



33rd Meeting of the Marine Stewardship Council's Technical Advisory Board

Public Summary

Meeting Dates: December 9th – 10th, 2020

Virtual meeting

This summary contributes to the transparency of MSC's governance. Readers should note that recommendations made by the MSC Technical Advisory Board are reviewed by the MSC Board of Trustees and only those recommendations that are formally endorsed by the MSC Board of Trustees will result in changes to the program. The Board may not always immediately consider the TAB's recommendations, especially in instances where more research or consultation is required. Project pages on msc.org will be updated to reflect final decisions, including rationales.

In view of the ongoing challenges and widespread travel restrictions in place due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the MSC's Technical Advisory Board (TAB) convened for its 33rd meeting as a virtual meeting, focusing on a small number of time-critical topics where the TAB's engagement and input to MSC's policy development and provision of advice to the MSC Board was required.

The TAB meeting was attended by [all members of the TAB](#). Dr Florian Baumann gave his apologies for day 1 of the meeting, and Mr Adam Swan gave his apologies for day 2 of the meeting.

The following observers were present for the meetings: Ms Gabrielle Anhalzer (SCS Global Services), Dr Antonio Hervas (Accreditation Services International), Dr Andrew Hough (assessor/consultant), Mr Hugh Jones (Control Union)

Ms Stephanie Moreland represented the MSC's Stakeholder Advisory Council (STAC) and Dr Werner Kiene (MSC Chair) attended on behalf of the MSC Board of Trustees. Dr Kevin Stokes (MSC Board member) also attended. External observers were not present for internal governance discussions and Executive updates and were asked to leave where potential for conflict of interest was identified.

Introductory items

During the session the TAB received an update from the MSC Chief Executive; an overview from Ms Moreland of the deliberations of the MSC's STAC, which had met the previous week and considered from a stakeholder perspective many of the topics the TAB would be deliberating; and an overview of intersessional TAB and TAB working group activities.

Report back from the Fisheries sub-group

In September 2020, the MSC Board approved a **six-month extension to the Fisheries Standard Review (FSR) timeline**. The timeline extension would allow additional input from stakeholders to resolve issues currently under review, through public consultation, and in-depth impact assessment to assess cumulative impacts and impact interactions between potential revisions.

The Fisheries sub-group, which met on December 7th – 8th 2020, considered **proposed policy options for five FSR projects**, including where possible, which policy options to take forward for each project. Between June and August 2020, a series of consultations had taken place on the projects. All policy options had been subject to an impact assessment, the aim of which was provide clear information on the impacts of the options as a basis for comparing them against one another and against the business-as-usual scenario to identify a preferred option. These assessments did not replace decision-making but were used as a tool to help the decision-making process, increasing transparency, making trade-offs visible and reducing bias. Further in-depth impact assessment would

be completed in 2021 and 2022.

A few components of FSR topics had not yet resolved to the point where policy options had been identified. To provide more time for research and help to manage the burden on MSC advisory bodies, remaining FSR projects requiring TAB discussion of policy options and impacts would be brought to the TAB's next meeting in March 2021.

The Fisheries sub-group considered policy options for three topics to **address the concerns associated with preventing shark finning in the Fisheries Standard**: 1) should the MSC define which species are covered under the term 'shark'; 2) how can MSC incentivise fisheries improvements aligned with the MSC Theory of Change and simultaneously deliver a zero tolerance policy on shark finning; and 3) how can the shark finning requirements deliver the needed confidence and transparency that shark finning is not occurring in MSC certified fisheries aligned with advances in best practice.

The Fisheries sub-group considered policy options to **strengthen how enforcement and compliance were considered in the Fisheries Standard** and considered this discussion timely. The objectives of this project were to ensure that best practice was considered clearly and systematically in the scoring of enforcement systems, and that the compliance requirements were clear in their intent and proper application.

The Fisheries sub-group considered policy options **that addressed six topics for improving consistency and reducing redundancy within Principle 1 of the Fisheries Standard**. Due to the complexity of the scope of this project, it was split into two components, the first (Component 1) dealt with scoring anomalies and inconsistencies in the requirements and the second (Component 2) addressed the issue of closing conditions for harvest strategies and harvest control rules when the MSC Unit of Assessment represented only part of the fishing activity that took place on a stock. The options to address Component 2 would be brought to the TAB's next meeting in March 2021.

The Fisheries sub-group considered policy options to address the issue of **MSC fisheries not consistently or effectively considering abandoned, lost or discarded gear ('ghost gear') impacts**.

The Fisheries sub-group considered **policy options to ensure the MSC's Risk Based Framework (RBF) remained a precautionary and robust assessment tool** for use by data limited fisheries undergoing MSC assessments. The sub-group considered several topics to address this, including aligning the RBF with the intent of the default assessment tree; triggering requirements and calibration; and proposals to deliver clarification and reduce redundancy in the RBF.

The TAB **supported** the MSC Executive proposed policy recommendations on the five FSR topics to be presented to the MSC Board in January 2021 for its consideration. The TAB **noted** that there would be opportunity to refine the policy options under consideration in the next phase of work.

Scope issues in the Fisheries Standard Review

The TAB explored the MSC Executive's proposed policy options to **resolve the issues related to the scope of the Fisheries Standard under review in the FSR**. Decisions on the Fisheries Standard scope criteria involved wide policy decisions about fisheries eligible to participate in the MSC program. These decisions often include some element of ethical judgement in addition to scientific and technical considerations and the TAB welcomed the opportunity to provide advice to the MSC Board on the scope issue presented to it.

The MSC's Stakeholder Advisory Council had had a thorough discussion of this topic at its meeting the previous week (November 30th – December 3rd, 2020), which provided helpful framing for TAB discussion of the topic.

The MSC Executive recognised the need to take a broad view of the scope requirements given the importance of these statements in articulating MSC's values and position on these topics.

The TAB concluded that it supported the proposals to the MSC Board for its consideration and for the MSC Executive to take forward the suite of options on each of the scope topics for impact testing.

What happens next?

The TAB will next meet in March 2021. The TAB will review work progressed following Board decisions in respect of the Fisheries Standard Review.