



WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

To: James Lynch, Frank Camacho, Eric Franklin, Steve Martell,
Shelton Harley, Graham Pilling, David Itano

Date: May 20, 2020

From:  Kitty Simonds, Executive Director

Subject: SSC Working Group on the Stock Definitions of Archipelagic and Pelagic Fisheries

National Standards 3 (NS3) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) does not provide clear guidance defining stocks relative to management units in US fisheries. I invite you to participate in a SSC Working Group to develop clearer guidance on defining stocks for our management unit species (MUS) in the Western Pacific Region. This “SSC Working Group on the Stock Definitions of Archipelagic and Pelagic Fisheries” aims to ameliorate management ramifications which may be resultant from misspecification of stock definitions in stock assessments and in characterizing fishery operations. The Western Pacific Region is unique in its non-continuous geographical nature, containing a mosaic of both insular and highly migratory pelagic management unit species within multiple domestic and international jurisdictions. This condition makes defining stocks critical for effective management of fisheries that may be distributed or have available data distributed throughout multiple presumed stocks of a management unit species - or just over partial stock(s). Pursuant to NS3, *an individual stock of fish shall be managed as a unit throughout its range, and interrelated stocks of fish shall be managed as a unit or in close coordination*. As scientific and technical tools continue to advance, so do capabilities to discern stocks as unique biological units based on the range and demographics of fish species distributed with respect to managed fisheries. Ultimately, outcomes from the Working Group may serve as guidance to update NS3.

The objectives of the working group are to:

- (1) Identify and prioritize a hierarchy of conditions and criteria (biological, fishery dependent, political) for which a stock may be defined for either archipelagic and pelagic fisheries that may be contained within a single jurisdiction or multiple jurisdictions.
- (2) Identify and prioritize research needs in the Western Pacific Region to reconcile knowledge gaps in criteria for stock definitions
- (3) Ultimately provide guidance to the MSA National Standards 3 definitions of stock based on management unit species that may be contained within a single jurisdiction, transboundary, or straddling stock.
- (4) Provide guidelines for defining specific stocks of both archipelagic and pelagic management unit species in the Western Pacific Region.

We plan to convene a 1 hour Working Group call on Thursday, June 4, 2020 at 2 p.m and will ask that you review any further materials discussed during the call prior to the SSC Meeting. Council staff will present stock definition guidelines pursuant to MSA National Standards 3, international definitions (i.e., ‘straddling stocks’), and examples of pelagic and insular stocks for which current stock definitions may be compromising management effectiveness. The SSC Working Group is expected to work intersessionally with independent experts following the June 2020 Meeting and before the September 2020 Meeting. The SSC Working Group Members will be joined by independent experts with scientific knowledge of our insular and pelagic fisheries. Findings and outcomes will be shared with the Council Coordinating Committee and may be shared at the National Scientific Coordination Subcommittee. A diagram describing the process of the Working Group is attached to this memo.

Please notify Mark Fitchett (Mark.Fitchett@wpcouncil.org) and Marlowe Sabater (Marlowe.Sabater@wpcouncil.org) by Friday, May 29, if you are able to serve on this Working Group. Additional background information is attached. Please do not hesitate to contact me, Mark, or Marlowe with any questions.