SSC
SOCIAL SCIENCE SUBCOMMITTEE (SSC-SSS)

REPORT ON JUNE 3 INAUGURAL MEETING

Hiro Uchida (SSS Chair)

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Meeting Details

- Date: June 3, 2025
- Location: NOAA Fisheries Narragansett Laboratory (RI)
- SSS Attendees
  - Drs. Birkenbach, Nenadovic, St. Martin, and Uchida (SSC)
  - Dr. Seara (NEFSC-SSB)
  - Dr. Feeney (NEFMC)

TORs

1. Subcommittee purpose, objectives, functions, and workplan
2. Future State of the Ecosystem (SoE) reports

TOR 1

Subcommittee purpose, objectives, functions, and workplan

A. **Review the purpose and objectives** for the SSS as proposed in the memo from the Executive Director dated November 7, 2024; develop any recommendations for refinements.

B. Develop a tangible **workplan** for improving the integration of social science information into fisheries management.

TOR 1A: Purpose and Objectives

Purpose:

To foster communication and collaboration between the NEFSC Social Sciences Branch (SSB) and Council to improve the use of social science information in the Council process.

[as approved by the Council]

TOR 1A: Purpose and Objectives

Objectives:

1. *Create more opportunities for integrating social sciences tools to inform management.*

2. *Better understand the Council's socioeconomic objectives to help address management needs.*

3. *Increase coordination between SSS and SSB staff in various Council PDTs.*

4. *Better integrate existing tools and data from SSB and other sources into fisheries management advice and decision-making processes.*

