

DRAFT REPORT
of the
SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE
to the
NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
April 2nd –4th, 2018

The SSC met from April 2nd through 4th at the Hilton Hotel, Anchorage, AK.

Members present were:

Anne Hollowed, Co-Chair
NOAA Fisheries—AFSC

Gordon Kruse, Co-Chair
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Chris Anderson
University of Washington

Amy Bishop
Alaska Sea Life Center

Robert Clark
Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game

Mike Downs
Northern Economics

Jason Gasper
NOAA Fisheries – Alaska Region

Dana Hanselman
NOAA Fisheries – AFSC

Brad Harris
Alaska Pacific University

George Hunt
University of Washington

Dayv Lowry
Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Franz Mueter
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Terry Quinn
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Matt Reimer
University of Alaska Anchorage

Heather Renner
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Ian Stewart
Intl. Pacific Halibut Commission

Alison Whitman
Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Members absent were:

Sherri Dressel
Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game

Kate Reedy
Idaho State University Pocatello

B-1 Social Science Plan Team Nominations

The SSC reviewed the nomination of Sally Bibb to the Social Science Plan Team. The SSC finds this nominee to be well-qualified and recommends the Council approve her nomination.

B-1 Research Priorities Proposal

It has been difficult for the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) to review annually research priorities at a single meeting, particularly as the list of priorities has become lengthy. At its June 2017 meeting, the Council passed a motion to explore ways to refine the review process of Council research priorities. On March 6, 2018, a workgroup met by teleconference to discuss this issue. Participants included Council Chair Dan Hull, Vice-Chair Bill Tweit, SSC Co-chairs Anne Hollowed and Gordon Kruse, AKRO SF Administrator Glenn Merrill, Council Executive Director David Witherell, Deputy Director Diana Evans, and Council staff lead Jim Armstrong.

SSC Co-chair Anne Hollowed summarized the proposal that emerged from the workgroup. Under the proposal, research priorities will still be classified as Critical Ongoing Monitoring, Strategic, Urgent, and Important. However, the Council would include a paragraph indicating that continuation of Critical Ongoing Monitoring projects should continue to be of highest priority. The review in 2018 would then

focus on research projects in the Urgent and Important categories. From this comprehensive list, the Council will develop a “top ten list” (or some other number) of key research priorities. To do this, each Plan Team would identify their top 3-5 projects for 2018 with an associated rationale. The SSC would then review the submissions from all of the Plan Teams and develop an overall prioritization of all projects, including priorities not associated with particular plan teams (e.g., marine mammals, seabirds). In developing their priority list, the SSC can also provide greater depth in consideration of the particular projects, and a rationale for including priorities on the list. Finally, it was proposed not to review Strategic research priorities in 2018, as these are less likely to be applicable to management in the near term. The workgroup proposed that the Council and SSC should develop a vision statement for the Council’s near-term and long-term activities, as well as the periodicity of reviewing longer-term (i.e., strategic) research priorities.

The SSC had a discussion about the need for changing the current process to review research proposals, as well as the usefulness of the resulting list of research projects. Although Council research priorities have found their way into the requests for proposals by the North Pacific Research Board (NPRB), current SSC members of the NPRB’s Science Panel have not seen a direct connection in recent years. The SSC recommends that the Council should seek input from granting organizations, such as NPRB, and state and federal resource agencies regarding the utility of the Council’s research priorities with regard to their funding and management action processes.

After considerable discussion, the SSC agreed that it seems reasonable to place the Critical Ongoing Monitoring projects into a preamble and not to review these projects this year. Also, the SSC agreed that it was acceptable to delay the review Strategic projects to next year. However, the process for reviewing such projects in the future needs to be identified. In addition to considering the establishment of a regular schedule for reviewing Strategic projects in the future, the Council might consider taking advantage of other related activities to provide input on these projects, such as the Fishery Ecosystem Plan for the Bering Sea, the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea Regional Action Plans, and the Social Science Planning Team.

The SSC was less comfortable with the proposal to develop a top ten list of Urgent and Important projects that trades off priorities for one group versus another. The SSC also recognizes that the top priorities for the NPFMC may not be the top priority for some funding agencies. For example, agencies responsible for non-fisheries ecosystem research may be interested in research priorities that do not appear on the top ten Council priorities. The SSC recognizes that there is value in the Council categorizing projects as Urgent and Important because it draws attention to them, even if they do not make the top ten list. Thus, maintenance of the full suite of priorities will remain an important activity. Despite these concerns, **the SSC agreed that it was reasonable to develop a list of the top three to five priorities for each group (e.g., groundfish, crab, scallop, social science), along with the rationale. The SSC agreed to try this approach for 2018.**

B-1 NMFS BSIA Guidance Update

Diana Evans (NPFMC) introduced this agenda item, which involves a revised white paper that was reviewed by the SSC in June 2017. The white paper aims to provide guidance on how councils document the use of Best Scientific Information Available (BSIA). Compared to the initial report, the revised document better emphasizes the key role that an SSC plays in the documentation process. The guidance in the revised document appears to be consistent with standard practices used by the NPFMC SSC, including