

Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch®

Fisheries and Aquaculture Standards Review

Complaint Resolution Process

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide detail on the process for submitting and resolving complaints related to the Seafood Watch® standard setting process. 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 process will enable any person, company or organization that intends to file a complaint to do so and will address complaints in a transparent, efficient and effective way. This document will be reviewed and updated as necessary at least at the outset of each standards revision cycle.

Definitions

- Complaint: a formal expression of dissatisfaction by a third party related to process for reviewing the Seafood Watch® standards for wild-capture fisheries and aquaculture operations. Please see [Process Protocols](#) for more information regarding the standard setting process.

- Complainant: Interested party that formally submits a complaint to Seafood Watch
- Interested party/stakeholder: Any person or group concerned with or directly affected by a standard.
- Investigator: Seafood Watch staff person or outside party assigned to resolve a specific complaint. The investigator must not be associated with the complaint or have a conflict of interest.
- Standard: Document that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for products or related processes and production methods, with which compliance is not mandatory.

Determining the eligibility of a complaint

An eligible complaint is a formal expression of dissatisfaction by a third party related to the process for reviewing the Seafood Watch® standards for wild-capture fisheries and aquaculture operations. Please see [Process Protocols](#) for more information regarding the standard setting process. This is not a procedure for complaints against the review outcome of the Seafood Watch International Standards for Wild-Capture Fisheries and/or Aquaculture Operations, the outcome of a Seafood Watch assessment, the use of the Seafood Watch marks, the Seafood Watch organization, or other such matters.

Process to Submit a Complaint

1. The interested party must submit a complaint in writing to Seafood Watch via email or mail (see contact details below).
2. The complaint must include the following items:
 - a. Be written in English
 - b. State that it is a complaint
 - c. Be specific
 - d. Include appropriate objective justification and evidence to substantiate a claim
3. All complaints received shall be logged internally by Seafood Watch staff. Seafood Watch staff will respond to the complainant within 10 working days to acknowledge receipt of complaint.
4. Seafood Watch staff will determine whether the complaint has merit.
5. If the complaint does not have merit, Seafood Watch staff will respond to the complainant letting them know the reasons and that the case is closed.
6. If the complaint does have merit, Seafood Watch staff will respond to the complainant identifying the individual responsible for resolving the complaint (referred to as the investigator). The investigator(s) must not be associated with the complaint or have a conflict of interest. In the case that the objectivity of the investigator or Seafood Watch staff may be questioned, the complaint will be dealt with by an external party, to be appointed by Seafood Watch in accordance with the nature of the complaint.
7. The investigator's response will indicate whether the complaint is eligible, the rationale for this decision, and if the complaint is eligible, the timeline for resolving the complaint.

Process to Resolve a Complaint

8. The Investigator will determine the cause of the complaint and, after investigation, shall set up an action plan to correct the cause of the complaint and prevent its reoccurrence. The investigator will present an action plan to the Director of Seafood Watch for approval. If the remedy for the complaint would require further revision to a standard for which the revision process has closed, the remedy will be considered in the next revision process.
9. The investigator will ensure that the action plan is followed. Once the action plan is complete, the Seafood Watch Director will verify that the corrective action has been effective and if so, close out the complaint. This will be noted in the Seafood Watch records.
10. Once the complaint has been closed the investigator will notify the complainant and identify what actions have been taken to resolve the complaint.

Appeals

There is no provision in this procedure for an appeal against a decision on a complaint.

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. It was updated with minor edits in Feb 2019.

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