

NPFC – PICES Framework for Enhanced Scientific Collaboration in the North Pacific

Executive Summary

The North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC) and the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES) are inter-governmental organizations with overlapping geographical areas and common scientific interests in the sub-Arctic regions of the North Pacific Ocean. The joint PICES-NPFC Study Group for Scientific Cooperation in the North Pacific Ocean (PICES-NPFC SG) developed a 5-year Framework for enhancing collaboration between the two organizations for the period 2019-2024. As areas of interest and priorities change over time, the joint areas for collaboration will be reviewed and may be updated in 5-year increments. This Framework has been updated to reflect changes in both organizations and to outline priorities for collaboration from 2025-2029.

The first Framework identified three broad areas of joint interest to PICES and the NPFC on which progress could be made from 2019-2024. These areas were (i) support for stock assessment for priority species; (ii) vulnerable marine ecosystems; and (iii) ecosystem approach to fisheries. The first two areas were ranked highest for both PICES and NPFC, and the third area was ranked lower. There were other areas that were discussed, but it was recommended not to pursue these areas due to being a lower priority when the Framework was developed, or they were not aligned with the organizations' research plans and priorities. During the revision in 2024 some cross-cutting areas (e.g., climate change) were incorporated into the three high priority areas and the topics were reviewed to make sure they were still priorities.

The Framework identifies various mechanisms for implementing enhanced collaboration between PICES and NPFC including workshops and joint working groups as the key ones in the near term, but also theme sessions at PICES annual meetings, representation at meetings and/or workshops, and coordination of science plans.

Following approval and implementation from both organizations, routine monitoring of activities will be completed jointly by the Secretariats of PICES and NPFC and reported to the PICES Science Board and the NPFC Scientific Committee on an annual basis during their respective annual meetings.

1.0 Background

The North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC) and the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES) are inter-governmental organizations with overlapping geographical areas and common scientific interests in the sub-Arctic regions of the North Pacific Ocean.

NPFC is a Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) which came into force on 19 July 2015 after ratification of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of the High Seas Fisheries Resources in the North Pacific Ocean. The objective of the Convention is to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fisheries resources in the Convention Area (Figure 1) while protecting the marine ecosystems of the North Pacific Ocean in which those resources occur. The fishery resources covered by the Convention are all fish, molluscs, crustaceans and other marine species caught by fishing vessels within the Convention Area, excluding (i) sedentary species insofar as they are subject to the sovereign rights of coastal states, and indicator species of vulnerable marine ecosystems

as listed in, or adopted pursuant to the NPFC Convention, (ii) catadromous species, (iii) marine mammals, marine reptiles, and seabirds, and (iv) other marine species already covered by pre-existing international fisheries management instruments within the area of competence of such instruments. The Commission has several committees that provide information and advice to the Commission for decisions, and is supported by a Secretariat. These committees include the Scientific Committee, the Technical and Compliance Committee, and the Finance and Administrative Committee.

