Fisheries and Aquaculture Standards Revision

Process Procedures

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**Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to provide detail on the process for reviewing and revising the Seafood Watch® Standards for wild-capture fisheries and aquaculture operations. The purpose of this process is to ensure the credibility of the Seafood Watch Standards by incorporating the values of transparency, participation and fairness into their development, and through compliance with international best practice for Standards development. This document will be reviewed and updated as necessary at the outset of each standards revision cycle.

**Definitions**

- **Consensus** (as defined by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO)): “General agreement, characterized by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by an important part of the concerned interests and by a process seeking to take into account the views of interested parties, particularly those directly affected, and to reconcile any conflicting arguments. Consensus need not imply unanimity.”
- **Interested party/stakeholder**: Any person or group concerned with or directly affected by a Standard.
- **Standard**: Document that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for products or related processes and production methods.

**Process to Review a Seafood Watch Standard**

1. Proposals to review and/or revise a Standard may be submitted by any interested party (contact details below). All input will be considered during the subsequent revision process.
2. All proposals received shall be logged internally by Seafood Watch staff.
3. Seafood Watch Standards shall be reviewed on an ongoing basis, with the period between reviews not to exceed four years.
4. The date of the subsequent scheduled review shall be made publicly available once the Standard is finalized.
5. A review process shall consider a Standard’s continued relevance, effectiveness, and whether external circumstances have changed to the point where change is required.
6. After each review, a decision shall be made by Seafood Watch on whether a revision shall be initiated.
7. Reasons why a review process may be recommended and initiated are:
   a. Stakeholder and/or internal feedback
   b. New scientific developments or management changes
   c. Change in legislation
   d. Any other significant change in the fishery and seafood supply chain industry
   e. Four years have elapsed since the previous review
Process to Revise a Seafood Watch Standard

Preparation
8. Seafood Watch staff will:
   a. Review and update the following documents as necessary:
      i. A Terms of Reference including scope, justification of need, Objectives, risk assessment, and contact details
      ii. A public summary including information about Seafood Watch, an overview of the Standards (including scope, justification of need and objectives), how interested parties can contribute, the timeline for revision, the decision-making procedures and contact details
      iii. A workplan
      iv. Complaint procedures
      v. This process procedure document
      vi. Terms of Reference for the Multi-Stakeholder Group and Technical Advisory Committees
   b. Produce drafts of the revised Standard both prior to and following stakeholder feedback, including justification of the proposed changes, and an assessment of risks and impact of each change.
   c. Make all of these documents publicly available on the Seafood Watch website (or related website)
   d. Regularly update the website with information on the status of the Standard revision activities.
9. The Seafood Watch Complaints Procedure shall be referred to when complaints about the Standard revision process are received by Seafood Watch.

Decision-Making
10. Seafood Watch Director approval is required for
    a. Signoff of the documents in line 8 above
    b. Any substantive modifications to the contents of the documents above
    c. Releasing document for public consultation
    d. Recommending further rounds of public consultation beyond the required two
11. The TACs and MSG are to strive for consensus. Efforts to achieve this include identifying and trying to address the specific areas of disagreement and gathering further data/information to inform the decision.
12. Voting cannot be conducted without a quorum. In the case of the TACS, a quorum is two-thirds of the members. In the case of the MSG, a quorum is two-thirds of the members and at least one member from each stakeholder group.
13. Ideally, approval of the draft Standards occurs in the TAC and MSG meetings. However, if the TACs and MSG are unable to draft the Standards in those meetings (due to time constraints or otherwise), Seafood Watch staff (or a consultant) will draft the Standards based on TAC and MSG input. In this case, TAC and MSG approval will occur remotely.
14. Where consensus is not possible, an alternative decision-making procedure will be triggered. The alternative for each group is as follows:
   e. In the case of the TACs, a ‘minority’ proposal can be presented to the MSG, as long as it is clearly presented as such.
   f. In the case of the MSG, a two-thirds majority and at least one vote from each stakeholder group.
15. The results of decision-making shall be made public on the Standards review website, including any dissenting opinions.

TAC and MSG member selection
16. For the 2014-2016 revision cycle, Seafood Watch staff will establish a Fisheries Technical Advisory Committee, an Aquaculture Technical Advisory Committee (TACs), and a Multi Stakeholder Group (MSG). The MSG and TACs will remain in effect indefinitely to provide advice and input into future Standard revision cycles and other matters related to Seafood Watch research and assessments.
17. In addition to agreeing to follow these Process Procedures, TAC and MSG members must agree to provide input consistent with the overarching Terms the Reference and the Terms of Reference specific to their group.
18. TAC and MSG members must agree to a term of 2 years.
19. To establish the TACs initially, Seafood Watch staff will select members that together have technical expertise that covers all of the issues addressed by the Standards.
   a. The selection criteria for the TACs are:
      i. Expertise in developing and adapting seafood sustainability standards
      ii. Expertise in the sustainability issues addressed by the standards
      iii. Commitment to SFW’s mission and vision
      iv. Desire to seek and reach consensus on controversial issues
      v. Ability to review and comment on documents in English
      vi. Ability to actively participate in the process until final approval of the revised standard
20. To establish the MSG initially, Seafood Watch staff will:
   a. Solicit applications to create a ‘pool’ of possible members
   b. Use the criteria below to select members from the pool to ensure each key stakeholder group on the stakeholder map (see Public Summary) is balanced as possible and as well and equally represented as the others. The ideal composition of the MSG will be at least two members from each of the six key stakeholder groups as well as the Chief Scientist of the Monterey Bay Aquarium.
   c. The selection criteria for the MSG are:
      i. Expertise in one or more aspects of seafood sustainability
      ii. Commitment to SFW’s mission and vision
      iii. Desire to seek and reach consensus on controversial issues
      iv. Ability to review and comment on documents in English
v. Ability to actively participate in the process until final approval of the revised standard