5. *Improve effectiveness and optimize timing of social science data inputs and recommendations.*
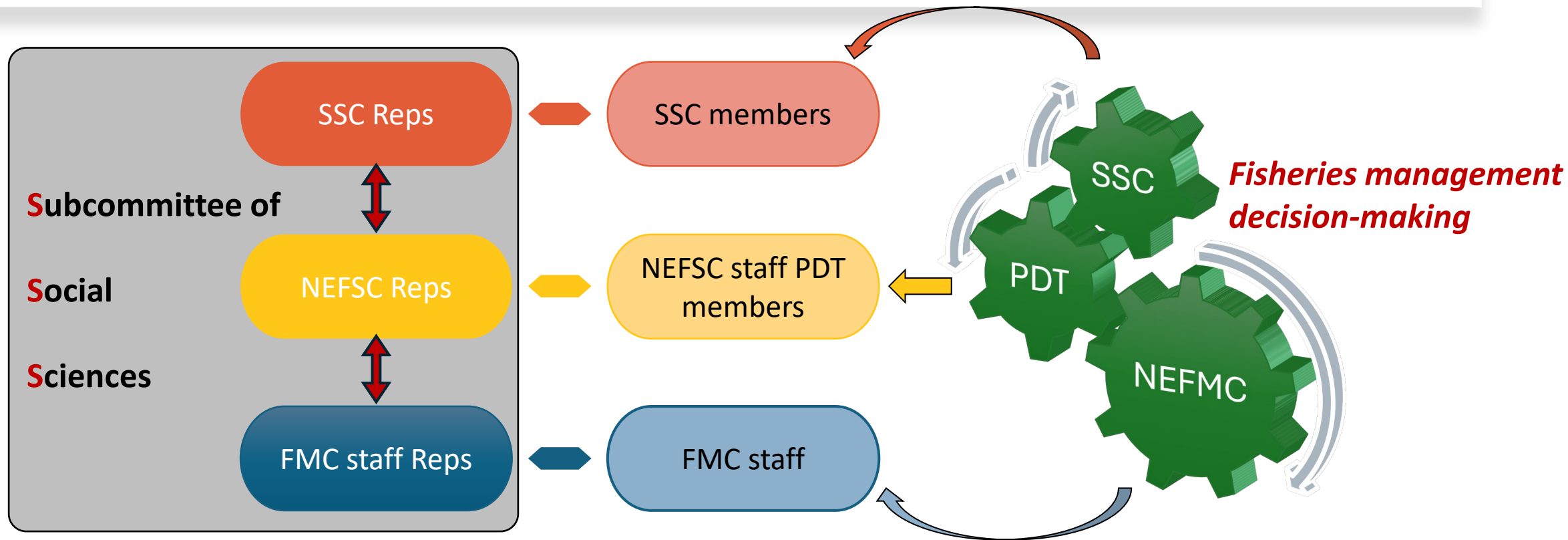
TOR 1A: Overarching Strategy
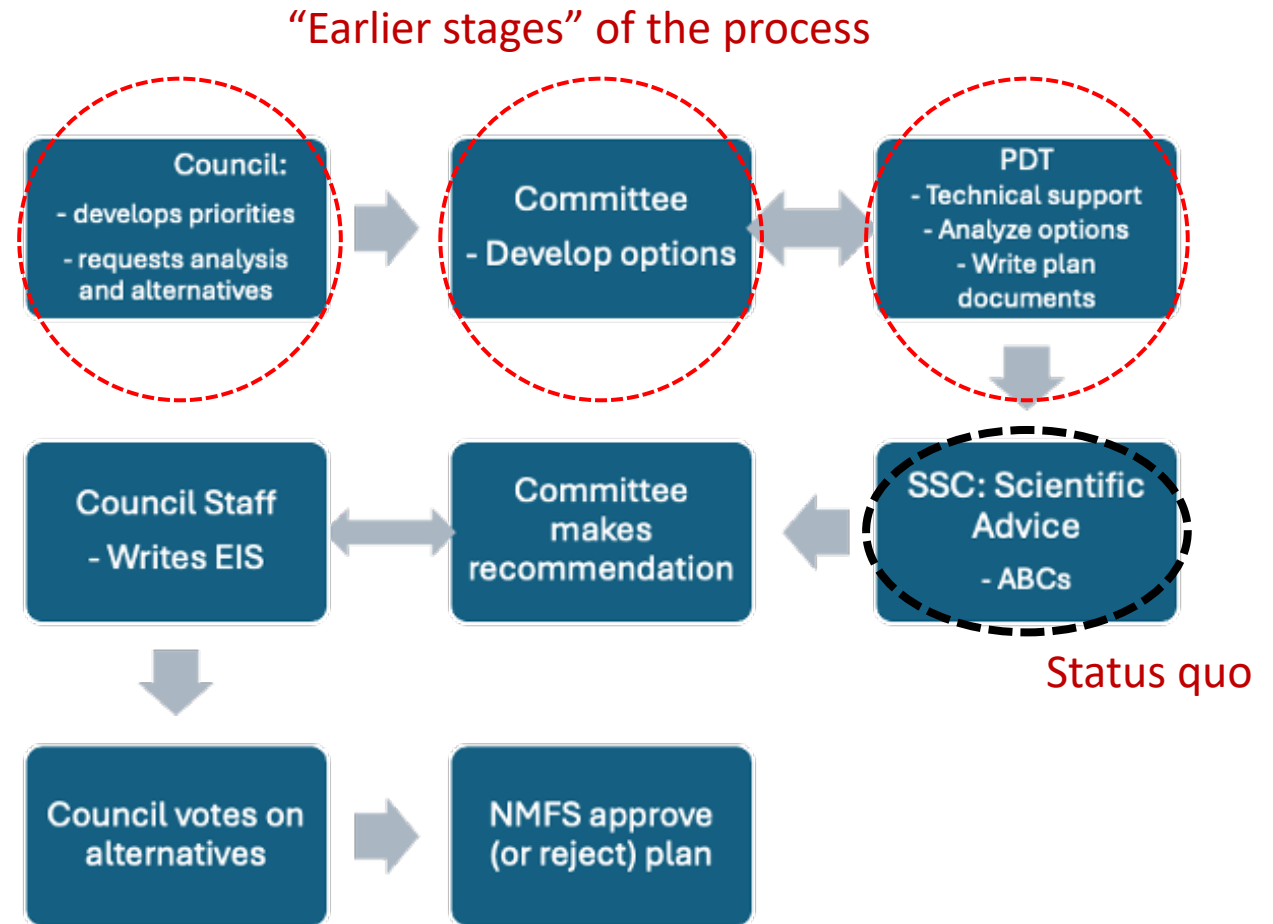
- For better integration of social sciences (SS), critical to **bring SS information to light earlier** in the decision-making process.
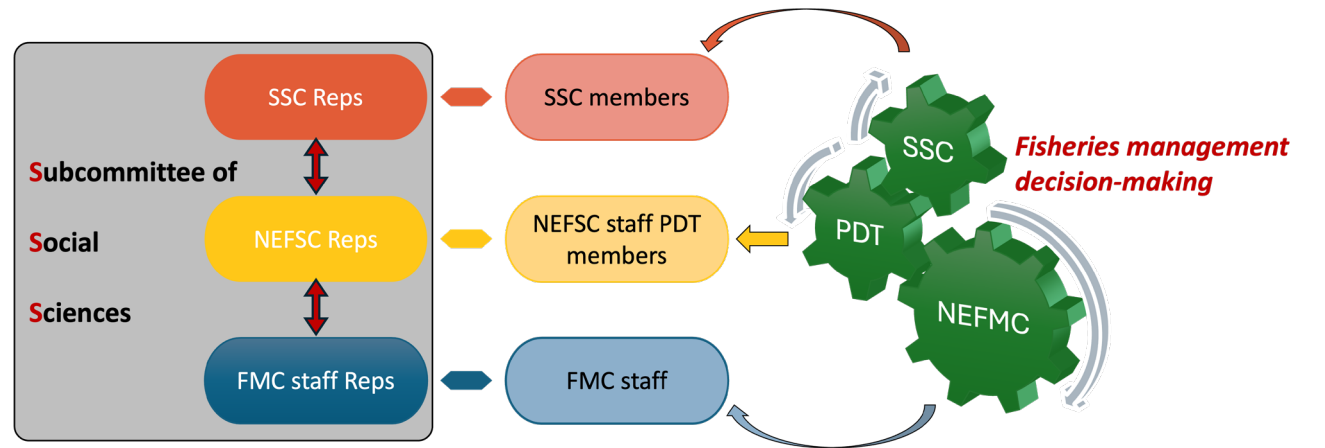
TOR 1A: Overarching Strategy
How to get in front

