

**PROTOCOL**

**24<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE U.S.-RUSSIA  
INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (ICC)  
ON FISHERIES**

September 11-13, 2013 – Girdwood, Alaska

- 1. Opening Remarks; Introduction of Members of Delegations**  
Pursuant to Article XIV of the 1988 Agreement on Mutual Fisheries Relations, as amended, representatives of Russia and the United States conducted the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the ICC on Fisheries in Girdwood, Alaska, on September 11-13, 2013. The delegation of the Russian Federation (Russia) was led by Dr. Vasily Sokolov, the Deputy Head of the Fisheries Agency of the Russian Federation and the delegation of the United States of America (U.S.) was led by Ambassador David Balton, Deputy Assistant Secretary of U.S. State Department for Oceans and Fisheries.  
Opening remarks are provided in Attachment 1. A complete list of the U.S. and Russian delegation members is provided in Attachment 2.
- 2. Election of Chairman and Rapporteur**  
Ambassador David Balton (U.S.) was elected as Chairperson of the 24<sup>th</sup> session of the ICC. Mr. Dmitry Kremenyuk (Russia) and Dr. Alexander Glubokov (Russia) and Mr. Michael Clark (U.S.) were appointed as Rapporteurs.
- 3. Adoption of the Agenda**  
The delegations adopted the agenda provided in Attachment 3.
- 4. Discussion of Issues Connected with Agreement on Mutual Fisheries Relations (1988).  
U.S. –Russia Cooperation in the Study of Living Marine Resources:**  
The U.S. side provided an update on the extension of the 1988 Agreement on Mutual Fisheries Relations and requested an update from the Russian Federation on the status of the exchange of diplomatic notes necessary to extend the Agreement. The Russian delegation indicated that the interagency process is ongoing and that the Agreement should be renewed by the end of the year.

**4.1 Status of Bering Sea Pollock Stocks**

Ms. Patricia Livingston (U.S.) reported on the status of U.S. pollock stocks. The dominant stocks in the U.S. EEZ of the Bering Sea are located in the eastern Bering Sea, the Aleutian Islands, and the Bogoslof Island area.

Additional details on the status of pollock stocks in the Bering Sea-Aleutian Islands (BSAI) can be found on the following website:

<http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/refm/stocks/assessments.htm>.

Dr. Glubokov (Russia) made a presentation on the results of Russian studies of pollock in the Bering Sea conducted during the inter-sessional period. From July 2012 to August 2013,

10 expeditions were carried out in the Bering Sea. It was noted that in the Western Bering Sea pollock stocks from the 2006, 2008, 2009 and 2010 year classes were above average. Studies of Navarin pollock showed that its stock has stabilized. According to the modeling data and by using a precautionary approach the TAC for 2014 will remain at the 2013 TAC level.

Due to the absence of abundant year classes of Karagin Pollock in recent years the TAC for 2014 was decreased twofold compared to the 2013 TAC level.

#### **4.2 Walruses**

Dr. Patrick Lemons (U.S.) reported that in 2013, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service initiated a multi-year, genetics based, capture-mark-recapture project for estimation of abundance and demographic rates (i.e. survival and recruitment) of Pacific walruses. This study requires the collection of a large number of skin biopsy samples from a representative sample of the Pacific walrus population and therefore sample collection must occur in both the U.S. and Russia. The United States proposed conducting a joint U.S./Russian research cruise in 2014 and 2015 to collect skin biopsy samples from walruses hauled out on sea ice in the Bering and Chukchi Seas.

Dr. Vinnikov (Russia) reported about the research on Pacific walruses conducted in the Chukotka rookeries by the ChuckotTINRO. In 2011-2012 observations were carried out in four rookeries along the Arctic coast to study the walrus age and sex composition, external influence on walrus behavior and other factors. The Russian side supports the US proposal for a joint US-Russia five-year research program in order to determine the abundance of walrus populations held in common by both sides. Dr. Vinnikov proposed developing a common approach to the assessment of the indigenous walrus hunt's impact on both countries.

