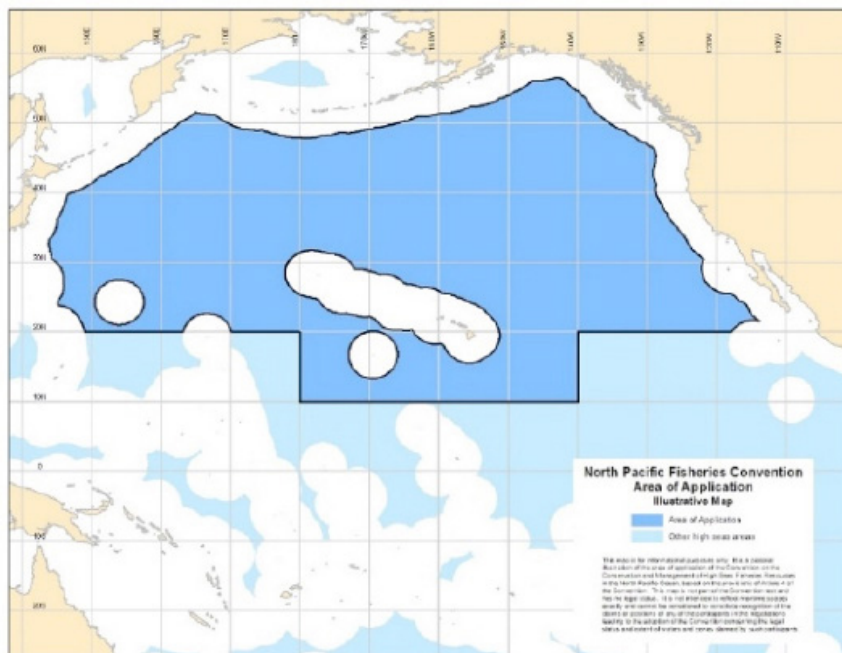
North Pacific Fisheries Commission

Birth of the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC)

The Fishing Environment in the North Pacific

From ancient times, humans have relied on the oceans for many reasons mainly for food, economic opportunities, recreation and so on. According to FAO, in 2013, fish accounted for about 17% of the global population's intake of animal protein and 6.7% of all protein consumed, and about 56.6 million people were engaged in the primary sector of capture fisheries and aquaculture in 2014. However, increased human impacts along with rapid population growth and substantial developments in technology have continuously pushed commercial fish stocks and they have decreased, resulting in significantly lower levels of fish resources now available. It is not surprising that more than 50% of fish stocks are fully exploited and only about 10% are underfished stocks.

The North Pacific Ocean where we live is the most productive area in the world due to its surrounding environments, which has allowed the Pacific Rim States to enjoy the freedom of access to high seas fisheries resources. More recently agreed international instruments have been established to conserve and manage these resources for sustainable use for the future. Currently around fifty such governing bodies called Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFB) or Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) focus on high seas fisheries, coastal fisheries, inland fisheries and aquaculture on the world's oceans. However, despite these numerous RFBs, there have been relatively few such organizations in the North Pacific Ocean and it was clearly recognized by the UN that there needed to be a bridge in this region to manage fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems. This was the beginning of the birth of the North Pacific Fisheries Commission.



1. NPFC Convention Area

Who Are We?

The North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC) is an inter-governmental organization, headquartered in Tokyo, Japan, established by the *Convention on the Conservation and Management of the High Seas Fisheries Resources in the North Pacific Ocean*. The objective of the Convention 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”. The initial meetings to establish the NPFC commenced in 2006, in accordance with United Nation’s General Assembly Resolution 59/25 (2004), 60/31 (2005), 61/105 (2006) and it took 9 years of negotiation processes for Canada, China, Japan, Korea, Russia, Chinese Taipei, USA to reach the point where we are now a Commission. The Convention was adopted on 24th February 2012 and came into force 180 days after receipt of the 4th ratification on 19 July 2015. The current Members of the NPFC include: Canada, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and Chinese Taipei.

What Do We Do?

