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FUTURE RUSSIAN POLLOCK SUPPLY

Progress Report for Pollock Conservation Cooperative Research Center
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Background

This project was funded by the PCCRC in 2001. The objectives of the project were summarized as follows in the original proposal:

The objective of this project is to reduce the level of uncertainty about future Russian pollock supply (and its effects on markets for Alaska pollock products) by systematically pulling together available information from a variety of sources about Russian pollock resource conditions, the setting of TAC, allocation of quota, enforcement of regulations, and the production and marketing of products produced from Russian pollock. . .

It is important to recognize that this project may not "succeed" in providing information which is new or useful for the Alaska pollock industry. . . Nothing is guaranteed when dealing with Russian fisheries--or with Russia in general. There are a long list of things that could keep this project from providing useful information about the outlook for future Russian pollock supply. It may be that no one really knows the condition of Russian pollock resources. It may be that those who know would be unwilling to willing to share the information with me. It may be that information available from different sources is contradictory, or incomplete. . . .

Given these kinds of risks, why should the Pollock Conservation Cooperative consider funding this project? I am offering the project for consideration because it *may* succeed--because it *may* be possible to acquire useful new information. Or it may at least provide a start towards obtaining useful information. Or, it may serve to demonstrate that it will be difficult or impossible to reduce uncertainty about future Russian pollock supply."

I provided written and oral reports about this project to the PCCRC in January 2002 and January 2003.

Current Progress Status

Based on data collected from a number of sources, including during a trip to Vladivostok in September 2001, in November 2001 I completed a draft report for this project entitled "Preliminary Notes on Russian Pollock Supply," which I circulated for comments. I also briefly discussed this preliminary report for the PCCRC in January 2002 (although only a limited amount of time was available for this topic because I was also reporting on another project).

Among the conclusions of the draft report were the following:

"Given the limitations of available data, it is difficult to reach any definitive conclusions about Russian pollock harvests in 2001 or what harvests will be in 2002. Nevertheless, it appears likely that Russian pollock quotas will be substantially reduced in 2002, perhaps from about 1678 thousand metric tons to about 930 thousand metric tons, or by about 748 thousand metric tons."

As I discussed in the draft report, clearly sufficient information is available so that it is possible to develop an informed opinion about the likely general trend in harvests of pollock from Russian waters over the next year, and to a lesser extent for several years into the future. The primary sources of information upon which an informed opinion can be based include announced quotas, Russian and Japanese press reports, scientific reports about stock assessments, and Russian industry sources.

However, there will always be significant uncertainty about what actual harvests levels and supply to world markets of Russian pollock will be, because (a) only limited and conflicting data exist; (b) not all data which exist are publically available; (c) there are significant illegal and unreported harvests which are impossible to measure.

The work for this project was essentially completed as of November 2001. What remained to be done was to make a few revisions and additions to the preliminary report and submit it as a final report.

However, due to a difficult and continuing work-overload situation I have not yet completed a final report.

Plans for Completing Project

I will work with the PCCRC's designated representative to formally complete a final report for this project by January 31, 2004. I do not plan extensive revisions or updating to my November 2001 draft report. Rather, I will incorporate the comments which I received on the draft report, and the additional material for the report which I had

completed as of that time. I will date the final report to reflect when it was actually written.

It does not make sense nor would it be feasible for me to “update” this report to reflect a current assessment (as of January 2004) of the outlook for future Russian pollock supply. The Russian pollock situation is a constantly and rapidly changing target, and extensive new research would be needed to address the current situation.

Although the final report has been regrettably delayed, it will still be useful, in that it provides (a) historical data on Russian pollock supply; (b) a discussion of available data sources for tracking Russian pollock supply; and (c) a discussion of the extent to which it is possible to make informed projections about future trends in Russian pollock supply.