#### **4.3. Status of Steller Sea Lion stocks, interactions with fisheries, and protection measures around rookeries and haul-outs**

Dr. John Bengtson (U.S.) presented research on the status of domestic and trans-boundary Steller sea lions and other marine mammals. The eastern and western stocks constitute the two main stocks of Steller sea lions in the North Pacific. The National Marine Fisheries Service conducts surveys of Steller sea lions every other year, weather permitting. Currently, the largest rookeries and major haulouts in the western population occur in the eastern Aleutians and western Gulf of Alaska. Steller sea lion populations in these areas are increasing. By contrast, the rookeries and haulouts in the western and central Aleutians are much smaller and continue to experience declines. Despite a decline in the western and central Aleutians, the U.S. portion of the western stock has shown an increasing trend between 2005 and 2012.

Dr. Vinnikov (Russia) presented information regarding current sea lion distribution in the Chukchi area. Abundance of sea lions is at average levels in the Russian EEZ. Expanded

sightings of walrus in the Chukchi Sea and the appearance of new haulouts support this conclusion.

#### **4.4 Status of Crab Species: *Opilio*, blue and red king crab, and *Chionoecetes bairdi***

Mr. Chris Oliver (U.S.) reported that Bering Sea snow crab continues to comprise the highest catch of crab stocks in the Bering Sea. All major stocks have exhibited a declining trend except for the Aleutian Islands golden king crab.

Dr. Melnikov (Russia) presented stock assessment data for 3 species of crabs in the western Bering Sea: blue king crab, *Ch. opilio* and *Ch. bairdi*. Stocks of all 3 species are currently stable and there is a trend toward an increase in the number of recruits. Total annual catch of all 3 species in the last few years were below TAC.

#### **4.5 Seabird Bycatch**

Ms. Kim Rivera (U.S.) reported on seabird bycatch trends in the Alaska groundfish fisheries and efforts undertaken to reduce the bycatch and provided an update on the endangered short-tailed albatross. Bycatch reduction efforts have progressed in the US West Coast groundfish fisheries, in response to the 2011 take of an endangered short-tailed albatross. Ms. Rivera also reported on another seabird species of concern, the Kittlitz's murrelet, whose breeding range is limited to Alaska and the Russian Far East. US Fish & Wildlife Service is working with Russian and American scientists to gain a better understanding of the species status and population size, particularly in the Russian portion of the Bering Sea. Sources of anthropogenic mortality have been identified—e.g. gillnet fisheries and oil spills. The Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program operated by NOAA Fisheries has documented bycatch of Kittlitz's murrelet in several Alaska gillnet fisheries. The US and Russia share many seabird resources and collaborations in areas such as bycatch assessment and reduction and at-sea surveys are possible and important.

Dr. Vinnikov (Russia) reported on the results of sea bird bycatch studies, and the effectiveness of using streamers in the Russian long line fisheries, conducted in the last few years by KamchatNIRO, ChukotTINRO and the Kamchatka branch of the Far East Academy of Science. The use of streamers helped reduce bycatch of sea birds, including rare species, and increased the efficiency of long-line fisheries. Following studies will include investigations of sea birds bycatch in other types of fisheries, as well as abundance assessment of sea birds on the Russian side of the Bering and Chukchi Seas.

#### **5. Status of joint research planning, data exchanges, and surveys**

There is a long history of joint research planning between the Pacific Research Fisheries Center (TINRO) and the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC). As part of mutual efforts to advance the research program in the Bering Sea under the Russia-United States Intergovernmental Consultative Committee (ICC) that was discussed at the January 2011 ICC workshop, the AFSC invited Dr. Mikhail Stepanenko (Russia) of TINRO to come to

