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# North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission

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## **NORTH PACIFIC ANADROMOUS FISH COMMISSION HOLDS 24<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING**

*Busan, Republic of Korea (May 20, 2016)*—The 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC) was held from May 16 to 20, 2016, in Busan, Republic of Korea.

The NPAFC is an international organization that promotes the conservation of Pacific salmon and steelhead in the North Pacific and its adjacent seas. It serves as a venue for cooperation in and coordination of enforcement activities and scientific research. The vast majority of salmon catches in the North Pacific originate from NPAFC member countries, which are Canada, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and the United States.

At the Commission's Annual Meeting, Plenary Sessions and the Commission's three standing committees, Enforcement, Scientific Research and Statistics, and Finance and Administration, were convened to discuss issues related to salmon and steelhead in the NPAFC Convention Area, which is the high seas of the North Pacific.

This year the Commission presented Ms. Wakako Morris, retired Administrative Officer of the NPAFC, with the 2016 NPAFC Award. This award was given to Ms. Morris in recognition of her career-long support of the Commission's operations. She is acknowledged for her tireless dedication to increasing effective information sharing and coordinating efforts among NPAFC's fisheries enforcement agencies to detect illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the Convention Area. Through her efforts and leadership, Ms. Morris has significantly advanced international cooperation among the member nations of the Commission.

At the Commission's enforcement meetings, multilateral cooperative enforcement operations and regular information exchanges between NPAFC-member enforcement agencies were reviewed. Patrols by Canadian and United States fisheries enforcement aircraft from airports in Japan helped maximize the operational effectiveness. In a bilateral arrangement, the USCG hosted People's Republic of China Coast Guard law enforcement officers aboard the USCG cutter to further increase the effectiveness of ship patrols.

These combined multilateral efforts resulted in no high seas driftnet or IUU fishing activities observed by enforcement agencies of NPAFC member countries in 2015. The coordinated enforcement work of member countries in 2015 resulted in patrolling substantial portions of the NPAFC Convention area and involved over 400 hours of aircraft flights and more than 100 ship days. In excess of 500 fishing vessels were sighted and none were detected conducting illegal fishing activities. Inspection of several transshipment vessels did not indicate retention of salmon captured on the high seas. This confirms that high level coordination, patrol, and inspection efforts act as strong deterrents to IUU fishing.

At the Commission's scientific meetings, leading salmon researchers from member countries reviewed commercial catch statistics compiled from information provided by each of the member nations. Preliminary 2015 North Pacific-wide salmon catches were 1.04 million metric tonnes (507 million fish).

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Pink salmon constituted the majority of the total commercial catch (44% by weight) followed by chum (34%) and sockeye salmon (18%). Coho comprised 3% of the catch, Chinook salmon was 1%, and each of cherry salmon and steelhead trout were < 1% of the catch by weight.

In 2016, salmon research surveys are planned to take place in the Gulf of Alaska, the Bering Sea, the northwestern and central North Pacific, and the southern Sea of Okhotsk. Researchers will be examining conditions such as species abundance, migration, and distribution of salmon at sea.

Preparation for the International Year of the Salmon (IYS) continued at this year's meeting. The IYS is an intensive burst of internationally coordinated scientific research focused on understanding the impacts of climate change on salmon in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Their initiative represents a unique opportunity for countries to conduct joint surveys to better understand the factors affecting salmon distribution and abundance on the high seas. Upon completion of the IYS, we will be equipped with new techniques and analytical methods to better evaluate environmental challenges facing salmon and their refine strategies to mitigate these impacts to ensure healthy wild salmon stocks throughout their range. The 2016-2020 NPAFC Science Plan was approved at the Annual Meeting. This Plan recognizes it is now more important than ever before to promote new cooperative international research that provides better scientific information on the ecological mechanisms regulating the distribution and abundance of anadromous populations and climate impacts in North Pacific marine ecosystems. The primary goal of the Science Plan is to understand variations in Pacific salmon productivity in a changing climate—a goal in complete alignment with the IYS program.

Approaches to cooperative research under the Science Plan includes the collection and synthesis of existing data to generate and test hypotheses, integration of ecological monitoring programs in the ocean using research vessels and/or remote sensing, modeling, field and laboratory studies, and retrospective analyses. Scientific results from cooperative studies will progressively reduce major gaps in knowledge with respect to understanding variations in Pacific salmon productivity in a changing climate, as well as make significant contributions to the IYS initiative in collaboration with other international organizations. New scientific information will also contribute to effective coordinated enforcement activities by NPAFC member nations in protecting Pacific salmon from IUU fishing in the Convention Area.

The five-day NPAFC Annual Meeting closed with an invitation from the Canadian Party to host the 2017 Annual Meeting in Victoria, British Columbia. This meeting will coincide with the Commission's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

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Contact: Vladimir Radchenko  
NPAFC Executive Director  
Phone: +1-604-775-5550  
Email: [secretariat@npafc.org](mailto:secretariat@npafc.org)  
Website [www.npafc.org](http://www.npafc.org)

## **About NPAFC**

The NPAFC is an international organization that promotes the conservation of salmon (chum, coho, pink, sockeye, Chinook, and cherry salmon) and steelhead trout in the North Pacific and its adjacent seas, and serves as a venue for cooperation in and coordination of scientific research and enforcement activities. The NPAFC Convention Area is located in international waters north of 33°N latitude in the North Pacific, Bering Sea and the Sea of Okhotsk. NPAFC member countries include Canada, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, and United States of America.