Day-to-day running of the Commission is through the Secretariat under the direction of the Executive Secretary. With support from two professional staff responsible for scientific and compliance matters, the Executive Secretary assists the Commission Members in the presentation and adoption of conservation management measures (CMMs) that will govern the fishing practices of their fleets when operating in the NPFC Convention Area. The Commission has two key areas of work, the first being the scientific area which addresses status of fish species and impacts of fishing activity on fish stocks and marine ecosystems to provide advice to the Members for sustainable management of the resources and protection of ecosystems. Second, is the compliance component where rules and regulations (CMMs) are endorsed for approval by the Commission for sustainable management of the resources and ecosystems. Fishing vessels operating in the NPFC Convention Area are monitored at sea and in port to ensure compliance of their operations with the agreed regulations/CMMs of the Commission. The Area of Competence of the NPFC includes the high seas of the North Pacific Ocean. Fisheries resources covered by the Convention include all the fish, mollusks, crustaceans and other marine species caught by fishing vessels within the Convention Area, excluding sedentary species insofar as they are subject to the sovereign rights of coastal States, indicator species of vulnerable marine ecosystems, catadromous species, marine mammals, marine reptiles and seabirds, and other marine species already covered by pre-existing international fisheries management instruments within the area of competence of such instruments.



2. Major target species of North Pacific Bottom fisheries North Pacific Armorhead, Splendid Alfonsino, Rockfish, Sablefish

Currently the fish species targeted by the NPFC Members include bottom fish stocks and pelagic fish stocks. As for bottom fish stocks, in the Northwestern Pacific Ocean, bottom trawl fisheries, bottom gillnet fisheries and bottom longline fisheries have been conducted over the Emperor seamounts by Japan, Korea and Russia. The primary target species of the bottom trawl fisheries have been North Pacific armorhead, and splendid alfonsino, and the primary target species of the bottom gillnet fisheries have been splendid alfonsino, oreo and mirror dory. In the Northeastern Pacific Ocean, four seamount aggregations have been fished by Canada, via longline hook and longline trap gear. Since the inception of the fishery, the target species of both the longline hook and longline trap harvesters has been sablefish. As for pelagic fish stocks, Pacific saury has been harvested by China, Japan, Korea, Russia and Chinese Taipei. These fleets mainly use stick-held dip nets or lift nets to catch Pacific saury. While Japanese and Russian vessels operate mainly within their EEZs, Chinese, Korean and Chinese Taipei vessels operate mainly in the high seas of the North Pacific. Besides Pacific saury, neon flying squid has been harvested by squid jigging fisheries within the Convention Area. More recently, the chub mackerel fishery is commencing in the NPFC Convention Area in the Northwestern Pacific Ocean.

As a new RFMO, NPFC is now in its early developmental stage of setting up the Secretariat, developing internal rules and procedures, liaising and cooperating with other RFMOs to enable exchange of pertinent information on research, processes and operational activities. It is notable, however, that the NPFC with cooperation of six Members has made significant progress by adopting important CMMs which include Vessel Registration, limitation on Pacific saury, listing of IUU fishing activities, interim transshipment procedures, addressing vessels without nationality, measures for the management of bottom fisheries and protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) in both the Northwestern and Northeastern Pacific Oceans, and limitation on fishing effort for chub mackerel.

Challenges and Future Plans

As other existing RFMOs, the NPFC also is facing challenges in attaining its Convention objectives. Among those are first and foremost commitment of Members and Participants to good governance, transparency, and sustainable management of renewable marine resources and protection of the marine ecosystems, which is an absolute and basic requirement to the success of RFMOs. Leadership for sustainable management by current Commission officers is also critical to a potential success of the NPFC, since politics will always play a part in regional resource management. In addition, understanding the complexity of resources and ecosystems that encompass dependent or associated species within their larger surrounding environments is also a challenge that the NPFC has to overcome in the short and long-term. In summary, the NPFC, as a recently established RFMO, is fully committed to making every effort for the conservation and management of high sea fisheries resources in the North Pacific Ocean. This will be achieved by complying with relevant UNGA fisheries resolutions, the development of Commission work plans including science and compliance, conducting stock assessments of target species, establishing data management system, and cooperation with other organizations.

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