Seattle, Washington during March 25-29, 2013. The main purpose of the visit was to review the 2012 Bering Sea midwater and bottom trawl survey information from the AFSC and TINRO and make recommendations about possible future research. In addition, research on fish ageing protocols for walleye pollock and Pacific cod were discussed. Also reviewed was available information about commercial catch amounts, spatial distribution and size composition around the maritime boundary line. A report was prepared that summarized the discussions and recommendations for future scientific exchanges between AFSC and TINRO. Both research centers plan on continuing their scientific collaborations in the coming years. In summer and fall of 2013 and 2014, there will be further midwater survey efforts around the maritime boundary line. A scientific exchange of information regarding pollock ageing protocols is also planned for 2014. Dr. Stepanenko (Russia) presented data regarding plans for echo-integration and bottom trawl surveys by Russia in the Bering Sea in 2014. TINRO-Center conducted an echo-integration trawl survey in the northwestern Bering Sea in the Russian and US EEZs adjacent to the maritime boundary in October 2012. TINRO-center conducted the same survey in August-September 2013 and plans a similar survey in 2014. The TINRO-Center and Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) are planning bottom trawl surveys in the Bering Sea in 2014, thus potentially creating a possibility to conduct intercalibration of fishing gear used during these surveys. The AFSC initiated the conduct of comparison studies to determine pollock age readings by scale (Russia) and otoliths (U.S.). The TINRO-Center sampled pollock scales and otoliths in the northwestern Bering Sea in the summer of 2013 and could send specialist to AFSC for joint age readings by scales and otoliths in early 2014 with funding support from AFSC.

#### **6. Exchange of Information on Fisheries Enforcement Cooperation**

U.S. Coast Guard Captain Phil Thorne presented an overview of cooperative maritime law enforcement efforts over the past year conducted by the USCG District 17 and Kamchatka Border Guard Directorate of the FSB of Russia, focused on stemming illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing activity in the vicinity of the maritime boundary line in the Bering Sea as well as efforts focused on curtailing illegal large-scale high seas drift netting in the North Pacific. There remains interest by both sides to expand fisheries law enforcement cooperation, especially in regard to investigations of potential illegal importation of Russian fisheries products into the United States. Such cooperation will need to expand on the involvement of the NOAA Fisheries (office of Law Enforcement). Both Parties agreed to continue their strong partnerships between the U.S. and Russian enforcement agencies and to furthering cooperation through the signing and entry into force of the IUU Agreement. Ambassador Balton (U.S.) expressed gratitude for Russia's cooperation on fisheries enforcement and congratulated both sides on their establishment of a productive working relationship.

V. Monakhov, representative of the Russia FSB Border Guard Service, reported on joint activities by the FSB and the U.S. Coast Guard District 17, as well as actions undertaken in 2013 in fulfillment of the international schedule for the enforcement of regulations in the area delineated by the Convention for the North Pacific Anadromous Fisheries Commissions (Convention area.)

Provided information showed, that enforcement activities in the areas adjacent to the line of delimitation between the Russian Federation and the United States in the Bering sea did not encounter vessels engaged in illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.

Results of enforcement activities in 2013 within the Convention area were provided. It was noted that no vessels engaged in the specialized catch of anadromous fish species were detected.

It is the opinion of the Russian side that the low level of illegal activity in the indicated areas is a direct result of a high level of cooperation between the Russian FSB Border Guard Service and the U.S. Coast Guard District 17.

It was noted that an important element of Russian-American cooperation on preventing illegal activities at sea are the exchange visits between delegations of the Border Guard Service of the Russian FSB in the Kamchatka Region and the 17<sup>th</sup> District of the U. S. Coast Guard, as well as the use of the Automated Information Exchange System.

## **7. Exchange of Views on issues that are of multilateral interest**

### **7.1 Review of results of the 17th annual virtual Conference of Parties to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea and Exchange of information on fisheries pursuant to the Agreement on Preservation of Transboundary Fish Stocks in the Central Sea of Okhotsk**

The 17th Annual Conference of the Parties was conducted virtually by email with Korea as the virtual host. The 2012 US Bogoslof Island survey resulted in the lowest estimated pollock biomass to date of 67,100 metric tons. There have been no directed fisheries on the stock from 2002 as set by the Convention on the Conservation of Pollock Resources in the central Bering Sea. The Parties agreed that the AHL for 2013 be set at zero. The United States, Korea, Japan and Russia had no plans to conduct trial fishing in 2013. At the ICC meeting, Russia proposed that future virtual meetings be limited to no more than 30 consecutive days. The U.S. side agreed to support that approach. Both sides also agreed to maintain the status quo with respect to the interest of the European Commission to join the Convention.

