Scientists Met to Seek Explanations for High Abundances of Pink and Chum Salmon

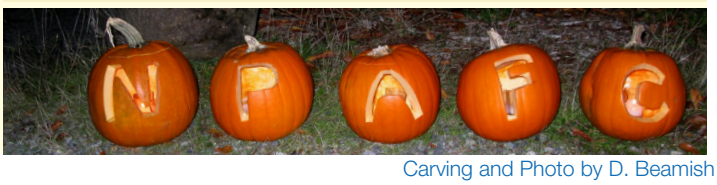
The NPAFC convened a meeting of experts in Nanaimo, BC, on October 30-31, 2011, "Explanations for the High Abundance of Pink and Chum Salmon and Future Trends", to discuss explanations for current and future abundance trends of pink and chum salmon. The conference was managed as a workshop to encourage discussion and speculation. It was clear that the total catches of Pacific salmon were at historic high levels and that the high productivity of pink and chum salmon was the major reason for the record high catches. What was not understood were the reasons for the increased abundances. Understanding the reasons is critical to integrating conservation objectives with economic opportunities. An effective workshop needed participants from all Pacific salmon producing countries as well as experts who had published and puzzled over the mechanisms that regulate the abundances of pink and chum salmon. Seven organizations (Bering Sea Fisherman's Association, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, PICES, North Pacific Research Board, Pacific Fisheries Research Conservation Council, Pacific Salmon Foundation, and State of the Salmon) provided funds that allowed organizers to invite 13 experts. Experts shared ideas and identified new research opportunities. Participants improved their understanding of the factors that control pink and chum abundances. Equally important, was what was not understood. We still do not know why the abundances are increasing and it is relevant that after over 100 years of research on salmon we are struggling to sort out the fundamental mechanisms regulating Pacific salmon productivity. I think that we now realize that the more we integrate all Pacific salmon research, the faster we are going to solve these basic questions. Answers will improve the accuracy of our expectations and this will maximize economic opportunities in a management structure that conforms to international standards of stewardship. I think that participants, sponsors, delegates, and governments should take satisfaction for bringing experts together in a manner that allowed participants to be part of a family of researchers. I think that we are close to identifying the basic processes that regulate all Pacific salmon populations. I think that the more we work together as a family of researchers, the faster we will solve the key questions.

Dick Beamish
Emeritus Scientist
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Pacific Biological Station, Nanaimo, BC, CANADA

Question and answer session at the Workshop
NPAFC Secretariat photo

Poster session at the Workshop
NPAFC Secretariat photo

Dick Beamish was born in Toronto and graduated with a PhD from University of Toronto. In 2011 he retired from the Pacific Biological Station (PBS) in Nanaimo. While at PBS, Dick was Head of the Groundfish Section (1977-1979) and the Station Director (1980-1992). He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and is the first foreign scientist named as an honorary member of the Pacific Research Fisheries Center (TINRO-Center) in Vladivostok. Dick received the Order of Canada and the Order of British Columbia for his scientific achievements. He is an Editor for Transactions of the American Fisheries Society, Professor at Vancouver Island University, and a member of numerous scientific panels and management boards. Dick's research interests include climate regimes and variation, effects of climate on fish populations, and taxonomy. In retirement, Dick continues at PBS as an Emeritus Scientist.



Carving and Photo by D. Beamish