

**Proposed Key Objectives for Revised Operational Guidelines (OGs)
DRAFT FOR REVIEW - September 5, 2013**

The Operational Guidelines (OGs) are intended to improve the public decision-making process for fishery management actions under the MSA by:

- Providing guidance on the development, review, and implementation of fishery management plans (FMPs); and
- Facilitating compliance with the laws affecting fishery management decision-making.

Key objectives include:

Promoting the Quality of Outcomes and Products:

- Improve quality of documentation, including FMPs, regulations, and supporting records.
- Produce documents that are concise and easily understandable by the public.
- Improve the quality and efficiency of fishery management decisions.
- Avoid unexpected determinations and decisions.
- Raise the likelihood of success in litigation.

Promoting an Effective and Transparent Public Process:

- Simplify and speed the flow of work: Continue efforts to streamline compliance with regulatory requirements, including working to ensure that relevant information and comment is provided early in the process and that unnecessary delays are eliminated.
- Achieve appropriate standardization: Encourage application of standardized practices, while still recognizing regional variability, including continuing to seek ways to standardize compliance with other applicable laws (e.g., ESA, NEPA)
- Increase transparency: Promote transparency and effectiveness of the decision making process by clearly explaining the process, promoting the public's accessibility to the Council and regulatory process, and providing mechanisms for people to track the progress of different actions.
 - Description of the Process: Describe and illustrate the fishery management process in a way that is useful for NMFS, NOAA General Counsel, and the Councils, flexible enough to account for regional variations, and simple and meaningful enough to inform the public about when and how to engage constructively. Provide clarity about the points in the process where it is most useful to introduce recommendations and new information, and set realistic expectations about what changes can be made at different points in the process. This would explain both how an action moves through the Council process and what happens between the time the Council approves it and when final regulations are published.
 - Accessibility: Promote informed public participation and make public engagement as simple and constructive as possible, including incorporating the use of technology to enhance outreach and participation.
 - Tracking and Accountability: Provide a mechanism to inform the public about the status of fishery management actions as they move through the Council and regulatory processes to explain how the process works (and how it can vary depending on different types of actions), being realistic about what limitations should apply/what level of detail concerning review can be provided at different stages of the process.