

JOINT REPORT OF THE CANADIAN AND U.S.
ADVISORY PANEL REGARDING THE 2015

WHITING TAC

March 18, 2015

The U.S. and Canadian Advisory Panels (“AP”) convened on March 17 in order to provide advice to the Joint Management Council on the 2015 coastwide Whiting TAC.

The U.S. AP members in attendance were Joe Bersch (Chair), Mike Okoniewski, Mike Hyde, Bob Dooley, Dave Smith, Brent Paine, Tom Libby and Rich Carroll.

The Canadian AP members in attendance were Dave Dawson (Chair), Shannon Mann, Albert Radil, Brian Mose, Brian Dickens, and Peter Knott.

Members of the public also attended the meeting and were provided the opportunity for public comment.

The AP received a presentation from the Joint Technical Committee (JTC) on the 2014 fishery and on the 2015 stock assessment. JTC members present were Alan Hicks, Ian Taylor and Nathan Taylor. The AP thanks the Joint Management Committee (JMC) for providing open and direct access to the JTC as part of the process of informing the decision making process of the AP.

The AP considered the stock assessment and the advice of the JTC and the Scientific Review Group (SRG) and recommends the following for consideration by the JMC:

1. The AP thanks the JTC for their presentation and their availability to answer the questions of the AP throughout the process and in particular during the AP’s March 17 meeting. The AP wishes to thank the JTC and SRG for their robust scientific review of the status of the whiting stock.
2. After consideration of the 2015 stock assessment and other relevant information, the AP recommends a target removal (actual fish harvested) of 360,000 MT of whiting coast wide. This is lower than, but approximately equal to, the highest historic catches of whiting coastwide.
3. The AP recommends calculating the 2015 coastwide TAC by applying a historic utilization rate and continues to believe that absent a reason for deviation, the most recent 5 year average utilization rate should be applied to calculate the coastwide TAC.
4. The AP has concluded that the most recent U.S. five-year average utilization rate of 84.4% is the best projection of the likely U.S. utilization rate in 2015. This is supported by recent U.S. utilization rates of 85.2% and 83.5% in 2013 and 2014 and the discussion

among AP members that fishing conditions in the U.S. for 2015 are expected to closely resemble conditions encountered in 2013 and 2014.

5. The AP has concluded, however, that the 2014 Canadian utilization rate of 33.5% is an anomaly which is not likely to be repeated in 2015. Market (weak currency, Russian embargo, Ukraine crisis) and environmental conditions (warm water “blob”, food supply, nutrients) explain the unusually low utilization rate in Canada and are unlikely to be repeated in 2015. In addition, it is expected that the 2010 year class, because it is one year older, will be more abundant in Canadian waters in 2015. For these reasons, for purposes of recommending a 2015 coastwide TAC, the AP recommends using a projected 2015 utilization rate of 74.5% for Canada, which is more than double the actual 2014 rate of 33.5%. This estimated utilization rate is above the range of the four most recent Canadian utilization rates of 54.4%, 71.4%, 56.6% and 33.5%. This results in a more conservative estimate of Canadian utilization than the actual most recent 5 year average.
6. Substituting the derived 2014 Canadian utilization rate of 74.5%, the historic 5-year coastwide average utilization rate is 81.8% which is more conservative than the actual 5-year historic average of 77%. Applying the adjusted utilization rate of 81.8% to the target removal of 360,000 MT results in a 2015 coastwide TAC of 440,000 MT.
7. The AP supports a 2015 coastwide adjusted TAC of 440,000 MT.

After consideration of the science and other relevant factors, the AP believes that the recommended TAC is consistent with the 5 Management Principles adopted by the JMC in 2014. The AP has reviewed these Management Principles and continue to find them to be appropriate guidelines for management of the fishery.

- The AP has considered the best available science as provided by the JTC and SRG and their review of the 2015 stock assessment.
- The TAC recommended by the AP results in a projected fishing intensity well below the default harvest level in either the base case or alternative case model. As a result of this conservative recommendation, the strong 2010 year class is expected to continue to contribute to the resource over the long term. At the projected harvest levels, the 2010 cohort is expected to contribute economically and biologically over multiple years providing benefits to the nations of Canada and the U.S. This harvest strategy will continue to be evaluated annually based upon the latest surveys, stock assessments, and best available science.
- The continued conservative management recommendations of the AP relative to the fishery and the 2010 year class are intended to ensure that each country will have the opportunity to receive, over the long term, the intended benefits contemplated in the Treaty.