The Russian side noted the positive role of cooperation between Russia and the United States within the framework of the Convention for Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea and the Agreement for Conservation of Transboundary Fishery Resources in the Central Sea of Okhotsk which ensures conservation of offshore pollock stocks in the Bering and Okhotsk seas. The Russian side noted that the addition of members such as the European Union to the Convention for Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea is unacceptable.

## **7.2 Arctic Fisheries**

### **7.2.a Presentation on domestic and international Arctic fisheries research; discussion of areas of cooperation**

The U.S. side reviewed the outcomes of the meeting hosted in Washington, DC, in April-May 2013 on the subject of Arctic fisheries. The U.S. side noted that a further meeting of

fisheries scientists would take place in Norway in October and that Denmark was still organizing a meeting to discuss the policy aspects of Arctic fisheries in early December. The U.S. side asked whether Russia intended to provide any comments on the revised proposal for an international agreement. It emphasized that the main goal of the United States is to deter vessels from outside the Arctic from initiating commercial fishing in the high seas portion of the central Arctic Ocean until there is an international mechanism in place to manage those fisheries properly.

The Russian side noted the importance of a preliminary detailed scientific analysis of issues, relating to the future of Arctic fisheries. It confirmed its interest in the participation in future meetings regarding this subject.

### **7.3 North Pacific Fisheries Commission – Status and Secretariat**

The U.S. side noted that a meeting of the Preparatory Commission for the North Pacific Fisheries Commission was taking place in Taipei. It informed the Russian side that President Obama had submitted the North Pacific Fisheries Convention to the U.S. Senate last year and that the United States hoped to ratify that agreement soon. The Russian side noted the importance of making a decision regarding the North Pacific Fisheries Commission's Secretariat country. That will create the conditions necessary for effective work by this regional fisheries organization.

By the end of the ICC meeting, both sides noted with satisfaction that the location of the NPFC Secretariat had been resolved (Tokyo, Japan).

### **7.4 Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) – Ross Sea**

The U.S. side indicated its disappointment with the outcome of the special CCAMLR meeting in July. Still, the United States had listened to the concerns expressed by Russia and others about the proposal to create a marine protected area in the Ross Sea. Recently, the United States and New Zealand had circulated a revised proposal in an attempt to address those concerns and was hoping that CCAMLR would adopt the revised proposal at its annual meeting in October. The U.S. side outlined the main elements of the revised proposal and indicated that the United States wanted very much to work with Russia to resolve any remaining issues prior to the CCAMLR meeting.

The Russian side reported its national position concerning the boundaries, duration and international jurisdictional status of a proposed marine protected area in the Ross Sea. The U.S. side indicated that it would pass these remarks back to the U.S. CCAMLR experts and also to Secretary of State Kerry, who is personally engaged on the Ross Sea initiative.

The Russian side confirmed its readiness to participate in the discussion of the U.S./New Zealand proposal concerning the establishment of a marine protected area in the CCAMLR area.

### **7.5 International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas**

The U.S. side sought the support of Russia in efforts to ensure that ICCAT adopted measures for Atlantic tunas and related species that were based on sound science. It noted

a proposal pending before ICCAT on steps to prevent the practice of "shark finning" by requiring that all sharks be landed with their fins attached. The U.S. side also encouraged Russia to participate actively in efforts to amend the ICCAT Convention.

The Russian side reported that it will study the proposals concerning fisheries regulation and the landing of sharks. It also affirmed its interest in discussing issues which are of common interest within the framework of the next session of the International Commission on the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas.

