

Standards Review and Revision 2024-2026 Cycle Public Summary (v4 Aug 2025)

About this document

This document summarizes the Seafood Watch Standards Review and Revision cycle for 2024-2026. It includes an overview of Seafood Watch and the standards (including scope, justification of need, and guiding principles), a timeline for the current review and revision process, information on how interested parties can contribute, decision-making procedures, and contact details. It was last updated August 5, 2025.

Learn more about our [protocols, procedures, and terms of reference](#) for the [Standards Review and Revision](#) process. As the process progresses, all documents will be updated as necessary, and each update will be recorded in an appendix.

Review scope

From May 2024 through May 2026, Seafood Watch will be conducting review and potential revision of all three Seafood Watch standards:

- [Seafood Watch Standard for Fisheries](#)
- [Seafood Watch Standard for Aquaculture](#)
- [Seafood Watch Standard for Salmonid Fisheries](#) (an adaptation of the Standard for Fisheries)

The Standards for Fisheries and Aquaculture have been revised several times, most recently in 2020. The Standard for Salmonid Fisheries was first developed in 2015 and revised in 2020.

Timeline

The current review phase commenced in May 2024 and is scheduled to conclude in November 2025. If necessary and approved, the revision phase will then begin and run through

approximately May 2026. The initial timeline below will be updated as necessary during the process.

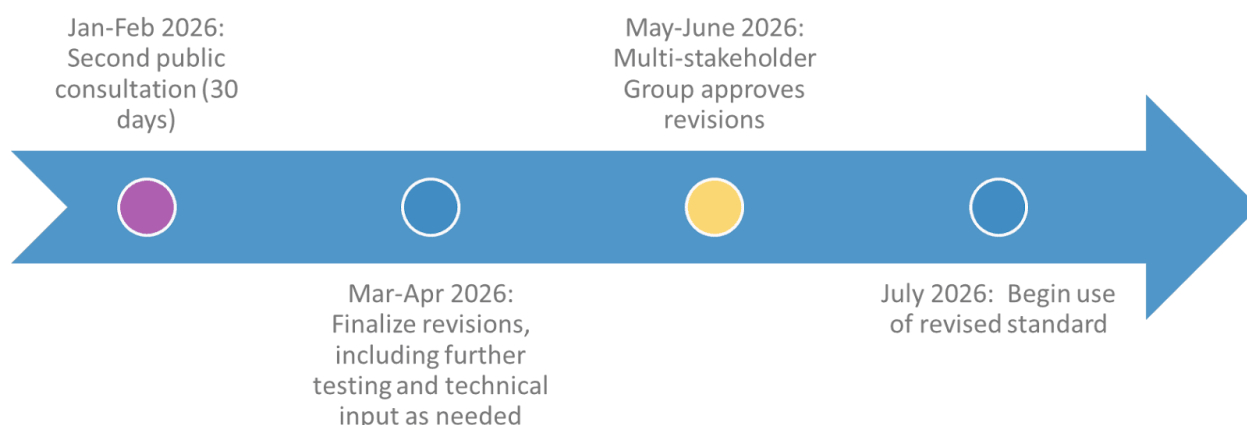
Review phase

In the Review phase, we compile all internal learning since the last version of the standards was published, gather expert and public input, and determine whether revisions are necessary. Potential revisions are drafted, tested, and deliberated over by advisory committees. The Multi-stakeholder Group (MSG) reviews the draft revisions and, if appropriate, approves moving to the revision phase.



Revision phase

In the Revision phase, potential revisions to the standards are posted for public comment and again deliberated over by advisory bodies. The revisions are then finalized and, if appropriate, approved by the MSG. The final revised standards are then posted.



Contributing to public consultation

We greatly value input into how we can better meet our objectives in assessing wild-capture fisheries and aquaculture operations. Our standards review process is structured to allow as much public input as possible. To this end, we have created a [standards review webpage](#) that provides information on the process, the related standards review documentation, and how interested parties can get involved.

The Review phase public consultation ran from May 6 to August 5, 2024. Commenters were encouraged to submit comments online on the [standards review webpage](#) or to SFWStandardReview@mbayaq.org. **All substantive comments received were published on the standards review webpage** (anonymity was permitted if requested by the author). A summary of all comments received, along with an explanation of whether and how they will be incorporated into the draft revised standard, will be published in 2025.