TOR 1A: Focal points

Focus on the **tangible strategies** on ways to better **integrate social sciences** with the fisheries management decisions.

1. **Priority:** Of all the things we wish to do/have (data, analysis, etc.), which ones take higher priority?

2. **Timing:** When to carry out the activity; when to aim to complete → at what stage of decision- making process to be involved.

3. **Resources:** Funding and manpower (who will lead? Anyone from outside?).

TOR 1B: Workplan
Three targeted areas

1. **Incorporate social science into stock assessment process**
   - Go beyond assessing impact of proposed regulation change *a posteriori*.
   - Feedback between fish biology and harvesters' behavior as part of ecosystem.

2. **Meet the needs for Council actions**
   - Be proactive ascertaining the Council's needs early in the policy-making process.
   - Continue supporting Rick Policy and SOE revisions.

3. **Improve the use of industry-generated information including LEK**
   - Catalog and strategize utilizing NGO/industry generated data and information.
   - Generate "Fishery Performance Reports" to aid Council and SSC processes.

TOR 1B: Workplan
General meeting schedule

- **January**: plan actions ("sow the seeds") for the upcoming year, in conjunction with development of the workplan and research priorities (when applicable).

- **May/June**: conduct mid-year review and update the action plans as the stock assessments and PDTs gear up their activities for late summer/autumn SSC reviews.

  For 2025, 10/28 & 11/12 AM, hybrid

- **Late fall**: review and reflect on accomplishments or impediments from the current year and initiate discussion for the next year's plan.

