

# Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch®

## Fisheries and Aquaculture Standards Review

### 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. 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

7. 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 procedures document
  - 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.
8. The Seafood Watch Complaints Procedure shall be referred to when complaints about the Standard revision process are received by Seafood Watch.

### Decision-Making

The primary approval body for revisions to any Seafood Watch Standard or developing a new Standard is the Multi-Stakeholder Group.

9. Seafood Watch Director approval is required for
  - a. Signoff of the documents in line 7 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
10. The MSG is 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.
11. Voting cannot be conducted without a quorum. A quorum is two-thirds of the members and at least one member from each stakeholder group.
12. Ideally, approval of the draft Standards occurs in the MSG meetings. However, if the MSG is 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 MSG input. In this case, MSG approval will occur remotely.

13. Where consensus is not possible, an alternative decision-making procedure will be triggered which is a two-thirds majority and at least one vote from each stakeholder group.
14. The results of decision-making shall be made public on the Standards review website, including any dissenting opinions.

## Advisory Bodies

The main advisory bodies in the Seafood Watch Standard Review process are the Fisheries Technical Advisory Committee and the Aquaculture Technical Advisory Committee (together, the 'TACs'). In addition, Expert Working Groups may be formed to debate issues that are very specific.

15. During the standard review cycle, TACs will convene at least twice to discuss input from public consultation as well as bring their own expertise to bear on any potential revisions to the standard.
16. The TACs discussion will be written up by Seafood Watch staff and presented to the TACs for signoff as correctly reflecting the discussion and outcomes. This document is then made available to the MSG for review.
17. Expert Working Groups will be convened as necessary to focus on specific issues to later be discussed within the TACs. These may include members of the MSG or TAC(s) but will also likely include other experts. A summary of these discussions will be provided to the TAC(s).

## TAC and MSG member selection

18. The MSG and TACs were initially established as part of the 2014-2016 revision cycle. The MSG and TACs will remain in effect indefinitely to provide advice and input into future Standard review cycles and other matters related to Seafood Watch research and assessments.
19. In addition to agreeing to follow these Process Procedures, TAC and MSG members must agree to provide input consistent with the Terms the Reference.
20. TAC and MSG members must agree to a term of 2 years.
21. To establish and maintain the TACs 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
22. To establish and maintain the MSG, Seafood Watch staff will 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.

- a. 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
- 23. Any changes to the MSG or TACs require approval from the Seafood Watch Director.
- 24. 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. Members can also voluntarily step down.

## Public Consultation

- 25. The launch of a public consultation shall be announced on the Seafood Watch website.
- 26. Revisions to the Standard will require at least two rounds of public consultation.
- 27. 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.
- 28. 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.
- 29. Comments must be submitted in writing. All comments will be made available on the Standards revision webpage. Contact details are required for all submissions, but commenters can choose to remain anonymous on the webpage.
- 30. 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

- 31. Seafood Watch staff will draft revisions to the Standards as advised by the TACs and EWGS, and as directed by the MSG. The revisions 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**

32. 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 9-14).

### **Maintenance of Seafood Watch Standards**

#### **Publication and Record Keeping**

- 33. Once the draft Standard receives the approval of the MSG, it shall be published within 30 days on the Seafood Watch website.
- 34. All approved Standards shall include a contact point where requests for clarification and general feedback can be sent.
- 35. 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.
- 36. All records related to Standard development activities shall be kept for at least five years.

#### **Implementation**

37. Generally, Seafood Watch will begin use of the revised Standard for assessment updates and new assessments from the date it is published. In the case of a new Standard or if there are novel elements introduced in a revised Standard, Seafood Watch may use a phased approach to implementation in order to allow industry and management sufficient opportunity to make the changes necessary to conform to the new Standard. In this case, Seafood Watch will conduct outreach to major stakeholders that are likely to be affected by the new Standard in order that they understand the new Standard.

#### **Making non-substantive changes**

- 38. Typographical errors, minor inconsistencies, formatting, organization and other non-substantive changes may be corrected without public process with the approval of senior staff.
- 39. 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. The document was reviewed prior to the 2019-2020 Standard review cycle (Feb 2019), and was updated to better reflect the roles of the TACS and EWGs as advisory rather than decision-making bodies.

## Contact Details

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