

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
MAGNUSON-STEVENSON ACT REAUTHORIZATION IMPLEMENTATION

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the draft revision to Council Operating Procedure (COP) 4. The revision generally reflects current practice regarding SSC roles and responsibilities. The SSC notes that the COP – particularly paragraph 1 under “Objectives and Duties” – may need to be revisited once guidance is received from NMFS regarding the process for establishing annual catch limits.

The SSC suggests the following editorial changes to the COP:

Topic – “Objectives and Duties”

Paragraph 1, first sentence: The term “independent” was inserted to characterize SSC advice to the Council. Paragraph 3b defines “independent” in terms of ensuring that SSC advice is not unduly influenced by SSC members directly involved in producing reviewed materials. Use of the term “independent” in paragraph 1 should be similarly clarified in terms of other types of influences SSC members are expected to avoid (e.g., fishery management policy by the Council and agencies, constituent pressure).

Paragraph 1, second sentence: The SSC has long supported the Council’s practice of separating science and policy as highly beneficial to the credibility of the SSC’s scientific advice. The phrase “rather than supplant” provides some discomfort to the SSC, as it appears to suggest a need to safeguard against SSC intrusion into policy decisions. Given the extent to which the technical nature of the SSC’s role is circumscribed in other portions of the COP, the SSC considers the phrase unnecessary and requests that it be deleted from the paragraph.

Paragraph 1, third sentence: For general clarity and to remove ambiguity regarding Council and SSC roles in dealing with equally probable estimates, replace “determining allocations or the setting of annual catch limits, quotas, and harvest guidelines within acceptable biological catch levels, or determining the best available science when multiple equally probable estimates exist” with “determining allocations; setting annual catch limits, quotas and harvest guidelines within acceptable biological catch levels; and deciding between estimates deemed equally probable by the SSC.”

Paragraph 2, first sentence: For clarity, replace “Assist in the development, ...” with “Provide advice regarding the development, ...”

Paragraph 3, first sentence: For clarity, replace “proposed regulations, measures to prevent overfishing” with “proposed management measures”.

Paragraph 3b, second sentence: For clarity, replace “SSC review and deliberation of such items” to “SSC deliberation and conclusions regarding such items”.

Paragraph 4, first sentence: For clarity, replace “recommend entities with ongoing research programs” with “identify ongoing research programs”. Also replace “optimal execution” with “implementation”.

Topic – “Composition”

To more fully address the issue of SSC expertise, add a third sentence to the first paragraph as follows: “More generally, the Council shall strive to ensure that SSC members reflect the range of expertise needed for all Council FMPs.”

Second sub-bullet under bullet 2. Delete “one with expertise in groundfish stock assessment”. It is not clear why expertise is specified for one but not all agencies. Such decisions may be better left to agency discretion rather than mandated in a COP.

Topic - “Officers”

To reflect the current practice of two-year terms for the SSC chair, replace “one-year terms” with “a two-year term” in the second sentence. Also delete the fourth sentence.

PFMC
09/11/07