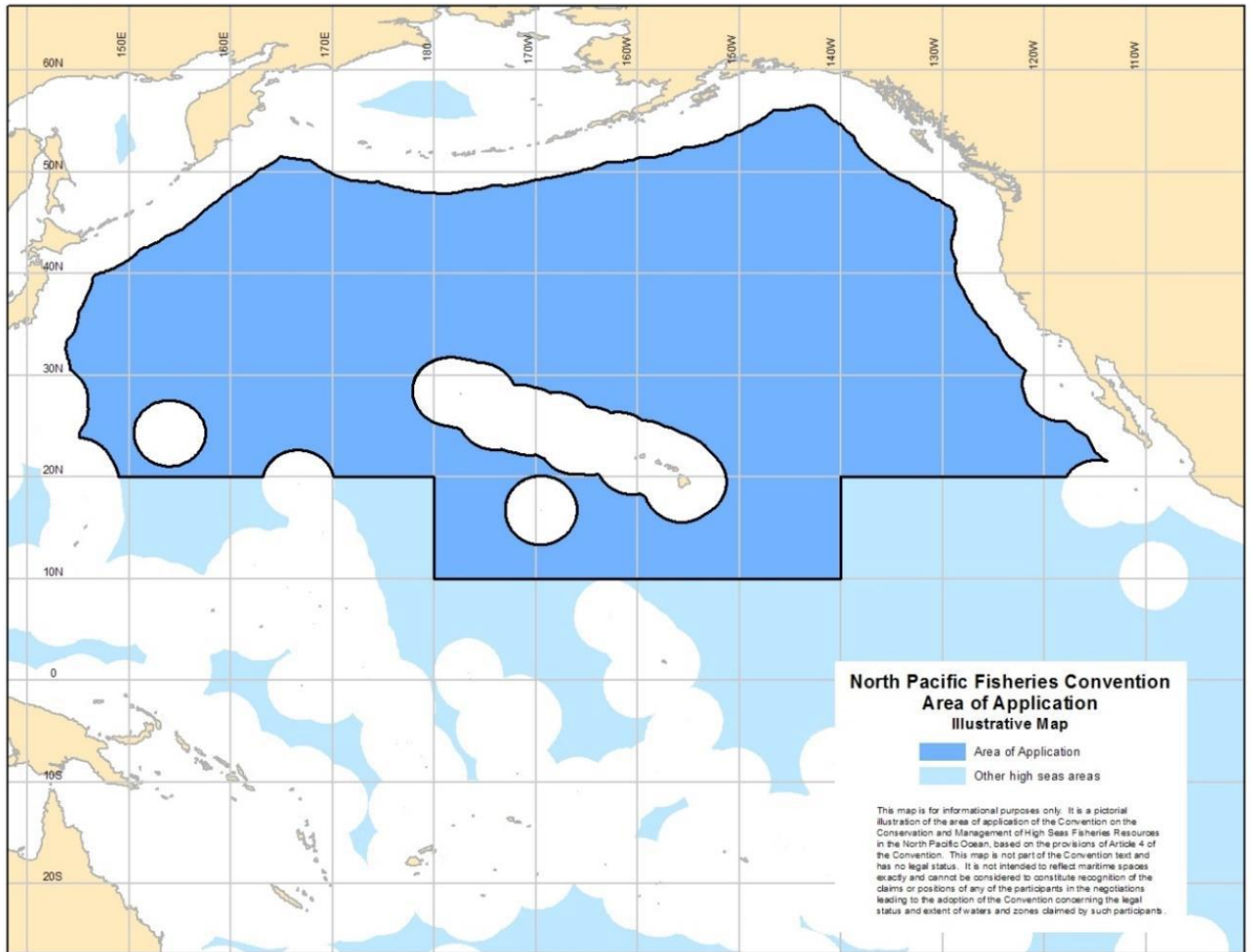


Figure 1: Illustrative Map of the NPFC Convention Area

PICES was established in 1992:

- 1) to promote and coordinate marine scientific research in order to advance scientific knowledge of the area concerned and of its living resources, including but not necessarily limited to research with respect to the ocean environment and its interactions with land and atmosphere, its role in and response to global weather and climate change, its flora, fauna and ecosystems, its uses and resources, and impacts upon it from human activities;
- 2) to promote the collection and exchange of information and data related to marine scientific research in the area concerned.

The Organization receives recommendations on the science program from the Science Board, which is supported by a number of permanent scientific and technical committees, along with an assemblage of “expert groups.”

The PICES Convention Area is defined as “the temperate and sub-Arctic region of the North Pacific Ocean and its adjacent seas, especially northward from 30 degrees North Latitude, hereinafter referred to as the “area concerned”. Activities of the Organization, for scientific reasons, may extend farther southward in the North Pacific Ocean.”

