

Some suggestions for writing minutes and SAFE Intro summaries

Grant Thompson

Resource Ecology and Fisheries Management Division
Alaska Fisheries Science Center
National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
7600 Sand Point Way NE., Seattle, WA 98115-6349

Suggestions for writing and editing Joint Team and BSAI Team minutes in Google Docs:

- If a rapporteur is unsure what the Team's recommendation was, including uncertainty as to whether any recommendation was made in the first place, it is better to include a comment to this effect than to hide a pseudo-recommendation in the text by using language such as "the Team suggests" or "the Team agreed that authors should" (as opposed to the established format for Team recommendations).
- Do not make substantive "stealth edits" of Team recommendations. If someone wants to suggest a substantive change in the draft text of a recommendation, that is fine, but include a comment noting what was changed (accompanied by an e-mail to all Team members if the edit is being suggested after the meeting has adjourned).

Suggestions for how to write SAFE Intro summaries under the current process:

- Use the standard subheadings, which are:
 - Changes from previous assessment
 - Spawning biomass and stock status trends
 - Tier determination/Plan Team discussion and resulting ABCs and OFLs
 - Status determination
 - Ecosystem considerations (this one is optional)
- Do not change the order of the subheadings
- Make sure that items of information are addressed under the appropriate subheading
- For new data listed under "Changes from previous assessment," distinguish between those items that have an impact on reference points or specifications from those that are presented for information only (alternatively, the latter items may be omitted entirely)
- Under "Spawning biomass and stock status trends," be sure to mention something about spawning biomass if the stock is managed under Tiers 1-3
 - Discussion of recruitment strengths under this subheading is also useful for stocks managed under Tiers 1-3, as it helps to explain the described trends
- If assessment authors change their estimates of reference points or specifications so that they differ from the values in the chapter that the Team was provided, summary writers should include a comment to that effect in the initial draft of the Intro
- In general, but especially for "off-year" assessments, the amount of text should be roughly proportional to the amount of new information or degree of controversy in the assessment (as opposed to, e.g., making the amount of text proportional to the particular summary writer's personal interest in the particular stock)
- The fact that a sentence may have been important in some previous year's summary does not mean that it must be retained for all time (e.g., if a stock was split from a complex, this fact probably does not need to be mentioned once the first year of split management scrolls off the top of the summary table).

- For off-year assessments of stocks managed under Tier 3, make sure to distinguish between the *assessment* model and the *projection* model (e.g., do not say, “The model was re-run...”)

Suggestions for improving the process:

- Change the “Spawning biomass and stock status trends” subheading by deleting the word “status,” so as not to confuse this subheading with the “Status determination” subheading
- Given that, with the exception of EBS pollock, it is rare for an author or the Team to recommend an ABC other than the maximum permissible level, consider adding a piece of generic text to the start of the “Summaries of Stock Status” section stating that recommended ABCs correspond to the maximum permissible levels unless otherwise specified, and omit references to the maximum permissible level in the species summaries (except for those rare cases where the author or Team recommends something different)