

NW and SW Fisheries Science Centers
February 12, 2014

REPORT ON THE STATUS OF NATIONAL STANDARD 2 IMPLEMENTATION

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is implementing National Standard 2 (NS2) guidelines regarding peer review processes and Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) reports and will closely coordinate with the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) on the undertaking.

Amendments to the NS2 guidelines for the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) regarding scientific information were published in the Federal Register this past summer (<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-07-19/pdf/2013-17422.pdf>; Friday, July 19, 2013). The revised NS2 guidelines are intended to ensure the highest level of integrity and strengthen public confidence in the quality, validity and reliability of scientific information disseminated by NMFS in support of fishery management actions. The guidelines provide direction on what constitutes best scientific information available for the effective conservation and management of fisheries managed under Federal fishery management plans (FMPs), and adds new language to the NS2 guidelines regarding the advisory role of the Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSCs) of the Regional Fishery Management Councils (Councils) and the relationship of SSCs to the peer review process. The revised NS2 guidelines also clarify the content and purpose of the SAFE Reports and related documents.

A NMFS Working Group has been assembled including representatives from each of the regional Science Centers and led by staff from the Office of Science and Technology. The NMFS NS2 Working Group has recently commenced work towards developing a plan to implement the NS2 guidelines. Representatives from the Northwest (NW) and Southwest (SW) Science Centers are Ms. Stacey Miller and Ms. Sarah Shoffler, respectively. Ms. Miller and Ms. Shoffler will work with PFMC staff and with staff from the West Coast Regional Office (WCRO) on these efforts.

The primary tasks of the Working Group are to:

- 1) Work with the Councils to ensure that their regional peer review processes are agreed and documented;
- 2) Publish a Notice in the Federal Register (FRN) to announce existing peer review processes under MSA section 302(g)(1)(E). The scope of the FRN will be to provide a summary of the regional peer review processes (i.e., SARC, SEDAR, WPSAR, STAR, and AFSC-NPFMC) that address the review of domestic stock assessments; and
- 3) Review the status of each of the regional SAFE reports and work with the Councils and Regional Offices toward compliance with NS2 Standards.

This first task is anticipated to proceed quickly and require limited resources, given that the Stock Assessment Review (STAR) process for Pacific coast groundfish and coastal pelagic species is the only process under consideration at this time, and is well established and well documented.

Tentative timeframe: Complete by April 2014.

The second task is to announce the STAR process for Pacific coast groundfish and coastal pelagic species as a peer review process established under Magnuson-Stevens Act sections 302(g)(1)(E) in the Federal Register along with a brief description of the process. In addition, NS2 requires detailed information on the STAR process to be made publicly available on the Council's website, and updated as necessary. These tasks are anticipated to also proceed quickly and require limited resources for completion as Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species Stock Assessment Review Process are prepared biennially by the PFMC in collaboration with NMFS, and are currently posted on the PFMC's website. The Science Centers have begun drafting the brief description of the STAR process to be included in a national Federal Register Notice and will collaborate with the PFMC, SSC, and WCRO.

Tentative timeframe:

- NW and SW Science Centers draft STAR process description for FRN and circulate to the PFMC and WCRO in March 2014.
- Compile edits, revise and circulate STAR description for FRN for a second round of review in April 2014.
- Finalize STAR description for FRN in May 2014.
- Submit final description of STAR process to NMFS Office of Science and Technology to be included in national FRN in June 2014.

The final task for this working group includes reviewing the status of the SAFE reports and creating a plan of action with the PFMC and WCRO to ensure SAFE reports comply with NS2. SAFE reports have been periodically published for fisheries managed by the PFMC although the frequency of publication and scope of included information varies between the managed fisheries. Additional information, summaries or indices of available information for each SAFE may be needed to comport with the revised NS2 guidelines. The NW and SW Fisheries Science Centers are creating an inventory of the documents currently included as part of each SAFE report or FMP, and will confer with the PFMC and WCRO to develop a plan to ensure SAFE reports comply with NS2 guidelines.

Tentative timeframe:

- Inventory current SAFEs and confer with the PFMC and WCRO in March 2014.
- Draft action plan for SAFE compliance in April 2014.
- Finalize action plan for SAFE compliance in June 2014.

The NW and SW Fisheries Science Centers welcome your input and look forward to working collaboratively with the PFMC and the WCRO on these tasks.