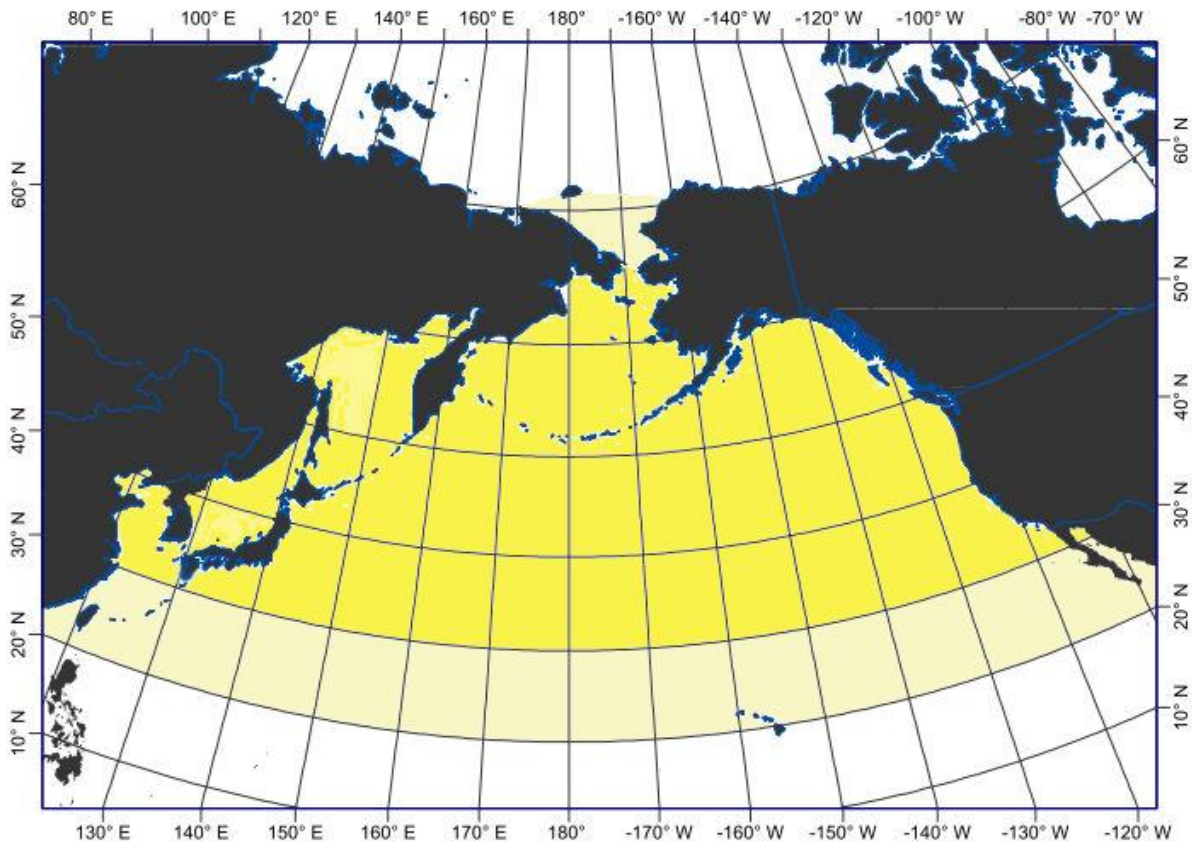


Figure 2: Illustrative Map of the PICES Convention Area

The present PICES members are Canada, Japan, People's Republic of China, Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America, which are also members of NPFC (note: the European Union, Chinese Taipei and Vanuatu are also members of NPFC).

Following a number of informal conversations between the two organizations, it was recognised that there was an opportunity to share and build upon each organization’s expertise and activities through enhanced collaboration in order to more efficiently and effectively meet work plans and priorities. As a result, the joint PICES-NPFC Study Group for Scientific Cooperation in the North Pacific Ocean (PICES-NPFC SG) was established in 2017 to determine if there were scientific areas of mutual interest on which both organizations can collaborate, and if so, to identify mechanisms to jointly implement activities that produce desired products and outcomes for each organization. The product of the Study Group was the

first Framework which spanned 2019 to 2024 and in 2024 members of both organizations met to review and update the Framework for 2025-2029.

1.1 NPFC Science Priorities

The NPFC Scientific Committee provides scientific advice and recommendations to the Commission. The primary functions of the Scientific Committee are to (i) regularly plan, conduct, and review the scientific stock assessments of the relevant fisheries resources in the Convention Area; (ii) assess the impacts of the fishing activities on fisheries resources and species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent upon or associated with the target stocks; (iii) develop a process to identify VMEs and areas of features where VMEs occur or are likely to occur; (iv) review effectiveness of management measures and make recommendations to meet Convention objectives; and (v) develop rules and standards for the collection and sharing of data on fisheries resources and associated ecosystems.

In response to these functions, the NPFC developed a five-year Research Plan that is updated annually and outlines priority research themes, including the rationale and more specific areas of work. These theme areas include (i) stock assessments for target fisheries and bycatch species, (ii) ecosystem approach to fisheries, (iii) vulnerable marine ecosystems, and (iv) data collection, management and security.

