

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE POLICY

A. Objectives and Duties

When requested by the Council through the Executive Director

1. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) shall provide expert scientific and technical advice to the Council on the development of fishery management policy, on establishing the goals and objectives of fishery management plans (FMP) or amendments, and on the preparation of such plans or amendments.
2. When requested by the Council, the SSC shall supply the Council with a critical review of the scientific information necessary to make management decisions, such as stock assessments or other reports on stock status, socioeconomic impacts of management measures, sustainability of fishing practices, and habitat and ecosystem status. Such information may include fishing level recommendations including OFL and ABC, where appropriate, based on the best scientific information available.
3. The SSC shall assist the Council in the development, collection, and evaluation of such statistical, biological, economic, social and other scientific information as is relevant to the Council's development and amendment of any FMP and specification of annual catch limits.
4. The SSC shall assist the Council in determining what statistical, biological, economic, social or other scientific information is needed for the development of an FMP or amendment that meets the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act; and shall advise the Council as to the best way of obtaining this information, including identifying entities with ongoing research programs that may be able to develop the needed information.
5. The SSC shall advise the Council on preparing comments on any FMP or amendments prepared by the Secretary or Secretary's delegate or other Councils, which are transmitted to the Council pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Act.
6. The SSC shall comment on, if requested by the Council, any proposed regulations, which the Council deems necessary to implement any FMP or any amendment to an FMP which is prepared by the Council.
7. The SSC shall assist the Council in establishing criteria for judging FMP effectiveness.
8. The SSC shall submit to the Council such reports as the Committee deems appropriate and such reports as are requested by the Council.
9. The SSC shall perform such other necessary and appropriate duties as may be requested by the Council to carry out its functions under the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

B. Membership Composition

1. The SSC of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council shall be appointed by, and serve at the pleasure of, the Council.
2. The SSC shall be composed of experts in the biological, statistical, economic, social, and other relevant disciplines from the Federal, State and private scientific communities and whatever other source the Council deems appropriate. Members appointed by the Council to the scientific and statistical committee shall be federal employees, state employees, academicians, or independent experts who are not employed by nor receive any compensation from advocacy or interest groups and shall have strong scientific or technical credentials and experience.
3. The SSC shall be composed of 19 members; Council may add additional seats as need and resources allow.
4. The SSC shall include among its membership a representative of each state agency represented on the Council.
5. The SSC shall include among its membership at least one social scientist, one economist, and one additional representative from either of these specialties.
6. The SSC shall elect a chairperson and vice chairperson from among its members to serve terms of 2 years or until a successor is elected. SSC members that are employed by NMFS cannot serve as chairperson or vice chairperson of the SSC.
7. A Social-Economic Panel (SEP) composed of SSC and/or non-SSC members will serve as a sub-panel of the SSC to address social and economic issues related to council actions and develop advice and recommendations related to social and economic analyses presented to the Council. This panel will be chaired by a Panel member who is also an SSC member, elected from among its members. The SEP will report its findings to the SSC and will develop guidance for consideration by the Council and SSC.
8. Non-SSC members are appointed under the same procedure as SSC members (Section E.).

C. Terms of Members

1. Members of the SSC shall be appointed for 3-year terms by the Council.
2. Membership terms shall be staggered, with 1/3 of the terms ending annually.
3. Membership terms begin on July 1 of each year.
4. Non-SSC members of the SEP will serve 5-year terms.

D. Termination of Membership

An SSC member may be replaced at the Council's discretion if:

1. They transfer employment or move to a different location.
2. They are absent from two consecutive meetings without giving adequate notification or reason to the Council Executive Director.
3. They appear unable or unwilling to fulfill their obligations as an SSC member.
4. Their area of expertise is no longer required.
5. The Council determines they should be removed for just cause (e.g., violation of marine resource law and felony conviction, etc.; these examples are not all inclusive).