Comments received after the Review phase public consultation may still be considered in the Review phase, and may be included in the Review phase public consultation comments summary on the [standards review webpage](#). Alternatively, they may be considered during the public consultation step of the Revision phase, which is currently scheduled for late 2025 (pending approval by the MSG). Any comments received outside the review and revision phases will be considered in the next standards review cycle.

Updates on the Standards Review can be requested at any time by emailing SFWStandardReview@mbayaq.org. In-person meetings, web-based surveys, webinars, and workshops may also be utilized to gather public comments.

Scope of standards

We define sustainable seafood as seafood from fished or farmed sources that can maintain or increase production without jeopardizing the structure and function of affected ecosystems, minimize harmful environmental impacts, assure good and fair working conditions, and support livelihoods and economic benefits throughout the supply chain.

Seafood Watch ratings reflect the environmental impacts of seafood production to help ensure that seafood is fished and farmed in ways that promote the long-term well-being of wildlife and the environment. Seafood Watch assesses the ecological impacts on marine and freshwater ecosystems resulting from fisheries and aquaculture operations, up to the dock or farm gate. However, Seafood Watch assessments do not consider all ecological impacts (e.g., land use, air pollution), post-harvest impacts such as processing and transportation, or non-ecological impacts (e.g., social issues, human health, animal welfare).

Social responsibility, equity, and economic viability are also outside the scope of our assessments. Instead, we work directly with human rights experts worldwide to explore ways to improve the seafood industry's human rights and labor conditions.

Justification of need

The Seafood Watch standards and fishery and aquaculture assessments fill a unique role in the U.S. marketplace. The assessments identify the environmental performance of the fishery or aquaculture operation in question providing producers with areas for improvement. The resulting fishery and aquaculture ratings inform the purchasing decisions of concerned consumers and businesses. Elements of the Seafood Watch standards and program that differ from certification schemes and other ratings programs include the following:

1. We assess the majority of the seafood on the U.S. market. Current estimates are that our recommendations cover some 80% of the total seafood in the U.S. market, by volume;
2. Our assessments are non-voluntary and impartial, meaning they are never commissioned or funded by seafood producers or processors. Assessments are prioritized based on their importance to the Seafood Watch program.
3. We utilize a three-tiered traffic light rating system, which enables us to recognize a range of environmental performance. Green ratings reflect the best performers, which may be operating above current industry best practices. Red ratings flag areas of concern in a fishery or aquaculture system;
4. Fisheries or aquaculture operations are assessed at the country or regional level, not at the company or brand level. This approach enables us to assess the industry's cumulative impacts within a specific geographical area.

Objectives of the standards

The objective of the standards and assessment framework is to determine how closely fisheries and aquaculture operations worldwide align with the guiding principles outlined below.

The objective of Standards Review and Revision is to ensure that they remain relevant over time and reflect the latest scientific and management understanding of what it means to be environmentally sustainable.

Guiding principles

Seafood Watch's guiding principles illustrate the qualities that fisheries and aquaculture operations must possess to be considered environmentally sustainable. These principles inform the performance criteria and scoring methodology used to assess them.

Fisheries guiding principles (including salmonid fisheries)

Sustainable wild capture fisheries:

1. Follow the principles of ecosystem-based fisheries management;
2. Ensure all affected stocks¹ are healthy and abundant;
3. Fish all affected stocks at sustainable levels;
4. Minimize bycatch²;
5. Have no more than a negligible impact on any threatened, endangered or protected species;
6. Are managed to sustain long-term productivity of all affected species;
7. Avoid negative impacts on the structure, function or associated biological communities of marine habitats where fishing occurs;
8. Maintain the trophic role of all marine life;
9. Do not result in harmful ecological changes such as reduction of dependent predator populations, trophic cascades, or phase shifts;
10. Ensure that any enhancement activities and fishing activities on enhanced stocks do not negatively affect the diversity, abundance or genetic integrity of wild stocks.