Accurate stock assessments are critical in helping to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of fisheries resources in the Convention Area. In NPFC, stock assessments for both pelagic fish (e.g., Pacific saury and chub mackerel) and bottom fish (e.g., North Pacific armorhead, and splendid alfonsino) should strive to understand the current status and trends in production of populations of priority species as well as factors that may affect future trends. Areas of work include developing baseline assessments, reaching consensus on data standards used in stock assessments, and developing a standardized method to provide advice to the Commission. The research plan is intended to guide the work of the Scientific Committee by identifying key research priorities and associated areas of work to be undertaken or maintained. Indeed, the research plan forms the basis for a the NPFC Scientific Committee's five-year work plan.

Making progress on adopting an ecosystem approach to fisheries addresses several articles in the Convention. For example, the Convention makes reference to (i) adopting and implementing measures in accordance with the precautionary approach and an ecosystem approach to fisheries, (ii) adopting management strategies for any fisheries resources and for species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependant upon or associated with the target stocks, and (iii) assessing the impacts of fishing activities on fisheries resources and species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependant upon or associated with the target stocks. Areas of work identified include vulnerable marine ecosystems and understanding ecological interactions among species.

1.2 PICES Science Plan

PICES engages scientists in trans-disciplinary, multi-national collaborations to further collective understanding of the North Pacific's natural systems and enhance ecological and social resilience of marine systems. As part of its vision, PICES aspires to be a leading contributor to global marine science, sought as a valued collaborator to solve current and future management issues as they emerge, and to be recognised as the premier organization for current research and understanding of North Pacific marine ecosystems. The scientific leadership for the organization is through the Governing Council and

Science Board which are supported by the Secretariat. The scientific work of PICES is conducted primarily by expert groups, which consist of (i) working groups, (ii) study groups with a one-to-three-year duration to achieve the results described in their terms of reference, as well as (iii) advisory panels and (iv) sections which provide longer-lived expert groups to maintain specific expertise within PICES. The Scientific and Technical Committees are responsible for the planning and direction of the major disciplinary themes, and for providing general supervision to the expert groups.

The current version of the PICES Strategic Plan (April 2016) is expected to be revised in the near future but at the time of preparing this Framework it outlines six specific goals to meet its vision and advance scientific knowledge. These goals are:

1. Foster collaboration among scientists within PICES and with other multinational organizations, particularly with those that have common goals.
2. Understand the status and trends of marine ecosystems in the North Pacific and improve assessment of the vulnerability and resilience of these ecosystems to pressures from climate and human activities.
3. Understand and quantify how marine ecosystems respond to natural forcing and human activities.
4. Advance methods and tools (e.g., oceanographic models, ecosystem indicators, etc.) to enable new knowledge and improved advice over seasonal to decadal timescales in support of ecosystem-based management.
5. Provide relevant scientific information pertinent to North Pacific ecosystems that is timely and broadly accessible.
6. Engage with early career scientists to sustain a vibrant and cutting-edge PICES scientific community.

PICES activities are further guided by its current integrated science program FUTURE: Forecasting and Understanding Trends Uncertainty and Responses of North Pacific Marine Ecosystems. The goal of FUTURE is to understand how marine ecosystems in the North Pacific respond to climate change and human activities, to forecast ecosystem status based on contemporary understanding of how nature functions, and to communicate new insights to its members, governments, stakeholders, and the public. FUTURE is likely to end within the time frame of this Framework, however, planning for its successor has not yet started.

1.3 Contributions to Other Science Initiatives

Ongoing collaborations between PICES and NPFC contribute to other international science initiatives. One in particular is the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (The Decade hereinafter) which was launched in 2021 with a 10-year period. The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission prepared an implementation plan for the Decade in consultation with Member states, specialized agencies, funds, programmes, and bodies of the United Nations, as well as other intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and relevant stakeholders. The Decade highlights the need and role of ocean science data and information exchange for sustainable development. With the two main goals of (i) generating the scientific knowledge and underpinning infrastructure and partnerships needed for sustainable development of the oceans, and (ii) providing ocean science, data, and evidence to inform policies for a well-functioning ocean in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, this PICES-NPFC Framework for Collaboration is well aligned with contributing to the Decade.

The Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement was adopted on 19 June 2023 and addresses a package of issues under the overall objective of ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. It has not yet entered into force but four of PICES member countries have signed the Agreement and are in the process of ratification. The agreement will enter into force 120 days after 60 ratifications, with a first Conference of the Parties soon after. The Agreement contains cross-cutting issues that explicitly include strengthening and enhancing cooperation with and among relevant IFBs (relevant global, regional, subregional or sectoral body).

2.0 Objectives

The objectives of this revised Framework are to:

1. Update the scientific interests and objectives of each organization;
2. Identify potential areas and specific topics for scientific cooperation;
3. Identify potential collaborative methods (such as representation at each other's meetings, holding of joint workshops or symposia, development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the organizations or other formal agreements, establishment of joint working groups);
4. Clarify practical steps to advance the cooperative activities identified above;
5. Provide advice on how information produced by PICES can be shared and applied in NPFC;

Specifically, for NPFC key objectives include reducing duplication of effort, increasing leveraging of time and resources with PICES, and acquiring impartial scientific information and advice to support policy and decision making within the North Pacific Fisheries Commission's Convention Area. PICES also shares these objectives as well as the objective to be more relevant to Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs), such as NPFC, by providing the needed objective scientific advice for decision making. Further, for both organizations, the intent is for productive, mutually beneficial collaborative initiatives, which is to say that the areas for collaboration need to be relevant to both organizations. To support the success of this Framework for Enhanced Collaboration, efforts will be focused on areas that are high priority for both organizations to advance over the next five years.

3.0 Scientific Areas of Joint Interest

The PICES-NPFC SG identified several topics of joint interest and came to consensus on three priority areas from 2019-2024. For each area identified, discussions focused on whether each organization viewed the area to be a priority and the specific interests in the area for each organization. Determining whether the research area was a priority for future collaborative work involved consideration of several criteria including:

- Aligns with organization's goals and objectives and existing research plans and priorities
- Potential outputs/benefits from the work area well-defined and relevant
- The timelines for when scientific results and advice are required
- The level of impact and likelihood that the project outputs will be utilised
- Likelihood of success (i.e., are the project objectives likely to be achieved)

In 2024, representatives from both organizations reviewed, considered and ranked each of these topics for enhanced collaboration from 2025-2029. Table 1 in the Appendix summarizes all scientific areas for collaborations that were considered in 2024, the three areas that were recommended for joint activities

from 2025-2029, and potential activities that can be implemented during those years for each area. Below the three priority areas of joint interest are discussed in more detail.

3.1 Support for Stock Assessments for priority species

Stock assessments for target fisheries and bycatch species have the highest priority among the research areas of the NPFC. There are eight fish species and two squid species that are recognized by the NPFC as priority species: Pacific saury (*Cololabis saira*), chub mackerel (*Scomber japonicus*), blue mackerel (*Scomber australasicus*), Japanese sardine (*Sardinops melanostictus*), North Pacific armorhead (*Pentaceros wheeleri*), splendid alfonsino (*Beryx splendens*), sablefish (*Anoplopoma fimbria*), skilfish (*Erilepis zonifer*), neon flying squid (*Ommastrephes bartramii*), and Japanese flying squid (*Todarodes pacificus*). Additional species may be added to the NPFC's list of priority species during the next five years. Currently, the highest priorities are Pacific saury and North Pacific armorhead because of their lower catches and abundances (but chub mackerel, Japanese sardine, and neon flying squid are also priorities because of trends in their catches and limited knowledge of their biomass and status. These species are also relevant for many PICES Committees and Working Groups since they are suspected to be very sensitive to environmental changes, in particular during early life history stages. Given that many of the priority species are short lived and their abundance fluctuates significantly year to year, recruitment rate may not be determined by the number of spawners in any deterministic one-way interaction. Rather, oceanography and climate are suggested to be main drivers not only for distribution patterns at different spatial scales but also for survival success. PICES participants have a long history of developing and validating saury, mackerel, sardine and squid distribution models, collecting ecosystem time series observations (ETSO), and using simulation studies to predict the consequences of changes / variability in key environmental parameters on populations in space and time. Thus, the common question to be resolved is what methodologies are most appropriate to incorporate environmental variables, which may affect stock status and distribution estimates, into stock assessments.

