

Scientific and Statistical Committee

Social Sciences Subcommittee

Discussion of Fishery Performance Reporting

November 12, 2025

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Terms of Reference

- A. Consider: 1) the range of fishery performance information products available to the Council, including Risk Policy Matrices, monitoring reports, Council action documents, and information provided by Advisory Panels, and 2) staff updates on work to generate information products in a more efficient and consistent manner that meets a range of needs.
- B. Provide recommendations on
 - 1. How to gather and report on fishery performance information from Advisory Panels;
 - 2. The content of fishery performance information that is provided to the SSC when developing recommendations for specifications; and
 - 3. How best to report on fisheries performance that efficiently meets multiple needs for information.

Range of fishery performance information products

(NEFMC-generated)

- Advisory Panel feedback
- Risk Policy Matrices
- Reports on fishery performance/monitoring
- Affected Environment (AE) sections of Council action (NEPA) documents
- PDT memos to the SSC
 - Catch performance (e.g., federal commercial and recreational landings, discards, state catch)
 - Groundfish quota change model (predicted and actual catch and revenue)

Discussion:

- What data would be most helpful to consider when the SSC is recommending ABC?

Revisiting 2021 SSS recommendations

- Review of two Council actions (NEPA analyses)
 - Additional focus on tracking trends in the socio-economic metrics, integrating AE and the impacts sections, increasing language precision, considering additional metrics, streamlining analysis by updating metrics with less variability less frequently, and increasing use of the expertise available on the SSC.
 - “Further exploration of what elements are appropriate for automation in the long run would be beneficial.”
- Opportunities now to make more headway
 - Enhanced interest in consistent and efficient reporting (e.g., Risk Policy).
 - Advancements in automation technology assisting with data query and report generation.

Advisory Panel input

- APs periodically asked to discuss fishery performance for the general edification of Council members, staff, and public (see [example questions](#)).
- Often during the first AP meeting in a calendar year, also to contribute to a draft report.
- Documented in [meeting summaries](#) and selected [performance reports](#).
- The process for querying and reporting AP feedback has not been systematic.
- Questions and frequency has varied by FMP.
- Not regularly provided ahead of SSC meetings; perhaps if the AP input is embedded in a report.

Discussion:

- Does the SSS have recommendations on collecting fishery performance input from APs?
- What input from APs would be helpful to for the SSCs to receive consistently across FMPs?

Reports on fishery performance monitoring

- “Annual Monitoring Reports”
 - Annual PDT review of skate, monkfish, and small-mesh multispecies FMPs required by regulations.
 - Specific content outlined in regulations, differ by FMP; only SMS FMP requires a report.
 - In years when specifications are developed, information from review provided in Council action document.
 - In off years, an “annual” report may be prepared.
 - Not required for Northeast multispecies, scallop, or Herring FMPs, though PDT review/reporting occurs through Council actions (annual for groundfish and scallops).
- Ongoing Omnibus Management Flexibility Amendment – final action Sept 2025
 - Includes removal of regulatory requirement for skates, monkfish, and SMS FMPs.
 - If approved, would allow the Council to determine the appropriate timing and content of reviews/reporting across all FMPs as resources allow.
- Current efforts to automate reports and align with the Council’s Risk Policy.

Risk Policy and Risk Policy Matrices

- The Risk Policy aims to systematically account for factors that influence risk tolerance in Council decision making, implemented in stages. (Alpha / Beta).
 - Data that will be assembled will be determined by the Risk Policy factors (under review).
 - Longer-term: Fishery Performance Report could be a source for information used in Risk Policy (scoring)
- Matrix:
 - Brought to SSC meetings when recommending ABC, then available to Council.
 - Prepared for last ~10 years but undergoing updates with revisions to the Council's Risk Policy Concept (Sept. 2024).
 - Versions of the Matrix for 2025 SSC meetings align with the factors in the Risk Policy Concept. No changes planned for the matrix. However, data in the matrix will evolve when Risk Policy is updated in 2026.

Discussion:

- Is the data as presented in the matrix in a format that is understandable?

Affected Environment of NEPA documents

- Timing
 - At the time of an SSC meeting, the AE of the relevant action is still being drafted.
 - Typically, the final AE from the most recent action is shared with the SSC.
- Content
 - Level of detail varies by the NEPA analysis required.
 - NEPA regulations evolve. Current trend is towards simplifying, reducing length.
- Council members, SSC, APs all need key information to make decisions.
 - What is that key information? (Irrespective of the required analyses)
 - How best to report on fisheries performance that efficiently meets multiple needs for information?

