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# North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission

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## NORTH PACIFIC ANADROMOUS FISH COMMISSION HOLDS 26<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING

*Khabarovsk, Russia (May 25, 2018)*—The 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC) was held from May 21–25, 2018, in Khabarovsk, Russia.

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.

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 U.S. fisheries enforcement aircraft from airports in Japan helped maximize operational effectiveness. In a bilateral arrangement, the United States Coast Guard (USCG) hosted People's Republic of China Coast Guard law enforcement officers aboard a USCG cutter to further increase the effectiveness of ship patrols.

These combined multilateral efforts identified multiple possible instances of IUU fishing in 2017, however none involved high-seas driftnet activity or illegal retention of salmon. The coordinated enforcement work of member countries in 2017 resulted in patrolling substantial portions of the NPAFC Convention Area and involved over 500 hours of aircraft flights and more than 100 ship days. Around 1,400 fishing vessels were sighted and none were detected conducting illegal fishing activities involving salmon. 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 2017 North Pacific-wide salmon catches were 920 thousand metric tonnes (460.7 million fish).

Pink salmon constituted the plurality of the total commercial catch (49% by weight) followed by chum (29%) and sockeye salmon (19%). Coho comprised 3% of the catch, Chinook salmon was 1%, and each of cherry salmon and steelhead trout were each < 1% of the catch by weight.

In 2018, salmon research surveys are planned to take place in the Gulf of Alaska, the Bering Sea, the southern Chukchi Sea, the northwestern and central North Pacific, and the southern Sea of Okhotsk. Researchers will be examining conditions such as migration timing, abundance, distribution, survival, marine ecology, run size forecasting, stock identification, and salmon growth and body condition at sea.

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The Commission discussed plans for the International Year of the Salmon (IYS) which will have a focal year in 2019 with research and outreach projects and events already occurring and continuing through 2022. In the coming months, core partners will be working with the NPAFC to plan and announce details of a North Pacific opening event in Vancouver, B.C., Canada in October 2018, a Signature Project winter expedition to the Gulf of Alaska in March 2019 and detailed research plans. Organizations and individuals concerned with salmon and interested in participating in this exciting initiative are encouraged to contact the NPAFC.

At the meeting, outgoing officers including President Carmel Lowe (Canada), Vice-President Suam Kim (Korea), and three committee chairpersons, Stephen White (USA), Igor Melnikov (Russia), and Junichiro Okamoto (Japan) were thanked for their dedicated service to NPAFC.

NPAFC welcomed the incoming officers for two-year terms: President Suam Kim (Korea), Vice-President James Balsiger (USA), and three committee chairpersons, Mike Carlson (Canada), Masa-aki Fukuwaka (Japan), and Vladimir Belyaev (Russia).

The five-day NPAFC Annual Meeting closed with an invitation from the United States to the Parties to attend the 2019 Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon, the United States of America.

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### **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, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America.