



Social Science Planning Team REPORT

October 18, 2-4pm ATK, online meeting

The Social Science Planning Team (SSPT) met to discuss and plan for participation in the Council's Research Priority process.

Committee Members in attendance:

Sarah Wise (AFSC; *chair*)
Caroline Brown (ADF&G)
Mike Fey (AKFIN)

Mike Downs (SSC; *chair*)
Scott Miller (NMFS)
Sarah Marrinan (NPFMC)

Courtney Carothers (UAF)
Sam Cunningham (NPFMC)

Members absent: Marysia Szymkowiak (AFSC), Kate Haapala (NPFMC), Seth Macinko (URI)

Others in attendance:

Nicole Watson
Brenden Raymond-Yakoubian

Ernie Weiss

Tom Meyer

Introduction, Membership Changes and Election of Co-chairs

Sarah Marrinan (SSPT staff coordinator) called the meeting to order with introductions and comments on the agenda. Member Matt Riemer could not be in attendance has chosen to step down from the group. Sarah Wise and Caroline Brown are new to the group since we last convened in March 2021.

Mike Downs and Sarah Wise were elected as co-chairs.

Research Priorities Process

Nicole Watson (NPFMC staff) and Sarah Marrinan provided a joint presentation on the Research Priorities process in the Council for 2024.

Nicole explained the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requires that the Council identify its 5-year research priorities for fisheries, fishery interactions, habitat, and other areas of research that are necessary for management purposes. This list of research priorities is provided to the Secretary of Commerce, Alaska Fishery Science Center, and other research and funding entities (e.g., the North Pacific Research Board). They are intended to signal on how well they a specific research topic could align with or inform management for the federal fisheries the Council manages.

The Council has moved to a system of reviewing these priorities on a triennial basis. The last reviewed its research priorities in 2021. They will be reviewed again by the Council and its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) in April 2024.

In this 2024 cycle of review, a modified process has been identified that is intended to provide better opportunity for public input both in what research projects are included in the list and in what research priorities are further elevated into the SSC's top 8-12 priorities. The process includes an online public

Request for Information¹ (link) in which members of the public can submit new research priorities. Additionally, prior to April 2024, the SSC has requested Plan Teams (including the SSPT) provide initial filter meetings, in which they review both existing research priorities and newly submitted research priorities relevant to that Plan Team. The Plan Teams should provide their top 3-5 research priorities for SSC consideration. Public comment on the identification of the top 3-5 priorities is also welcome at the Plan Team meetings. Plan Teams can also provide an additional list of what they see as “other important research priorities” that did not make the top 3-5 list but still see as priorities.

The SSPT is scheduled to meet November 3, 2023 to consider Research Priorities. Sarah M. highlighted the assignments for the SSPT members prior to the Nov 3rd meeting, including:

- Review the excel sheet of 31 existing research priorities related to human dimensions. Read through title and descriptions and consider whether categories are appropriate.
- Use the Google Form which will be distributed to SSPT members through email for submission of new priorities.
- Review the newly suggested research priorities that will be distributed to members after Oct 31.
- Consider the list of 31 current priorities + any new submissions from the public or SSPT members and identify your top 3-5 research priorities. Write down the Research ID # and provide any rationale points for yourself that could aid in the discussions at the Nov 3rd meeting.

The plan for the Nov 3 meeting would be to first discuss the current list of priorities and consider whether to add new submissions to the list. Next members may choose to share rationale behind priorities they have identified in their top 3-5 list. Public comment opportunity will be provided. It is intended that no new research priorities will be identified at this meeting, so in particular it would be helpful if public comment focused on identification of the top 3-5 within the existing list. The SSPT plans to use a rank choice voting tool to help the group identify its top 3-5.

Sarah M. highlighted that research priorities might not last all day on Nov 3, and the meeting is currently scheduled from 8:30am – 4:30pm AKT. However, several members expressed a desire to keep the full time to ensure discussion was not unnecessarily constrained. The meeting is also scheduled as ‘hybrid’ – with both in person and online options. Members discussed the benefits and drawbacks of encouraging in person attendance versus an online-only meeting. In addition to research priorities, the group will likely discuss next steps for the SSPT, under the ‘other business’ agenda item.

No public comment was given.

¹ Link to online submission for new Research Priorities: <https://www.npfmc.org/request-for-information-2024-research-priorities-triennial-review/>