



## D7 Research Priorities

April 2021

### Action Memo

Staff: Jim Armstrong  
Action Required: Review/approve SSC recommendations on research priorities.

### BACKGROUND

At this meeting, the Council will be presented with the SSC's review of current research priorities and their selection of a subset of specific projects they are recommending comprise the Council's "Top Ten", which are emphasized to encourage potential funding opportunities. Attached under this agenda item is a lengthy table with the Council's comprehensive list of 155 research priorities sorted by "research id" and color-coding to highlight aspects of specific projects. The SSC's Top Ten list recommendations, any other projects subsets or statements pertaining to this agenda item will be developed by the SSC at this meeting and will be provided to the Council through the SSC Report. Two additional tables (new projects and urgent/no-action) are provided on the SSC eAgenda to facilitate their discussions.

Current research priorities are maintained in a publicly accessible online database (<https://research.psmfc.org/>) which has been updated according to the latest Plan Team recommendations. The most recent set of research priorities reviewed and recommended by the Council is provided on the Council's research priority webpage (<https://www.npfmc.org/research-priorities/>).

The NPFMC bases its management decisions on rigorous analyses and up-to-date, scientifically-derived information about affected stocks, ecosystems, fisheries, and communities. A critical component of this operational approach is for the Council to regularly evaluate the appropriateness of ongoing data collection and research efforts, and communicate any emergent research needs to involved scientists and funding entities. Comprehensive reviews of research priorities have historically been done at June Council meetings, but over time this Council recognized that the total volume of its research concerns had become unwieldy and that thorough reviews were no longer feasible within the procedural constraints of a Council meeting. So, in 2019, the Council moved from annual to triennial comprehensive review by the SSC and determined that review of the subject, at the Council level, would focus on summary characterizations of needed research and the SSC's recommendations for a Top Ten list.

The Council's overall research priority review process continues to be detailed and complete, and to satisfy MSA mandates on communicating research priorities (provided below). The research priority review process begins with the Council's Plan Teams, which annually review projects associated with their respective FMPs. The Plan Teams provide updates on the progress of research projects, their recommended changes for priority rankings, and the emergence of any new research needs. The SSC considers the Plan Team recommendations, and also reviews research priorities the scope of the Plan Teams, including those related to marine mammals, seabirds, and halibut. After the SSC's research priority recommendations are reviewed and approved by the Council, the complete set of updated research priorities will be provided to the Secretary of Commerce, the Alaska Fishery Science Center, as well as research and funding entities including the University of Alaska, University of Washington, Oregon State University, North Pacific Research Board, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the Alaska Ocean Observing System.

Ranking of research topics is done using four priority categories: Critical ongoing monitoring, Urgent, Important (near term), and Strategic (future needs). These priority categories have specific [definitions](#) that emphasize the correspondence of research to the Council’s time horizon of management concerns

The Magnuson-Stevens Act (§ 302) requires that Fishery Management Councils identify five-year research priorities on an as-needed basis:

- “Each Council shall, in accordance with the provisions of this Act —*
- (7) develop, in conjunction with the scientific and statistical committee, multi-year research priorities for fisheries, fisheries interactions, habitats, and other areas of research that are necessary for management purposes, that shall—*
- (A) establish priorities for 5-year periods;*
  - (B) be updated as necessary; and*
  - (C) be submitted to the Secretary and the regional science centers of the National Marine Fisheries Service for their consideration in developing research priorities and budgets for the region of the Council; ....”*