

Issue: Status of Working Groups

Background

Participants at the fourth National Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Workshop seek guidance from the Council Coordination Committee (CCC) with regard to the recommended protocol for creation of National SSC working groups (WGs). An *Ad Hoc* WG assembled at the 2009 National SSC Workshop successfully developed a report on procedures for providing advice on data-poor stocks. This report, led by Dr. Jim Berkson, was published as a NOAA Technical Memorandum by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. However, the group of scientists who worked on this report was not formally commissioned as a WG by either the CCC or NMFS, and their informative report did not constitute formal technical guidance.

At the fourth National SSC workshop held in October 2011, there was interest among some SSCs to form a WG to deal with forage fish issues and another to continue discussion on ways to more fully incorporate social and economic science into the SSC and Council processes. While such WGs could be created informally among interested parties, a more formally commissioned WG process would be necessary if funding for meetings was sought or technical guidance was the intended final product.

Draft Recommendations:

1. Formalize the creation of a National SSC whose membership would be comprised of the eight SSC Chairs (or their designees). Technical support for this committee will be provided by personnel from the NMFS Office of Science and Technology and Council staff.
2. Develop SOPPS which would govern the operations of the National SSC and terms of reference (TOR) to direct its activities.
3. The National SSC would be tasked with the development of a prospectus for proposed WGs and topics for future National SSC Workshops. These proposals would be reviewed/approved by the CCC as part of the specification of TOR and then could be sponsored by one of the Councils or brought to NMFS for consideration for sponsorship.
4. The membership of national WGs approved by the CCC would be populated 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 which includes 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.