Aquaculture guiding principles

Sustainable aquaculture farms and collective industries:

1. Have robust and up-to-date information on production practices and their impacts (or lack of impacts) publically available;
2. Prevent effluent discharges from exceeding, or contributing to exceeding, the carrying capacity of receiving waters at the local or regional level;
3. Are located at sites, scales and intensities that maintain the functionality of ecologically valuable habitats;
4. Limit the type, frequency of use, total use, or discharge of chemicals to levels representing a low risk of impact to non-target organisms;
5. Source sustainable feed ingredients and convert them efficiently with net edible nutrition gains;
6. Prevent population-level impacts to wild species or other ecosystem-level impacts from farm escapes;
7. Prevent population-level impacts to wild species through the amplification and retransmission, or increased virulence of pathogens or parasites;
8. Use eggs, larvae, or juvenile fish produced from farm-raised broodstocks thereby avoiding the need for wild capture;

¹ "Affected" stocks include all stocks affected by the fishery, no matter whether target or bycatch, or whether they are ultimately retained or discarded.

² Seafood Watch defines bycatch as all fisheries-related mortality or injury other than the retained catch. Examples include discards, endangered or threatened species catch, pre-catch mortality and ghost fishing. All discards, including those released alive, are considered bycatch unless there is valid scientific evidence of high post-release survival and there is no documented evidence of negative impacts at the population level.

9. Prevent population-level impacts to predators or other species of wildlife attracted to farm sites;
10. Avoid the potential for the accidental introduction of non-native species or pathogens during the shipment of live animals.

Decision-making and advisory bodies and procedures

The main decision-making and advisory entities in the Standards Review are the [Technical Advisory Committees \(TACs\)](#) and the [Multi-stakeholder Group \(MSG\)](#). Members serve two-year terms. If you wish to be considered for the TACs or MSG, please notify us at SFWStandardReview@mbayaq.org.

Technical Advisory Committees: The TACs are advisory bodies composed of fisheries and aquaculture experts qualified to address substantive technical issues that may or may not be raised during the public consultation process. Their advice will be shared with the Multi-stakeholder Group to help ensure that our performance criteria are robust and reflect the latest developments in fisheries and aquaculture science and management.

Multi-stakeholder Group: The MSG approves the final standards before they are published. The selection of MSG members is made by Seafood Watch staff. We intend to ensure that the MSG is balanced and committed to advising the program in a manner consistent with our objectives (guiding principles) for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. Specific criteria used to select MSG members include:

- Represent one of the key stakeholder groups identified through our stakeholder mapping (see below); each of the four key stakeholder groups requires three representatives.
- Have an understanding of both best practice and practicability.
- Are users of Seafood Watch assessments, ratings, and related products.

MSG and TAC members may also engage in an advisory role in our discussions on our Theories of Change, definitions of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, and other work.

Multi-stakeholder Group approval process

- The MSG approves moving to the Revision phase and any final revisions or newly developed standards.
- The MSG is to strive for consensus. Efforts to achieve this include identifying and addressing specific areas of disagreement, as well as gathering further information to inform the decision.

- Voting cannot be conducted without a quorum. A quorum is defined as two representatives from each stakeholder group. Voting can be conducted in person or remotely.
- Where consensus is not possible, a minimum of two positive votes from each stakeholder group is required.
- The results of decision-making shall be made public on the [standards review webpage](#), including any dissenting opinions.

Seafood Watch stakeholder map

The diagram below shows the key stakeholder groups identified for the 2024-2026 Seafood Watch Standards Review.

- Academics for improvement/thought leaders
- NGOs that use our products
- Supply chain actors that use our products
- Producers that use our products



Contact Details

All questions about the Seafood Watch Standards Review and Revision should be directed to SFWstandardreview@mbayaq.org. Information is also available on the [standards review webpage](#).

Updates to this document

February 21, 2025 (version 2)

- The timeline has been updated to reflect the extended Review Phase. The end date of the Revision phase was not changed.
- Minor grammatical edits for clarity and to change tense for items that have been completed to date.
- Updates to stakeholder map and MSG selection criteria.

June 24, 2025 (version 3)

- The timeline has been updated to reflect the extended Review Phase. The end date of the Revision phase has been extended by one month.
- Minor grammatical edits for clarity and to change tense for items that have been completed to date.

August 5, 2025 (Version 4)

- The timeline has been updated to reflect the extended MSG approval step, which means the second public consultation will begin later than in earlier versions.