

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
MEMBERSHIP APPOINTMENTS AND COUNCIL OPERATING PROCEDURES

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) discussed the proposal to vacate the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) seat on the SSC (Agenda Item F.5.a, Supplemental NMFS Report). The SSC identified considerable value in the AFSC seat in fostering a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives on the SSC, avoiding conflicts of interest, and sharing information and experiences across regions. This proposed change would also have significant impacts on the SSC's capacity relative to its workload, especially in the short term.

In discussing this item, SSC members emphasized the value of diverse backgrounds and perspectives in providing thorough reviews. The SSC also noted that the west coast and Alaska Center scientists, as well as Pacific and North Pacific Councils, address similar issues with respect to groundfish, ecosystem based management, and catch share programs. As a result, there is considerable value to the exchange of ideas facilitated by SSC participation across regions.

SSC members from outside the Northwest Fisheries Science Center and Southwest Fisheries Science Center are also of particular value as reviewers and STAR panel chairs because supervisors must be recused from reviewing work produced by scientists they supervise. This has been an issue recently with groundfish stock assessments and could become an issue with California Current Integrated Ecosystem Assessment products as well. The current AFSC representative, Dr. Martin Dorn, also brings a great deal of institutional knowledge thanks to his long history of involvement with the Council process and current chairmanship of the SSC's Ecosystem Subcommittee.

In the past year, the SSC lost three members with experience chairing Stock Assessment Review panels. As a result, there would be great value in maintaining the AFSC seat at least until the end of the current groundfish assessment cycle (i.e., through November 2017) to allow for the possibility of one or more assessments being sent to the mop-up panel. The SSC therefore encourages the Council to contact the AFSC expressing the benefits (potentially mutual) of interactions across regions and working together to facilitate a gradual transition if the AFSC seat must be phased out.

The SSC wishes to express its appreciation to Dr. Dorn for his outstanding service and to AFSC for their long support of providing scientific advice to the Council process.

PFMC
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