#### **7.6 Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization**

The U.S. side informed the Russian side that, at the upcoming annual meeting of NAFO, the United States would seek continued efforts to implement the recommendations of the 2011 Performance Review and to conclude the peer review of catch estimation methodologies. It also urged Russia to support the recommendations of the Working Group of Fishery Managers and Scientists on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems to close one additional area and modify four existing closed areas. The also indicated that the United States hopes to ratify the amendments to the NAFO Convention in the near future.

The Russian side noted the importance of formulating decisions within NAFO based on the best available scientific information as well as the importance of maintaining the scientific principle of distributing national quotas established within the framework of this Organization. The Russian side also confirmed that it has completed its intergovernmental procedures related to the adoption of amendments to the NAFO Convention.

#### **7.7 South Pacific Fisheries Commission – Status**

The U.S. side said that the United States was satisfied with the outcome of the Review Panel process in which Russia was involved. It also said the United States understood the concerns of Russia relating to the jack mackerel stock and that the United States would work with Russia to improve the situation. It also expressed the hope that the United States would soon join Russia as a party to the SPRFMO Convention.

The Russian side noted the high level of professionalism shown by Professor Oxman, Chairman of the Review Panel that is studying Russia's objections within the framework of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization. The Russian delegation noted the bycatch problem of juvenile jack mackerel and the need to establish a minimum commercial fisheries size of this species and the minimum mesh size.

#### **7.8 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) IUU Pathfinder**

The Russian side informed the U.S. side on its preparations to hold a workshop in Russia on IUU issues within the framework of the APEC.

The U.S. side thanked Russia for its leadership on the initiative relating to IUU fishing and looked forward to further collaboration with Russia on this matter.

### **8 Discussion of draft Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the U.S. Government on Conservation and Management of Living Resources in the Northern Bering Sea**

The U.S. side had no specific comments on this item. It noted that efforts to conclude this

Agreement had stalled for the time being, while the two sides were attempting to finish negotiations on a bilateral IUU agreement and also to develop further a joint research program relating to northern Bering Sea fisheries.

The Russian side affirmed its position regarding the need to include within the draft proposal wording which provides for the possibility of access by Russian vessels to living marine resources in areas which have been ceded to the U.S. as a result of the implementation of the 1990 Agreement.

**9 Discussion on restructuring future ICC meetings to include substantive discussion on one or two mutually agreed topics**

Both sides agreed that, at the 25th ICC meeting, there would be focused discussion on the following topic:

Identify potential opportunities for cooperative research and data exchange between the two countries relating to fisheries, habitat, and ecosystem processes in the Chukchi and Northern Bering Sea. This workshop would look beyond existing institutional arrangements and would facilitate the identification of research needs and next steps.

Both sides also agreed that, beginning at the 25th ICC meeting, presentations and exchanges of information on other agenda items would be shortened accordingly.

**10 Other matters**

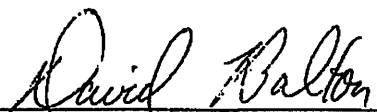
Both sides agreed to convene in December 2013 a meeting of technical experts in presence of Heads of delegations to the ICC on the issue of further drafting of IUU Agreement.

**10.1 International Whaling Commission Arctic Workshop**

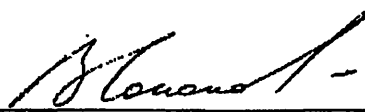
The U.S. side described a workshop that it will host in February or March 2014 on the potential impacts of increasing marine activities in the Arctic on cetaceans and stated that the U.S. side will soon inform Russia about the exact date and location of the workshop. He urged Russia to participate actively in the workshop and said that the U.S. organizers would be in touch with their Russian counterparts to discuss the details of the preparations.

**11. Time and Place for holding the 25<sup>th</sup> ICC meeting**

The Russian side proposed to conduct the 25<sup>th</sup> session of the ICC on Russian territory in mid-September of 2014.



David Balton  
Head of Delegation  
United States of America



Vasily Sokolov  
Head of Delegation  
Russian Federation