Introduction

The Seafood Watch Standards for Fisheries and Aquaculture allow assessment of the relative sustainability of wild-capture fisheries and aquaculture operations according to the objectives and conservation ethic of the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Seafood Watch assesses the ecological impacts on marine and freshwater ecosystems of fisheries and aquaculture operations up to the dock or farm gate. Seafood Watch assessments do not consider all ecological impacts (e.g. land use, air pollution), post-
harvest impacts such as processing or transportation, or non-ecological impacts such as social issues, human health or animal welfare.

The Standards undergo regular review and revision to ensure the latest science and best management practices are taken into account when conducting Seafood Watch assessments. Beginning with the 2014-2016 revision cycle, Seafood Watch will establish a Multi Stakeholder Group (MSG) and Technical Advisory Committees (TACs).

The purpose of this document is to provide the Terms of Reference for the TACs. It is meant to supplement (and frequently refers to) the overarching Terms of Reference document. This document will be reviewed and updated as necessary at least 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.”
- Chatham House Rule: “When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed”. The Chatham House Rule has the aim to encourage openness and the sharing of information at meetings.
- Interested party/stakeholder: Any person or group concerned with or directly affected by a standard.

Goals, Tasks and Responsibilities of the TACs

The main goal of the TACs is to tackle substantive technical issues which may or may not be brought up in public consultation and to suggest changes to the standards based on their expertise. Participation in the TAC must be conducted in a manner that is consistent with this document, the overarching Terms of Reference, and the Process Procedures.

Furthermore, the TAC members shall:

- Provide detailed input on the issues (needs, challenges, opportunities) that need to be incorporated into the revision process
- Review and propose revisions to the standards considering input from public consultation
- Review and consider stakeholder comments received during and outside the formal public consultations
- Decide when a draft is ready for the second public consultation
- Decide when the final draft is ready for review and approval by the MSG
In fulfilling their mandate, the TACs may:

- Recommend relevant agenda topics for its own deliberations;
- Constitute specialized sub-committees and panels from amongst its members and outside expertise from non-member when needed;
- Recommend suitable topics for specialized sub-committees and panels involving experts who are not members of the Board;
- Recommend commissioning of studies by external experts;

Tasks and Responsibilities of other entities in the process

*Multi-Stakeholder Group:* The MSG is the final decision-making body. The main goal of the MSG is to approve the final standards for publication. Participation in the MSG must be conducted in a manner that is consistent with this document, the overarching [Terms of Reference](#), and the [Process Procedures](#).

Furthermore, the MSG members shall:

- Serve as a liaison to their respective stakeholders
- Review and approve revisions to the standards proposed by the TACs
- Request further input revision from the TACs as necessary
- Approve the final revised standards

*Seafood Watch staff:* Seafood Watch staff, which, for this purpose, consists of all members of the Science Team including the Senior Science Manager. Seafood Watch staff shall organize and direct the process. Furthermore, Seafood Watch staff (or a contractor as assigned by Seafood Watch staff) shall:

- Draft the first set of documents for public consultation and publish to the [Seafood Watch Standards Revision webpage](#). These documents are:
  - Overarching Terms of Reference
  - Terms of Reference for Technical Advisory Committees (this document)
  - Terms of Reference for the Multi Stakeholder Group
  - Public Summary
  - Process Protocols
  - Complaints Procedure
  - Work Program
  - Draft Standards
- Select initial MSG and TAC members
- Organize the necessary meetings, including in person, webinars and phone calls
- Collate all public feedback for the Technical Committees
- Prepare the draft standards after TAC and MSG input (unless the TACs and/or MSG are willing and able to do so)
- Solicit approval from the TACs and MSG on the draft standards (if the TACs and/MSG are unable to do so in the in-person meetings)
Tenure
The Seafood Watch Standards are updated at least every four years, and provisions exist for more frequent updates as necessary (see Process Procedures for more information). The actual cycle for revising the standards lasts 12-18 months; this is the time when the demands on the TACs will be greatest. However, there is need to retain the TACs even when not in a revision cycle, in order to help keep Seafood Watch staff appraised of the latest science and management policy. For this reason, we expect TAC members to commit to two years’ service.