E. Appointment/Replacement of Members

Annual Appointment Process

1. SSC members whose term will expire shall be notified by the Executive Director and invited to reapply if interested. Members will be asked to submit a current resume and cover letter indicating their desire to continue service.
2. The Executive Director shall announce the annual appointment process through the news media, Council mailing lists, NOAA Fisheries mailings and other such means deemed appropriate to solicit qualified nominees. Interested persons will be requested to provide a resume, completed financial disclosure form, cover letter highlighting their qualifications and indicating receipt of the SSC Job Description and other supporting material relative to their qualifications and area of expertise.
3. The Scientific and Statistical Selection Committee will review the qualifications of the existing members seeking reappointment as well as any new nominees and make recommendations for appointments to the SSC to the Council. The Scientific and Statistical Selection Committee may consult with SSC members prior to making recommendations to the Council.

4. Applications for those not receiving appointments will be kept on file until the next appointment period.

When vacancies occur on the SSC due to resignation or Council action removing a member:

1. Vacancies will be considered at the next scheduled Council meeting.
2. Vacancies of state agency designated seats will be filled by a representative of that agency; the person identified by the agency will be reviewed/approved at the next scheduled Council meeting.
3. Vacancies of designated expertise seats (sociologist or economist) will be filled from the pool of applicants by an applicant with similar expertise.
4. Vacancies of other seats will be filled from the pool of applicants on hand at the time the vacancy occurs.
5. If the Council determines that no acceptable candidate is available in the pool to fill the vacancy, the vacancy may be left open until a future meeting when additional applications can be solicited and reviewed.

F. Administrative Provisions

1. The SSC meetings shall be scheduled by the Executive Director, with the approval of the Council Chair, as often as necessary to fulfill the Committee's responsibilities, within time and budgetary constraints.
2. The SSC shall report to the Council through the Executive Director (or designee).
3. The Council Executive Director shall provide such staff and other support, as the Council considers necessary for SSC activities, within budgetary limitations.
4. Eligible SSC members will receive a stipend payment of \$250 per day with payment frequency and eligible activities in accordance with the policies applicable to Council members. They will be paid their expenses for travel incurred in the performance of their duties for the SSC in accordance with Council policy.
5. The SSC shall follow the Council's procedures covering confidentiality of data.
6. A Council Member will be appointed by the Council Chair to serve as an SSC Liaison. The Liaison will attend SSC meetings to clarify Council requests, needs, and positions as necessary. Other Council members in attendance may also ask questions. The SSC chairperson will use their discretion if the discussion becomes extensive.
7. The SSC generally reaches decisions by consensus but may also vote as needed and as determined by the SSC Chair.

G. Webinar Meetings

The Council welcomes use of webinar meetings for the SSC and SEP to increase transparency and efficiency while reducing costs of conducting meetings in person. The Council prefers in-person meetings with the ability to freely discuss and exchange information. However, budget and time constraints may require more use of webinar meetings. The Council supports the continued use of webinar meetings for SSC and SEP meetings, primarily to address specific issues that are time sensitive.

H. Public Comment

The Council welcomes public comments to the SSC.

Written comment:

Written comment on SSC agenda topics is to be distributed to the Committee through the Council office, similar to all other Council briefing materials. Written comment to be considered by the SSC shall be provided to the Council office no later than one week prior to an SSC meeting. Submit written comments via the online comment page on the Council's website or mail comments to:

SAFMC – SSC Comments
4055 Faber Place Drive
Suite 201
North Charleston, SC 29405

Verbal comment:

Two opportunities for comment on agenda items will be provided at set times during SSC meetings. The first will be at the beginning of the meeting, and the second near the conclusion. Those wishing to comment should indicate such in the manner requested by the SSC Chair, who will then recognize individuals to provide comment.

An opportunity for comment on specific agenda items will also be provided as each item come up for discussion. Comments will be taken after all the initial presentations are given and before the SSC starts the discussion of the agenda topic. As before, those wishing to comment should indicate such in the manner requested by the SSC Chair, who will then recognize individuals to provide comment. All comments are part of the record of the meeting.