3.2 Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs)

Internationally, steps have been taken to protect marine biodiversity of vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs). According to the [International Guidelines for the Management of Deep Sea Fisheries in the High Seas](#) (FAO 2009), the criteria for identifying VMEs are: uniqueness or rarity, functional significance of the habitat, fragility, life-history traits that make recovery difficult, and structural complexity. PICES and NPFC share a common objective of promoting marine research that helps ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fisheries resources while protecting the marine ecosystems in which these resources occur. There are several areas of possible collaboration between NPFC and PICES on VMEs. Focused research topics may include:

- (1) Increasing scientific knowledge of biodiversity associated with known seamounts in the North Pacific, including identification of endemic species and distribution patterns of vulnerable taxa;
- (2) Increasing scientific understanding of the functional relationships within the ecosystem, with a special focus on the complex dependency of fishing resources and benthic species within VMEs;
- (3) Identification of areas likely to be VMEs in the Convention Area through predictive modeling and empirical observations (visual survey tools, fishery-independent data, where possible, or landed bycatch);
- (4) Understanding the impacts of different types of bottom-contact fishing activities on VMVEs and the magnitude and timing of their recovery from those impacts.

These and other research projects on VMEs will (1) contribute towards PICES FUTURE goals to understand how marine ecosystems in the North Pacific respond to climate change and human

activities, (2) support decision making regarding significant adverse impacts (SAIs) of bottom fisheries on VMEs, the NPFC's exploratory fishing and encounter protocols, and (3) aid refinement and implementation of NPFC Conservation and Management Measures for bottom fisheries and protection of VMEs in the NW and NE Pacific Ocean.

3.3 Ecosystem Approach to fisheries

The NPFC may adopt, where necessary, conservation and management measures for species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent upon or associated with the target stocks. Based upon this, the NPFC's Scientific Committee shall assess the impacts of fishing activities on both the targeted fisheries resources as well as species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent upon or associated with the target stocks. PICES integrates Scientific Programs undertaken by the member nations and affiliates of PICES to understand how marine ecosystems in the North Pacific respond to climate change and human activities, to forecast ecosystem status based on a contemporary understanding of how nature functions. There are several active PICES Expert Groups (i.e., Working Group on Climate Extremes and Coastal Impacts in the Pacific, Working Group on Sustainable Pelagic Forage Communities, Section on Climate Change Effects on Marine Ecosystems), projects such as the Basin Scale Events To Coastal Impacts (BECI) project and the Fisheries Oceanography Committee which could make a tremendous contribution in providing advice on the state-of-the-art ecosystem modeling techniques and methods to estimate "health" of the North Pacific in particular in the areas where NPFC's priority species occur and co-occur. Realising that there is an endless scope for research direction in this area, the short-term goal for this collaboration would be to develop a research plan to enable ecosystem considerations to be incorporated into a fisheries management approach.

4.0 Collaboration Mechanisms

There are many potential mechanisms for enhancing collaboration and making progress in the priority areas identified in Table 1. Some of these, which have been utilized in the first Framework or by other organizations in partnership with PICES, include:

- Workshops
- Joint working groups
- Theme sessions at PICES annual meetings
- Representation at meetings and/or workshops
- Coordination of science plans

The five-year reviews should also assess the collaboration mechanisms by identifying which ones were employed, the utility of those mechanisms in achieving desired results, and identify new mechanisms for future joint collaboration.

4.1 Workshops

PICES and NPFC have been co-sponsoring and participating in each other's workshops throughout their mutual history. New and emerging issues often demand innovative and multidisciplinary approaches. The ability to deal with and resolve new concepts is likely to be enhanced by the bringing together of PICES and NPFC expertise in co-sponsored workshops. NPFC held a joint workshop with FAO in March 2018 on *the Protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems in the North Pacific Fisheries Commission Area: applying global experiences to regional assessments* where PICES experts were invited to provide expert input to the discussions. The workshop made recommendations for future work, and these recommendations may be used to establish joint research activities or working groups that can focus on specific objectives. Moreover, there was a joint PICES-NPFC workshop (W11) on *The influence of environmental changes on the potential for species distributional shifts and subsequent consequences for estimating abundance of Pacific saury* that was held at the 2019 PICES Annual Meeting. During the first five-year phase of the Collaboration Framework workshops were one of the mechanisms for collaboration with NPFC Scientific Committee members co-sponsoring a workshop (W1) at the PICES-2022 annual meeting with members of PICES WG47 on *"Distributions of pelagic, demersal and benthic species associated with seamounts in the North Pacific Ocean and factors influencing their distributions"*.

