

CSRS

REFLECTIONS ON THE CSRS MEETING AND THE YEAR AHEAD

As the incoming Chairperson of the Committee on Scientific Research and Statistics (CSRS), I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on the recent annual meeting and share some of my thoughts on the upcoming year.

The CSRS met on October 23-27, 2011, during the 19th Annual Meeting. There were 23 participants from five member countries. Staff from the Pacific Biological Station was able to provide local support for the NPAFC Annual Meeting, which was conducted at the recently completed Vancouver Island Conference Centre in Nanaimo. It was with pride and pleasure that we were able to share our west coast locale.



CSRS in session at the 19th Annual Meeting
NPAFC Secretariat photo

In addition to the locale, the meeting differed from previous years in several ways. First of all, an additional meeting day was added to facilitate more in-depth scientific discussion. Secondly, (outgoing) Chairperson, Jin Yeong Kim and NPAFC Deputy Director, Nancy Davis, restructured the agenda to have discussion of the 42 submitted papers by research topic rather than by country. The result was one of the most effective and stimulating scientific meetings that many participants could recall. This approach builds on one of the key strengths of NPAFC and that is to facilitate understanding of underlying mechanisms affecting the North Pacific through comparative study of populations and related ecosystem traits. This theme was further developed in the successful workshop held after the Annual Meeting that examined factors

affecting the abundance of pink and chum salmon in the North Pacific. (See article, this issue)

A number of examples of comparative work came out in the review of research. Coastal surveys of juvenile salmon distribution and abundance using comparable survey methods are conducted by Japan, Russia, the United States, and Canada. These studies are demonstrating linkages to changing climate/ocean conditions, such as the increased production of Bristol Bay sockeye salmon that is associated with warm ocean conditions in the Bering Sea. Interestingly, all member countries conducting pelagic trawl surveys are beginning to collect concurrent hydroacoustic data to assess distribution and abundance of plankton and associated fish. These approaches will augment the understanding of pelagic ecosystems.

Russia and Japan provided very interesting summaries of stock assessment (escapement) monitoring by area. It would be of substantial benefit to have similar summaries for the full North Pacific rim. Russia, Japan, and the United States provided numerous examples of marine survey indices that are used in forecasting returns of pink and chum salmon. Russia and Canada provided informative papers with comparisons of productivity across multiple populations. This type of analysis is one that CSRS could potentially consider conducting across all member countries.

I am very much looking forward to working with the CSRS members over the next several years as we face what I know will be a time of unprecedented change, challenge, and opportunity. In addition to our usual identified workplan activities for this year, I will be working very closely with Commission staff, in particular the Deputy Director, the CSRS Points of Contact from each country, and Working Group Chairpersons on a number of activities related to the implementation of the List of Actions identified in the Performance Review and agreed to by the CSRS.

One of the most significant is the requirement to review the terms of reference for the CSRS and its working groups. I see this as a timely opportunity for us to reflect on how we conduct our business. It is important that we are very clear in terms of the objectives of the CSRS and that we are also clear in reporting progress against those objectives. Incoming President Vladimir Belyaev reinforced this point in his remarks. We made good progress this year in structuring our agenda to reflect the Science Plan themes, but I believe we can improve our synthesis and reporting of results. When we reflect on the needs of the current Science Plan themes we may determine that the roles of existing working groups might change and that there may be a need for new working groups.

Making progress between annual meetings without face-to-face meetings is certainly a challenge. While we have demonstrated that email will work in some cases, such as last year's Research Planning and Coordinating Meeting, I will be exploring with the Secretariat the potential of web meetings and shared collaborative sites to conduct our work. I believe that frequent but short web meetings/video conferences coupled with a shared collaborative web site may be viable.

I would like to close with a number of acknowledgements. I want to thank Jin Yeong Kim for her leadership and strong contribution to the CSRS. Thank you to the outgoing workgroup chairpersons, Lisa Seeb, Ron Josephson, Masa-aki Fukuwaka, and Dick Beamish and to the incoming workgroup chairpersons Shigehiko Urawa, Dion Oxman, and Jeff Guyon. Thank you as well to the Secretariat staff and to our meeting interpreters. We all bid a fond farewell to Dick Beamish from Canada and Kate Myers from the United States, both of whom have provided outstanding leadership and camaraderie throughout their long association with the NPAFC. We certainly expect to continue to see and hear from them both long into the future.

Mark Saunders
CSRS Chairperson



Mark Saunders manages the Salmon and Freshwater Ecosystems Division for Fisheries and Oceans Canada at the Pacific Biological Station in Nanaimo, B.C. The Division includes staff working on salmon stock assessment, freshwater habitat, molecular genetics, fish health, and marine ecology. The first half of his 30-year career focused on stock assessment and research of marine fish including Pacific hake, pollock, sablefish, and spiny dogfish. The second half of his career included work on hydroacoustic surveys and fisheries oceanography of the California Current system. In 2003 Mark took on an assignment working on development and implementation of Canada's Wild Salmon Policy and then returned to his current position in 2009. He lives in the small town of Chemainus, Vancouver Island, where he lives with his wife, two daughters, and a large and slightly neurotic white dog. Mark's hobbies include kayaking, cycling, skiing, and running the local soccer club.



Plenary Session at the 19th Annual Meeting

NPAFC Secretariat photo