Time Commitment
When in cycle, the full TACs will be expected to meet in person once, for no more than two days. Additionally, TAC members will be expected to meet remotely by conference call or webinar at least once. Members will be expected to review and provide feedback on draft standards prior to and otherwise outside of these meetings.

When out of cycle, TACs will meet by webinar once a year (or potentially in person by piggy-backing on existing events if enough members are attending).

Additionally, TAC members may be called upon to peer review Seafood Watch assessments, with timing based on availability.

Affiliations and Interests
Seafood Watch will ask members to make a written statement of their relevant affiliations and interests prior to appointment/election.

It is incumbent upon the member to update their declaration in writing, should their personal situation change. Seafood Watch will review declarations prior to appointment and on an ongoing basis as updates occur.

Members are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner; the use of their positions cannot be reasonably construed to be for their private gain or that of any other person, company, or organization.

Expenses and remuneration
Members will be reimbursed for expenses incurred during their work on the SAB, such as travel accommodation and out-of-pocket expenses.

Confidentiality
TAC members shall sign a confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement with Seafood Watch at the beginning of their work.
All documents prepared by or presented to the TACs are assumed to be public unless identified otherwise by Seafood Watch and agreed by the TACs.

The TACs operate according to the Chatham House Rule (see Definitions). So, while members of the TACs have full authority to share the non-confidential substance of discussions and papers, they shall not report or attribute neither the comments of individuals nor their affiliations outside of meetings, whether conducted face to face or virtual. The default approach of the TACs is that the non-attributable content of discussions and papers is not confidential, unless so specified.

**Language**
The working language of the TACs is English. There is no provision for other languages during this process.

**Operations**
Please refer to the [Process Procedures](#) for TAC and MSG composition, selection, and decision-making procedures.

**Principles for an effective process**

**Effective TAC meetings**

- Established solid foundation at the start (objectives, roles, timetable, etc)
- Agreed meeting protocols
- Detailed agendas provided before and at meetings; meeting materials provided well in advance of meetings whenever possible to ensure that members have sufficient time to review.
- Clear decision making structures, e.g., Use of decision-making matrix based on criteria that need to be considered and scenario-testing
- Simple, logical discussion format, e.g., commencing with clarifying the issue(s) the requirement is meant to address before starting to comment on the specific requirement
- Regular, ongoing temperature checks on points-of-agreement
- Decision point, end of day and end of meeting summaries
- Use of technical experts in drafting the documents to support Working Group’s role and task
- Decision on use of sub-groups, break-out groups in meetings, etc.
- Temperature check from TACs before a final draft is recommended to the MSG for approval.
- Straw poll of the TACs and MSG before going to decision-making.
Effective communications and representation of stakeholders

MSG members are expected to consult and represent the views of their respective constituencies. This includes:

- Proactively contacting a range of stakeholders during the revision process - a combination of soliciting views on questions/issues; sharing information and building enthusiasm for formal consultations
- Coordinating with other colleague(s) to ensure a wide range of views are sought on the development or finalization of the standards
- Passing on agreed public statements emerging from MSG meetings
- Representing the views of their constituency within the MSG meetings for the betterment of Seafood Watch and its mission. At the beginning of sessions, MSG members will be asked for ‘report-outs’ to share input they have received from their constituents. At the end of meetings, specific issues will be identified on which MSG members are expected to consult with other experts. These issues will be posted on the website for easy access.

To support stakeholder engagement, Seafood Watch staff will also:

- Implement a communications strategy to ensure ongoing and meaningful stakeholder engagement
- Proactively push communication towards those who self-declare their interest, or otherwise may be impacted by the standard/policy, via email and/or the website.
- Make available for all interested parties via the website:
  - All documents identified in the first bullet in “Tasks and Responsibilities of other entities in the process” above
  - Working Group agendas
  - Working Group minutes (non-attributable)
  - Signed off internal documents and drafts of the TACs
  - Anonymized comments of stakeholders on draft documents
- Use tracking/document handling software tools to facilitate dialogue amongst stakeholders as part of the consultation process.

Contact Details

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

Revision History

This document was first published in October 2014. 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.