4.2 Joint Working Groups

Joint working groups represent one of the most effective mechanisms for collaboration and cooperation when there is a need to focus on a specific topic with specific deliverables defined by terms of reference. In general, joint working groups would be formed following one or a series of meetings and/or workshops that are organized on a common theme. Thus, effective planning is a crucial element of successfully establishing a new and productive working group. Typically, in PICES a working group has a duration of three years. Under this PICES-NPFC Framework, it is recommended that joint Working Groups can be of any duration that is necessary to complete the Terms of Reference, but not longer than three years, except on a case-by-case basis where extensions are required. No joint Working Groups were convened during the first five-year phase but this remains a potential mechanism to be utilized.

4.3 Theme sessions at PICES annual meetings

Joint topic sessions at PICES annual meetings are also a valuable mechanism for collaboration between PICES and NPFC. There are numerous past examples of sessions that PICES has co-convened with other

organizations where the benefits of sharing research findings and expertise have been demonstrated, such as joint sessions with ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Seas), NOWPAP (Northwest Pacific Action Plan), and ISC (International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like species in the North Pacific Ocean). More recently NPFC has co-sponsored Theme Sessions at PICES annual meetings on:

2023 (S14) Seamount biodiversity: vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) and species associated with seamounts in the North Pacific Ocean.

2022 (S5) Environmental variability and small pelagic fishes in the North Pacific: exploring mechanistic and pragmatic methods for integrating ecosystem considerations into assessment and management.

Convening topics sessions at NPFC Scientific Committee annual meetings is not a mechanism used by NPFC for the review of the science. This is done via Small Scientific Committees (SSCs), Technical Working Groups and Small Working Groups focused on specific areas.

4.4 Representation at meetings and/or workshops

Both PICES and NPFC have a history of having representatives from other organizations participate in meeting and workshops where they can report on their organization's activities of interest. It was recommended that both organizations consider inviting one or more representatives from the other organization to participate in the Scientific Committee (for NPFC) and Science Board (for PICES) to update the bodies on the research activities ongoing and research priorities for the future and this was carried out during the first five-year phase. Many of the science experts that participate in the NPFC Scientific Committee are also members of PICES expert groups, thus representation within each organization is already strong but reciprocal participation allowed for increased visibility of the collaboration.

4.5 Coordination of science plans

To further promote collaboration in many of the activities identified in Table 1, PICES and NPFC could include shared elements in their respective research and work plans.

5.0 Monitoring and Reporting

Following the approval and implementation of this renewed Framework by the respective bodies of PICES and NPFC (i.e., the Science Board and the Scientific Committee), this Framework will continue for a period of five years at which time it will be reviewed to assess the progress on the areas identified in Table 1, and to identify new areas for collaborations. The review should also assess the collaboration mechanisms by identifying which ones were employed, the utility of those mechanisms in achieving desired results, and identify new mechanisms for future joint collaboration.

On an annual basis, there will be a progress report prepared by the Secretariat for each organization that is available for members. This progress report should be common for both, be a summary of all joint activities between PICES and NPFC (including status of activities and actions required to progress on objectives), and be prepared in collaboration by both Secretariats. Further, this progress report will be presented annually at the PICES Science Board (SB) and the NPFC Scientific Committee (SC) annual meetings as part of a standing item on their agendas. If modifications / alterations are required to joint activities to enable enhanced productivity and success, these recommendations will be approved by both the PICES SB and/or NPFC SC (via correspondence if necessary).

For any joint activity that is completed, the co-convenors will prepare a summary report of the activity and it will be available for all members of both organizations.

6.0 Other Considerations

When identifying recommendations for activities under the joint areas for scientific collaboration, other considerations need to be evaluated, including costs to the organizations in terms of financial as well as human capital and time. Some recommendations to alleviate these costs include:

- Using existing travel opportunities to established events, such as PICES and NPFC annual meetings. Economic efficiencies are realised even if the duration at a location must be extended by a day or two.
- Utilise on-line correspondence to the maximum extent to achieve deliverables, to prepare for face-to-face meetings, and to finalise reports.
- Minimise the number of annual meetings and create efficiencies within existing meeting as much as possible.

