

## **Joint Management Committee Report**

The Joint Management Committee (JMC) was established under the 2003 Agreement between the Government of the United States and the Government of Canada on Pacific Whiting. The JMC is comprised of eight members, four appointed by each Party. The JMC makes decisions via bilateral agreement or consensus, taking into account the advice from the Joint Technical Committee (JTC), the Scientific Review Group (SRG) and the Advisory Panel (AP).

Article III of the Treaty identifies a default harvest rate of F-40 percent with a 40/10 adjustment. The JMC, after consideration of the advice of the JTC, SRG, or the AP may recommend to the Parties a different harvest rate if the scientific evidence demonstrates that a different rate is necessary to sustain the offshore whiting resource.

The JMC is responsible for providing a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) recommendation to the Parties no later than March 25 of each year. Once the JMC establishes an overall TAC for the year, they shall calculate each Party's TAC, with the U.S. share of the TAC being 73.88 percent, and Canada's share of the TAC being 26.12 percent.

The JMC met on March 17 and 18 in Vancouver, British Columbia for the purpose of determining the 2016 TAC of Pacific Whiting. The JMC heard a report from the JTC on the Status of the Pacific Whiting stock in U.S. and Canadian waters. They also heard a report from the SRG regarding survey and stock assessment issues. The AP met the day preceding the JMC meeting, and periodically during the JMC meeting, for the purpose of reaching a bilateral consensus recommendation to present to the JMC regarding the 2016 TAC.

The stock is estimated to be near its highest biomass level since 1990 as a result of estimated large 2010 and 2014 year classes. The 2014 cohort has only been observed once by the commercial fishery and thus its size is uncertain. The survey did see high numbers of age-1 in 2015 but those data are not used in the base assessment model. The spawning biomass in 2016 is estimated to have increased from 2015 due to the 2014 year-class likely being well above average. As in the past, forecasts are highly uncertain due to uncertainty in estimates of recruitment for recent years.

While there is large uncertainty in the 2015 estimates of fishing intensity and relative spawning biomass, the model predicts a less than 1% joint probability of being both above the target fishing intensity in 2015 and below the target relative spawning biomass at the start of 2016.

During the last five years, catches have been above the long-term average catch (224,376 t) in 2011, 2013, and 2014, and below it in 2012 and 2015. In 2015, the overall catch of Pacific Hake in U.S. waters was much less than anticipated. Tribal

fisheries did not land any hake in 2015. The catcher-processor, mothership, and shore-based fleets caught 67.9%, 38.8%, and 46.6% of their reallocated quotas, respectively. Overall, 170,917 t (52.6%) of the total U.S. adjusted TAC was not caught. The 2015 Canadian Pacific Hake domestic fishery removed 36,507 t from Canadian waters, which was 31.8% of the Canadian TAC of 114,928 t.

The primary focus of the discussions this year was on the exploitation rates on strong year classes. Generally, it is the older fish that migrate into Canadian waters. As a result, Canada's fishery relies more on older fish than does the U.S. fishery. Canada has expressed concern about the U.S. fishery's exploitation rates on a year class before the cohorts matures and are present in Canadian waters. In recent years the biomass has been at high levels and the TAC that has been recommended by the JMC has been far below what might otherwise be possible if the JMC adhered to the default harvest rate in the Treaty of F-40 with a 40/10 adjustment. As a result, the U.S. fishery has exploitation rates on strong year classes that have been relatively low. The JMC will be meeting in May and this topic is one that is on their agenda.

Once again this year the JMC relied heavily on the AP to recommend a TAC for 2016. The AP again did a great job of working through a number of difficult issues and provided the JMC with a consensus recommendation. The JMC adopted the APs recommendation of 497,500 mts. which includes 2015 carry over tonnage from each country that totals 57,505 mts. The 2016 TAC for the U.S. is 367,553 mts. which compares to 325,072 mts. in 2015.

The Pacific Whiting Treaty implementation process once again had its challenges in 2016 but overall the process worked well and all of the participants were committed to work through the issues that were encountered.