21. Once established, new members of the MSG and TACs will be recommended and selected by the existing MSG and TAC members through a voting process consistent with line 11 above and the selection criteria in lines 17 and 18 above. The ideal composition of the MSG outlined in 15b above should always be the goal of this process.

22. Membership from the TACs and MSG can be revoked if members are not following the responsibilities as laid out in this document, the overarching Terms of Reference and/or the Terms of Reference for the TACs and MSG, respectively. Examples include missing two meetings in a row or a consensus vote by the rest of the TAC/MSG. Members can also voluntarily step down.

Public Consultation

23. The launch of a public consultation shall be announced on the Seafood Watch website.

24. Revisions to the Standard will require at least two rounds of public consultation.

25. Each round of consultation on a proposed draft shall normally include a period of at least 60 days for the submission of comments and no fewer than 30 days if a justification has been established for a reduced consultation period.

26. Key stakeholders shall be approached to contribute to the consultation. Organizations that have developed related Standards shall be encouraged to participate, and this engagement shall be documented.

27. Comments must be submitted in writing. All comments will be displayed on the Standards revision webpage. Contact details are required for all submissions, but commenters can choose to remain anonymous on the webpage.

28. After each consultation, a synopsis of the comments received and how they have been addressed in the draft Standards shall be produced. The synopsis shall be made publicly available on the Standards revision webpage and shall be sent to all parties that submitted comments.

Drafting a revised Standard

29. If the TACs and MSG are unable to draft the Standards (due to time constraints or otherwise), Seafood Watch staff (or a contractor) will prepare the drafts. In either case the Standards will be drafted to comply with the following:
   a. The objectives of the Standard shall be clearly and explicitly specified in the Standard itself.
   b. The Standard should avoid language and structure that may create ambiguities in interpretation. Consistent interpretation will be sought by setting criteria that are clear, objective and verifiable.
   c. The Standard shall be expressed in terms of a combination of process, management and performance criteria, rather than design or descriptive characteristics. To this end, the Standard shall only include criteria that contribute to the achievement of the stated objectives.
d. Requirements that may facilitate conformity assessment shall be presented separately from technical, process or management requirements.

e. The Standard shall attribute or cite all original intellectual sources of content.

Urgent Revisions to a Standard
30. In the case of an urgent need to revise a standard, for example to close a loophole, where there is an obvious incompatibility in a standard, or where a standard is found to be overly difficult or cumbersome to implement, Seafood Watch staff will make the revisions and the TACs and MSG will be given an opportunity to comment on them. Other stakeholders will be consulted during the next full revision cycle. If a TAC or MSG member raises concerns with the revision(s), Seafood Watch staff will seek to resolve the concerns and if they persist will call on the MSG to vote on the revision in question using the ‘Decision-Making’ procedures above (bullets 10-15).

Maintenance of Seafood Watch Standards

Publication and Record Keeping
31. Once the draft Standard receives the approval of the MSG, it shall be published within 30 days on the Seafood Watch website.
32. All approved Standards shall include a contact point where requests for clarification and general feedback can be sent.
33. Seafood Watch shall keep a file of all records made during Standards development activities (consultation comments, how they were taken into account, list of stakeholders, interested parties involved, draft and final versions of the Standard, etc.) and these shall be made available on request.
34. All records related to Standard development activities shall be kept for at least five years.

Implementation
35. Seafood Watch intends to use a phased approach to introduce any novel elements of the Standard in order to allow industry and management sufficient opportunity to make the changes necessary to conform to the new requirements. This phased approach will involve initially publishing the new Standard and beginning to collect data, but not immediately incorporating the new Standard into calculation of the final score and recommendation. Future revisions will focus on integrating these novel elements into the overall scoring.

Making non-substantive changes
36. Typographical errors, minor inconsistencies, formatting, organization and other non-substantive changes may be corrected without public process with the approval of senior staff.
37. The updated Standard shall be clearly identified with a version number and date and the most recent version shall be posted on the Seafood Watch website.
Revision History
This document was first published in October 2014. It was updated with the ‘Urgent Revisions to the Standard’ text above (bullet 30) in March 2016. The Introduction was updated in February 2017 to state that it will be reviewed and updated as necessary at the outset of each standards revision cycle.

Contact Details
Project management of the Seafood Watch Standards Revision is being conducted by Santi Roberts, SFWstandardreview@mbayaq.org. The Seafood Watch Standards revision website can be found at: www.seafoodwatch.org/seafood-recommendations/standards-revision