It is recognised that in certain cases where the work effort is intense (e.g., over a three-day period) to get the desired result, it is more effective to host a separate meeting with the additional financial and human capital costs, since the ultimate goal is to deliver on an objective. When additional costs are required, additional approvals also are likely required via the Governing Council for PICES and the Commission for NPFC.

TABLE 1: Recommended joint PICES-NPFC research areas and associated rank, interest, potential activities, and priority within next five years

Research Area	PICES Rank	NPFC Rank	PICES Interest	NPFC Interest	Potential Activities	Priority (5 years)
Support for Stock Assessments for priority species <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to include environmental variables that may affect stock status and distribution - Higher order modelling approaches that consider variability of multiple parameters 	High	High	Methodologies incorporating multiple variables, such as ecosystem time-series observations under North Pacific Ecosystem Status Reports (NPESR)	Methodologies that can enhance estimation of stock status; provide scientific justification for breaks in time series based on regime shifts in indices; science advice on how to best incorporate available information; NPFC adopted a resolution to adapt to climate change and promote resilience in NPFC fisheries	Joint workshop at PICES 2025 to identify specific areas on which to focus considering priority areas, data availability, desired outcomes, etc.; Joint WG(s) to address activities identified in the joint workshop; Sharing scientific results when they become available	
Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) and Significant Adverse Impacts (SAIs)	High	High	Identifying or predicting the distribution of VMEs; Have participated in workshops with NPFC; future considerations on biodiversity of seamounts.	Science support required for analysis of known and likely VMEs in the Convention Area; Use of species distribution models (SDMs) and/or habitat suitability models (HSMs) to support identifying where VMEs are located;	Sharing scientific results when they become available;	

				VMEs assessment is part of Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) for bottom fisheries and protection of VMEs; Small Scientific Committee (SSC) established to focus on bottom fisheries and VMEs.		
<p>Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scope to be defined but it was agreed to make progress in this area in incremental steps, for example the advice on fishing effort would include target stock status as well as impact of fishing effort on other key stocks, impacts of environmental variability on future target stock abundance, impacts of management decisions on human systems, etc. - There is high potential that activities under “Support for Stock Assessment” will address some of the initial objectives under this area. 	Med-high	High	Incorporate environmental variables and biological linkages within ecosystem models; Effort ongoing on advancing ecosystem models to understand impacts of stressors to ecosystem structure and function rather than assessing stock status;	Commitment to formulate a research plan to enable ecosystem considerations to be incorporated into a fisheries management approach; Support UN and FAO interests and commitments; One of the NPFC Scientific Committee’s functions is “Assessing the impacts of fishing activities on species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent upon or associated with the target stocks”	Joint workshop or session in 2025 or later to discuss options for advancing this area. Sharing scientific results when they become available;	
Climate change	High	Medium-High	Impacts on species /	Shifting of fishing areas due to habitat changes;	Ranked medium-high as a priority, but it was decided	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Factors effecting distributional changes of fish stocks due to changes in the environmental parameters including teleconnections with factors outside of the CA of the NPFC such as melting ice - Impact of ocean acidification - Factors affecting species' life history parameters (e.g., growth and maturity) and productivity 			<p>habitats; oceanographic process changes; some activities completed or ongoing (e.g., POC and BIO).</p>	<p>impacts on targeted stocks and distribution; impact of ocean acidification on corals;</p> <p>Integration of climate information into stock assessment and management;</p> <p>Adaptation of reference points and control rules to a changing environment;</p> <p>NPFC adopted a resolution to adapt to climate change and promote resilience in NPFC fisheries</p>	<p>to incorporate relevant project areas under the other three areas above.</p>	
<p>Data management (collection and sharing and security)</p>	<p>High (for sharing scientific results)</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>PICES is developing a new data catalogue to include metadata and PICES-generated data products. This will increase discoverability of data developed by PICES, member</p>	<p>Raw data is not generally accessible to external parties; available data products are accessible on the website depending on the membership in different subsidiary bodies. The NPFC is in the process of developing procedures for data management, including developing</p>	<p>Decided this was not an area where joint work was required. Important to encourage sharing of scientific results.</p>	

			countries and partners but the scope is not yet defined	data templates and a database.		
Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE)	Med	Med		NPFC has started activities on the MSE-based management approach for Pacific Saury and it may be something that NPFC would have interest in pursuing through collaborative work with PICES, but not in the short term	Decided this was not an area that would be a priority for joint work over the next 5 years	