

May 29, 2012

Samuel D. Rauch
Acting Assistant Administrator of Fisheries
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Springs, MD 20910

Dear Sam:

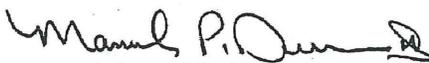
The convening of a National Scientific and Statistical Committee (National SSC) was a recommendation of the second conference in the series, Managing Our Nations Fisheries in 2005. The National SSC and its working groups have provided guidance on national fishery management issues, particularly those dealing with Acceptable Biological Catches, ecosystem based management, and optimum yield in a catch limit management setting. Unfortunately, the quality products and recommendations of the National SSC *ad hoc* working groups did not constitute formal technical guidance, as they were neither formally commissioned by the Council Coordination Committee nor National Marine Fisheries Service.

As such, the CCC recommends the creation of a National SSC whose membership would be comprised of the eight SSC Chairs (or their designees) and a senior NMFS staff as an ex-officio member. Technical support for this committee would be provided by personnel from the NMFS Office of Science and Technology and Council staff. A Standard Operating Practices and Procedures (SOPP) should be developed that would govern the operations of the National SSC and Terms of Reference (TOR) to direct its activities. The National SSC would be tasked with the development of a prospectus for proposed Working Groups and topics for future National SSC Workshops in consultation with the CCC. These proposals would be reviewed and approved by the CCC as part of the specification of the TOR and could be sponsored by one of the Councils or brought to NMFS for consideration for sponsorship.

The membership of national WGs approved by the CCC would be based on nominations from each Council's SSC (maximum of one SSC member per Council) and one member from NMFS. The Chair of the WG would be appointed by the National SSC (selected from the WG roster). The WG would submit a final report to the CCC that would include recommendations to address the TOR. The final report may be subject to external peer review, the level of which would be determined on a case-by-case basis, based on agreement between the CCC and NMFS. Following peer review of the WG report, the report would be published as a NMFS Technical Memorandum, or other appropriate mechanism, such that it meets the requirements for formal national technical guidance to the Councils.

Thank you and we look forward to your response and action on this matter.

Sincerely,


Manuel P. Duenas
Chairman



AUG 15 2012



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

THE DIRECTOR

WESPAC

AUG 21 P3:53

RECEIVED

Mr. Manuel P. Duenas
Chairman
Western Pacific Fishery Management Council
1164 Bishop Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Mr. Duenas:

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the Council Coordination Committee (CCC) requesting the formation of a National Scientific and Statistical Committee (National SSC). We agree that a National SSC could provide coordination of best practices among the Councils' SSCs, help establish topics for future national SSC workshops, and recommend creation of specific topical working groups. The National SSC could also serve as a pathway for improved communication with NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) fishery science program.

We recommend that a National SSC be established as a subcommittee of the CCC, and that the CCC establish Terms of Reference for the National SSC rather than separate SOPPs. The CCC can revise its Terms of Reference to formally establish the National SSC, specify the role of the SSC, and detail how the CCC expects to engage with the National SSC. This process is similar to the way Council SSCs are organized and would accomplish the same objective. We would be interested in participating in the development of these Terms of Reference, including ensuring that they satisfy the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act and any other legal requirements.

We are pleased that the CCC is interested in having a senior NMFS scientist serve as an ex-officio member of the National SSC. The new NMFS Lead Scientist for Stock Assessments is expected to be selected soon and would be an ideal candidate for this role with the National SSC.

Your letter describes a process by which the results of National SSC working group results could be reviewed, published, and then considered as best practices. Rather than respond specifically to the proposed process now, let us take that up as we develop and review the draft TORs. In particular, we should work together to clarify the level of review needed for a document to serve as a statement of best practices among the SSCs, versus the more extensive review and approval required for more formal technical guidance.

I appreciate your interest in this matter and look forward to continued engagement between the Councils and NMFS on the important science issues affecting marine fisheries.

Sincerely,

Samuel D. Rauch III
Deputy Assistant Administrator
for Regulatory Programs,
performing the functions and duties of the
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries

THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
FOR FISHERIES

