

SAFMC SSC Peer Review Process

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SSC Review Draft

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Purpose

Develop an approach for efficient and effective Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) peer review of complex technical analyses.

Overview

As the primary peer review body of the Council, the SSC is expected to provide review of a wide range of materials with varying levels of complexity. Stock assessments are typically the most complex analyses to come before the SSC. Effective SSC peer review of assessments is addressed by dedicated assessment processes, such as SEDAR, which provide for SSC involvement throughout their development.

While assessment peer review remains an important SSC task, analytical methods applied to management alternative evaluations are becoming increasingly complex, and, therefore, more time consuming and difficult for peer review. Some of the methods applied to management options recently are arguably as involved and data-intensive as stock assessments from just a few years ago. Yet, unlike assessments, there is no SSC involvement in their development or data selection and application. The SSC is expected to review such analyses from many perspectives, including adequacy of the analytical techniques, accuracy and appropriateness of the input data, consequences of assumptions, uncertainties, and risks associated with the various outcomes. Additionally, the SSC peer review often comes relatively late in the process, when any changes could trigger significant extra work on behalf of the analysts and lead to delays in amendment schedules. This tends to stifle exploration of alternative assumptions, and can result in begrudging acceptance of minor issues and changes “to be considered next time”.

It is likely that this situation will only worsen in the future. Today’s management actions tend toward multiple alternatives and sub-alternatives, the impacts of which can vary according to the input data set or time series of a dataset chosen to establish baseline conditions and evaluate effects. Moreover, the management program is heading toward greater complexity, through greater use of area and seasonal restrictions and more intricate stock definitions, which will lead to further complexity in efforts to predict how future changes will impact a population and fishery. It is unrealistic to expect the SSC to adequately and effectively review all aspects of complex management actions or detailed evaluation of management alternatives in a few hours, or often even less time. Therefore, the Council directed staff to develop an approach to improve the SSC’s ability to peer review complex analyses.

Proposed Peer Review Approach

1. Goals.

The goals of the peer review process are:

- ensure SSC involvement early in the analytical process
- provide opportunities for SSC guidance on data decisions, analytical approaches and assumptions
- provide adequate opportunity and time for SSC reviewers to evaluate the outcomes, uncertainties and risks.

2. “SSC Workgroups” Approach

- Implement a “workgroup” approach to increase SSC involvement in analyses and facilitate improved review by the full SSC.
- Workgroup practices should be flexible, as there are varying levels of complexity in the analyses, and should provide a scope of work to define the task for each project and workgroup.
- Workgroups work informally with the analysts/Inter-disciplinary Planning Team (IPT) on an as-needed basis; activities will be coordinated by SSC staff and appropriate Council technical staff.
- All Workgroup recommendations are vetted through the SSC.
 - Workgroup recommendations and report provided to the SSC when the analysis is reviewed.
- SSC leadership and Council staff decide if an analysis is likely to require the workgroup approach.
 - Propose an SSC Leadership Team composed of the SSC chair, Vice-Chair, and Former chair.
 - Include SSC workgroup participation and milestone reviews in IPT planning related to the analysis. Ideally, an approximate timeline and scope of work will be available prior to workgroup formation.
 - Prepare a general scope of work and timeline to guide the workgroup, and provide the justification for applying the workgroup approach
- Workgroup Composition
 - subset of SSC members (3-5)
 - Chair chosen by the members or assigned by the SSC Leadership Team
 - Workgroup members selected based on expertise and applicability to the analyses.
- Workgroup Approach
 - meet via conference call, webinar or in-person as needed.
 - Suggest in-person meetings, when deemed necessary, be held in conjunction with SSC meetings to manage time and expense.

- report regularly to the SSC. Workgroup chair leads SSC discussions on the topic assigned to the workgroup.
- Review the proposed approach and available data early on.
- Review preliminary results and analytical efforts as needed to provide guidance regarding assumptions and alternatives and ‘best’ analytical techniques, to enable their consideration for the analysis
- Workgroup prepares a working paper to submit to the SSC that documents their activities and recommendations.
 - This need not be complicated or require formal prose – a timeline/diary approach with extensive use of lists, bullets, etc. should suffice

3. Example Scope of Work

Analysis Type: Bag limit increase alternatives for an FMP amendment

Justification: Most bag limit analyses are based on reductions in the bag limit, and are developed by methods that trim individual trip catches to a new bag limit and recalculate total catches. Bag limit increases are a relatively unexplored management action requiring unique or novel approaches. Decisions about data periods and possible behavioral changes are likely to influence final outcomes.

Analyst: Mike Errigo, SAFMC Staff

Tasks and Timeline: Data and methods scoping (w/workgroup)– by August 22, 2016

Initial analyses reviewed by workgroup – October 18, in-person, prior to the SSC meeting

Progress Report to the SSC – October 18-20, 2016

Status Report to the Council – December 5-9, 2016

Review of preliminary results, in advance of March 2017 Council options consideration – by January 15, 2017

Status Report to the Council – March 6-10, 2017?

Final workgroup review – by March 15, 2017

Completion of workgroup report – March 23, 2017

Final presentation and review by the SSC – April 20-22, 2017

Final Report to the Council – June 12-16, 2017