

34th Meeting of the Marine Stewardship Council's Technical Advisory Board

Public Summary

Meeting Dates: 18-19 March 2021

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 or MSC's work. The Board may not always immediately endorse the TAB's recommendations, especially in instances where more research or consultation is required. Project pages on [msc.org](https://www.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 34th 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 most [members of the TAB](#). Mr José Augusto Pinto de Abreu and Mr Adam Swan gave their apologies for both days of the meeting.

The following observers were present for the meetings: Dr Antonio Hervás (Accreditation Services International), Dr Andrew Hough (assessor/consultant).

Ms Stephanie Moreland and Dr Ghislaine Llewellyn represented the MSC's Stakeholder Advisory Council (STAC) and Dr Werner Kiene (MSC Chair) attended on behalf of the MSC Board of Trustees. 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 and an overview of intersessional TAB and TAB working group activities.

The MSC's Stakeholder Advisory Council had had a thorough discussion of the topics on the TAB agenda at its meeting earlier in the week (15 – 17 March 2021), which provided helpful framing for TAB discussion of the topics.

Fisheries Standard Review Overview

The TAB was provided with **an overview of, and progress update for, the Fisheries Standard Review (FSR)** including the issues under review and the policy proposals identified to address these issues.

The FSR started in September 2018 and incorporated 16 topics (projects). Collectively these projects were expected to deliver revisions to the Standard to resolve issues and meet the objectives of the FSR. To provide more time for research and help to manage the burden on advisory bodies and on FSR project leads, the MSC Executive brought some projects to the TAB meeting in late 2020 and options were approved by the MSC Board of Trustees in January 2021.

The TAB's advice was now sought on the **proposed policy options for four FSR projects**, including

where possible, which policy options to take forward for each project. The FSR was now at the 'policy options phase', when the MSC Executive proposed a set of potential policy options to resolve the issues identified for each project. Public consultation on several topics for discussion at this TAB meeting and MSC's Stakeholder Advisory Council meeting were completed in 2020, and each policy option had been through an impact assessment process. Further consultation and impact assessment would be completed in 2021 and 2022.

The TAB welcomed the opportunity to provide technical advice to the MSC Board on the MSC Executive's policy options. The TAB noted the progress, key milestones, and planned activities for FSR review, and the governance meeting schedule.

Evidence Requirements

The TAB provided its views and advice on a **proposed design for an evidence requirements framework that would guide assessors' judgement of information adequacy**. The framework involved three steps: risk assessment, evaluation of information quality and information thresholds. Its introduction to the assessment process was expected to incentivise better data collection and provision for fishery assessments and promote transparent and consistent scoring. A methodology for setting information thresholds was presented.

The TAB concluded that it supported the proposals to the MSC Board for its consideration and the MSC Executive proceeding to consultation on the Evidence Requirements Framework.

Fisheries Certification Process Overview and Harmonisation

The TAB welcomed the **update on the Fisheries Certification Process (FCP)**, which included an **update on the conditions review** (the nature, intent and roles of conditions) and an update on FCP review projects, including the **harmonisation project** (the process by which consistent outcomes are achieved across assessments of overlapping Units of Assessment).

The policy options for the harmonisation project would be subject to a targeted consultation in 2021, engaging key stakeholders including Conformity Assessment Bodies, assessors and fishery clients. The TAB provided advice on several technical areas to be considered as part of this consultation activity.

Making the MSC Fisheries Standard more efficient (standard efficiency)

The TAB explored the proposed policy options to address issues associated with three topics in the **standard efficiency project, which was focused on making the Standard more streamlined, increasing efficiency and reducing complexity**: clarifying language and reducing duplication; more tightly defining measures, partial strategy and strategy; and simplifying grouping of Principle 2 elements; and noted that impact testing was underway in each of the three topic areas.

The TAB concluded that it supported the proposals to the MSC Board for its consideration and the MSC Executive proceeding to consultation on the standard efficiency project, advising that the fisheries included in the assessment phase cover a wide range of fishery types.

Reviewing Principle 1 with a focus on harvest strategies

The TAB had provided its views and advice on the proposed policy options that addressed six topics for improving consistency and reducing redundancy within Principle 1 of the Fisheries Standard at its December 2020 meeting. Due to the complexity of the scope of this project, it was split into two components. The first component aimed to clarify existing requirements for the assessment of harvest strategies under Principle 1 to ensure all fisheries are scored consistently. The policy options for this component were approved by the MSC Board in January 2021. The second component was introduced in May 2020 and was framed around the **adoption of stock-wide harvest strategies and harvest control rules for shared and highly migratory stocks**. Following the late 2020 TAB and Stakeholder

Council meetings, and discussion by the MSC Board in January 2021, the MSC Board required the MSC Executive to further **clarify the harvest strategies problem statement**.

The TAB welcomed the opportunity to provide its views and advice to the MSC Board on the proposed problem statement. The MSC Executive would continue its development work on the potential solution(s) for the adoption of stock-wide harvest strategies and harvest control rules for shared and highly migratory stocks within the framework of Principle 1 FSR project.

Clarifying best practice for reducing impacts on endangered, threatened and protected species

The TAB explored the proposed policy options to **address concerns associated with endangered, threatened and protected species (ETP) in the Fisheries Standard**. The topics addressed issues associated with the designation of ETP species in an assessment and the scoring and definitions in the ETP component.

The TAB concluded that it supported the proposals to the MSC Board for its consideration and the MSC Executive proceeding to consultation and impact testing.

What happens next?

At the MSC's TAB and Stakeholder Advisory Council meetings to be held in December 2021, the MSC Executive will present the proposed draft Standard prior to Final Review consultation in 2022. The TAB will be asked to endorse the draft Standard for consultation in December 2021, as per MSC Standard Setting Procedure clause 7.2, and the Stakeholder Advisory Council will be asked to provide recommendation to the MSC Board on the suitability of the draft Standard for consultation.

Closing remarks were shared.