

JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Agreement Between The Government Of The United States Of America And The Government Of Canada On Pacific Hake/Whiting

March 7, 2018

Ms. Rebecca Reid
Regional Director General- Pacific Region
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Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6C 2S4

Barry A. Thom
Regional Administrator
National Marine Fisheries Service
7600 Sand Point Way, NE, Bldg. 1
Seattle, WA 98115

Dear Ms. Reid and Mr. Thom:

The Joint Management Committee (JMC) established under *the Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Canada on Pacific Hake/Whiting* (the Agreement) held its sixth annual meeting in Lynnwood, Washington from March 5 - 6, 2018.

The primary purpose of the meeting was to develop recommendations to the Parties on:

- 1) The coastwide hake/whiting total allowable catch (TAC) for 2018;
- 2) Each Party's national hake/whiting TAC, including any adjustments (uncaught TAC from the 2017 year to be carried forward to the 2018 year) allowed by the Agreement; and
- 3) Potential operational and research measures for the proper care and management of the hake/whiting resource.

In reference to the Coastwide Hake/Whiting TAC and each Party's National TAC, being consistent with Article II 3 (e) of the Agreement, and following a review of the advice of the Joint Technical Committee (JTC), the Scientific Review Group (SRG), and the Advisory Panel (AP), the JMC recommends a coastwide TAC of 517,775 metric tons (mt.) for the 2018 season.

Based on Article III 2 of the Agreement, the Canadian share of the coastwide TAC is 26.12 percent, or 135,243 mt., and the U.S. share is 73.88 percent, or 382,532 mt. and consistent with Article II 5. (b) of the agreement, an adjustment (carryover from 2017) of 20,824 mt. is added to the Canadian share, for an adjusted Canadian TAC of 156,067 mt. In the same manner, an adjustment of 58,901 mt. is added to the United States share, for an adjusted United States TAC of 441,433 mt. This results in a coastwide adjusted TAC of 597,500 mt. for 2018.

The JMC continued their efforts to develop a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for the Pacific Whiting resource. The JMC acknowledges the progress made by NOAA Fisheries in securing the personnel to work on the MSE and associated environmental research that may impact the Hake/Whiting resource. At this meeting, the JMC identified the members of the MSE workgroup and approved a two year work plan with the goal of:

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- evaluating the performance of having a current hake management procedures under alternative hypotheses about current and future environmental conditions;
- better understand the effects of hake distribution and movement on both countries' ability to catch fish; and
- better understand how fishing in each country affects the availability of fish to the other country in future years.

The SRG report provided to the JMC included the introduction of an alternative model that warrants further exploration. The alternative model may change our understanding of the status of key elements of the Hake/Whiting resource, and in its current form preliminarily estimates that stock status is lower and closer to the reference point B_{40} . This is the reference point where harvest rates would need to be reduced as outlined in the Treaty.

The alternative model was developed during the SRG's February 26 – March 1, 2018 meeting, which did not leave enough time for full consideration and review in advance of the 2018 management cycle. The JMC supports the SRG request to have the Joint Technical Committee (JTC) examine the historical weights-at-age data, evaluate approaches for parameterizing fecundity-at-age for years without data (pre-1975) and evaluate other methods of deriving biological reference points such as unfished spawning biomass (B_0).

The JMC requested the JTC to provide it with an update on their evaluation of the alternative model at the JMC's meeting in August 2018.

The JMC supports the Advisory Panel request to be involved in acoustic survey design, sampling methodology and planning. Industry involvement is important in this process and we recommend Dave Smith and Joe Greene advise the survey team for this purpose. Involvement of industry is one of many critical factors in achieving transparency into the process and building confidence that acoustic survey outputs adequately and accurately reflect the actual biomass observed by the fishery.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations.



Paul Ryal
Canadian Co-Chair
Joint Management Committee



Frank Lockhart
United States of America Co-Chair
Joint Management Committee