Four Primary NEPA Reviews for Council Actions

NEPA Review Process	
Categorical Exclusion (CE)	The purpose of a CE is to document that an action does not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment. This is the lowest level of review for actions that are known to have no individual or cumulative significant environmental effects. CEs are routine activities that are "categorically excluded" from further analysis.
Supplemental Information Report (SIR)	A Supplemental Information Report is a tool that is used to re-evaluate an existing EA or EIS. The SIR is a concise document that evaluates new information, changed circumstances, or proposed changes to a measures to determine if a new or updated NEPA document is required.
Environmental Assessment (EA --> FONSI)	The purpose of an EA is to provide evidence and analysis to determine if a proposed federal action has the potential to cause significant environmental effects/impacts. If the EA finds no significant impacts, a FONSI is issued. If the EA finds that significant impacts are likely, then an EIS must be prepared.
Environmental Impact Statement (EIS --> ROD)	The most comprehensive and detailed level of review, an EIS is required for actions that are known to have significant environmental effects/impacts. This process includes a formal public comment period and the development of alternative actions. The final step is a Record of Decision (ROD), which records the agency's final choice.

For efficiency, Council often starts with scoping for EIS. If measures not expected to lead to significant impacts, then pursue EA (FONSI).

Council Actions and NEPA Review Process

Council Action Type

NEPA Review Process

Categorical Exclusion (CE)

Supplemental Information Report (SIR)

Environmental Assessment
(EA → FONSI)

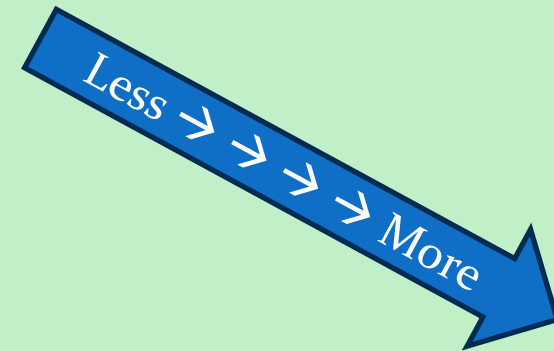
Environmental Impact Statement
(EIS → ROD)

Specifications

Framework

Amendment

- Faster Timelines (fewer meetings)
- Less Analysis
- Shorter Docs

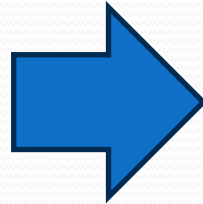


- Longer Timelines
- More Meetings
- Deeper Analysis
- Longer Docs

Document requirements are changing, what should we produce to support decision making?

Framework / Environmental Assessment

- Multiple Council Meetings, SSC
- Affected Environment:
 - Baseline description of existing conditions.
 - Provides context, transparency for Council and public, reference section when analyzing range of alternatives.
- Risk Policy



Specifications / SIR

- Committee Meeting, SSC, then a Council Meeting.
- Relies on previous analyses, evaluates new information.
- Risk Policy

Fishery Performance Reports: Consistent delivery of key information for decision making, irrespective of the regulatory requirements. Contents is complementary to Risk Policy.

Anticipated Changes and Opportunities

- Reduction in resources (\$, science, management).
- Environmental and ecosystem changes.
- New tools to increase management flexibility.
 - In-season adjustments, specification frequency.
- New guidance around applying NEPA.
 - Changes to level of analysis required to comply with the statute.
- Removal of some annual report requirements (monkfish, skate, whiting).

Integrated Documents (Council Actions)

- Council develops “actions” (Framework, Amendment, Specifications) as single document to comply with a range of federal statutes.
- Anticipating changes to the level of analysis required to apply NEPA in some of these documents.
 - EX: Updates to specifications could be “categorically excluded.”
- New Risk Policy and integration with Harvest Control Rules.
- Development of Fishery Performance Report (SSS, Today’s TORs)
- Internal Process mapping exercise for Fishery Performance Reports, Risk Policy, NEPA considerations, AI and automation of reports.
 - Staff currently mapping processes to integrate and align efforts.

Discussion:

- How can Fishery Performance Reports be used to inform risk-based decision-making and support streamlined NEPA analyses, especially as automation and AI tools become more integrated into internal workflows?