TOR 1B:

Specific workplan

Actions	Approaches	Timing
Incorporate social science in stock assessments	Invite assessment scientists to discuss how to include social science information including LEK.	January 2026
	Support improvements to ESP development within research track assessments.	When research track assessment resumes
Meet the needs for Council actions	Review Council annual work priorities to strategize what information would be informative.	January 2026 and annually thereafter
	Invite social science PDT members to discuss what social and economic issues they are helping address, where information is used and how, and any barriers; support improved analyses.	September 2025; Late spring 2026~
	Support the Council's work in implementing the revised Risk Policy to improve ABC setting in the face of biological uncertainty.	
	Finalize CINAR Phase 1 (May 2024) report.	Late August 2025
	Using CINAR Phase 1 list of data products, find barriers to uptake; identify on-ramps, make connections, and maintain list over time.	September 2025 and onward
	Identify opportunities for SSB data products.	Summer 2025 and onward
	Clarify NOAA data access agreements to identify opportunities that facilitate collaboration with external partners.	Summer 2025
	Provide data to SOE team for potential uptake as indicators; continue feedback for future SOE reports.	September 2025; Late spring 2026 ~
Improve the use of industry-generated information, including Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK)	Advise on content/template of a fishery performance report that can be brought to the NEFMC SSC, including Advisory Panel input and information from industry-generated documents, e.g., groundfish sector manager reports.	Summer/fall 2025
	Develop CINAR Phase 2 workshop on industry's data sources.	Fall 2025

TOR 2

Future State of the Ecosystem reports

A. Recommend if the **management objectives** in the State of the Ecosystem (SOE) report should only report current status or transition to indicate desired states. Consider improvements to how objectives are identified and described.

B. Comment on how the **indicators for the Social and Cultural objective** (e.g., community vulnerability) are used in the SOE report and recommend any improvements.

C. For the **Fishery Stability objective**, recommend if there is continued utility in including this objective in SOE reports and if it should be expanded upon, redefined, or replaced. If replaced, recommend an alternate objective and associated performance metrics.

TOR 2A: Management objectives in SOE

Main challenge: lack of desired state / benchmark / threshold ➔ Leads to ambiguous "management objectives"

- Number of active fishing vessels – too small, too many, adequate?
- Vulnerability indicator – what is "too vulnerable"?

Suggestion: continue the effort articulating the "desired state"

- SSS can coordinate/support the effort.
- In the meantime, avoid the term "objectives" and replace it with "ecosystem factors" and/or present the metrics more as categorical descriptors of socioeconomic indicators.

TOR 2B: Socio-cultural indicators

SSS supports:

- Reconsidering social and cultural indicators to reflect hard to measure but important factors such as *(job) satisfaction*, *adaptive capacity*, and *job security*.
- Continue use of Community Social Vulnerability Indicators (CSVI).
  - SSS notes that this is currently being revised by NEFSC.
- Inclusion of Community Environmental Variability Risk Indicators (CEVRI; formerly CCCVI).
  - Challenge: interpretation of the indicator in relation to management decision/objective → NEFSC is working on it.

Recommendation of data to be included in the SOE:

- Hotspot maps of fishery participation (landing, homeport, processors & dealers locations).
- High-level outcomes of (a) crew survey and (b) vessel cost survey.

TOR 2C: Fishery stability objectives

SSS noted that the usefulness of current indicators focused on *diversity* are limited.

SSS recommends focusing instead on measures of:

- Adaptive capacity / Flexibility / Resiliency
- Volatility / Variability

Other recommendations include:

- More consistent and timely reporting of FMP-specific information on fisheries → fishery performance reporting could fill this gap.
- Include a metric of fishery participation to show the distribution of economic benefits across the fisheries.

SSC-SSS Members

Hiro Uchida (SSC, SSS Chair), University of Rhode Island

Anna Birkenbach (SSC), University of Delaware

Rachel Feeney, NEFMC

Mateja Nenadovic (SSC), University of Rhode Island

Tarsila Seara, NEFSC-SSB

Kevin St. Martin (SSC), Rutgers University

* Tammy Murphy (NEFSC) stepped down due to retirement. Replacement discussion currently ongoing.