



**NORTHERN COMMITTEE
SIXTH REGULAR SESSION**
7-10 September 2010
Fukuoka, Japan

A PROPOSAL ON PEER REVIEW PROCESS

**WCPFC-NC6/WP-07
03 September 2010**

1. The Joint Tuna RFMOs Meeting of Experts to Share Best Practices on the Provisions of Scientific Advice (*Barcelona, Spain, May 31 to June 2, 2010*) recommended that Tuna RFMOs should promote peer reviews of their stock assessment works.

2. ISC 10 (Victoria, B.C. Canada, 21-26 July 21-26, 2010) discussed peer review process for stock assessments conducted by ISC. The following is the abstract from the ISC10 meeting report.

11.2 Peer Review of Function Process

S. Shoffler reported that the rules and procedures for conduct of the ISC and subsidiary bodies call for a review of function every five years or more frequently (*ISC/10/PLENARY/05*). ISC has not yet had a review of its function since its inception. A review of function should be conducted to promote transparency and scientific effectiveness. ISC10 is tasked with determining how to accomplish this requirement. Shoffler suggested two options for Plenary to consider: contract out the review or organize the review itself.

Discussion

Plenary discussed the pros and cons of the two options including the high cost of either option (\$50-90K USD). Plenary decided to organize a review of the ISC function itself. The first step would be to create an ISC Review Task Force (RTF) from the membership to draft terms of reference and determine timelines and costs. This option also will require ISC to solicit funding for the review from the Member countries. It was agreed that the RTF would be organized by the ISC Chairman who indicated that each Member country should identify a Review Task Force Member by the end of the Plenary.

3. The 6th Scientific Committee (SC6, August 10-19, Nuku'alofa, Tonga) recommended that the Northern Committee consider allocating funds for peer review of a northern stock assessment. The SC further noted that North Pacific Albacore is a possible candidate for review of the stock assessment scheduled to be completed in 2011.

4. Taking into account these recent developments, Japan proposes the following procedures for a peer review of north Pacific albacore assessment by ISC scheduled in 2010 and 2011:

- a) ISC Review Task Force (RTF) will develop draft a terms of reference and determine timelines and costs.
- b) RTF will appoint reviewers consisting of the following:
 - i) the Center for Independent Experts — a group affiliated with the University of Miami (USA) that provides independent peer reviews of the US National Marine Fisheries Service science nationwide, including reviews of stock assessments for fish and marine mammals; and
 - ii) SPC.
- c) Reviewers will conduct peer reviews by taking part in the following workshops:
 - i) ALBWG Workshop (Data preparation) at La Jolla, USA, 12-19 October 2010 October 12-19, and
 - ii) ALBWG Workshopv(Full stock Assessment) at Shimizu, Japan, 22-29 March 2011
 - iii) ALBWG (Results preparation), 14-15 July 2011, meeting venue – TBD
 - iv) ISC11, USA, 20-25 July 2011

(Reference: SC5 Summary Report, Paragraphs 399-401)

10.2 Peer review of stock assessments

399. SC5 agreed on the following points with regard to the Independent Review's recommendation on peer reviews stock assessments undertaken by the SC for consideration by the Commission:

- i. A periodic peer review was seen as strengthening assessments and their outcomes, improving transparency, building understanding and confidence, and helping to ensure best practice in the delivery of stock assessments to the Commission
- ii. The results or absence of a peer review may not be used as an excuse to delay conservation and management actions.
- iii. The SC recommended to undertake a peer review of a single stock assessment initially, and use the outcomes of this review to determine the scope and resource demands that would be considered in formulating subsequent reviews.
- iv. The SC recommended that an SPC-OFP assessment be selected for the initial review, in particular, the bigeye assessment undertaken for the WCPO;
- v. Given the perceived difficulties in completing the assessment by May for the review to be undertaken in June and the report made available in July (as recommended by Marine Resource Assessment Group–MRAG), the SC proposed the following process for undertaking the review:
 - a. undertake a detailed review of the selected stock assessment considered by the SC the previous year;
 - b. provide an interim report to the Preparatory Stock Assessment Workshop;
 - c. undertake a short review of the completed stock assessment report;
 - d. provide the report on completed review to SC;
 - e. stock assessment group to provide comments on interim report provided to the Preparatory Stock Assessment Workshop.

- vi. Participation by reviewer(s) in the SC (and possibly the Preparatory Stock Assessment Workshop) was seen to be possibly beneficial but would have additional cost implications.
- vii. In the selection of reviewers, the need to consider the independence and expertise of reviewers would need to be balanced against costs.
- viii. As range of options for selecting reviewers were noted. These included:
 - a. CCMs
 - b. other RFMOs (e.g. IATTC)
 - c. the Center for Independent Experts — a group affiliated with the University of Miami (USA) that provides independent peer reviews of the US National Marine Fisheries Service science nationwide, including reviews of stock assessments for fish and marine mammals
 - d. MRAG.
- ix. A recommendation on a specific reviewer is difficult to make at this time until the costs associated with each of these options are more fully understood. However, the SC saw considerable benefit in the independence of the selected reviewer.

400. SC5 noted that if the review of the SPC-OFP assessment was undertaken during 2010, there may be additional cost implications.

401. SC5 requested that the proposal for peer reviewing an SPC-OFP assessment be passed to the NC and ISC as an information paper for their consideration.