

SCS 7 Briefing for CCC

May 2021

The NPFMC is slated to convene the 7th national meeting of the Scientific Coordination Subcommittee (SCS7). The meeting was originally scheduled to occur in August 2020; we briefly discussed holding it as a virtual meeting in August 2021, but there is concern that the virtual format will negate the utility of holding the meeting. **As such, the NPFMC and the SCS7 Steering Committee propose postponing the planned SCS 7 meeting to summer 2022**, in order to accommodate the ability to hold the meeting in person in Alaska.

SCS7 Theme

The agenda for the SCS7 is primarily to cover 3 main theme topics as well as provide additional time to review and discuss national and regional initiatives. As has been reported previously, the theme topics are listed below:

- How to incorporate ecosystem indicators into the stock assessment process?
- Developing information to support management of interacting species in consideration of ecosystem-based fishery management (EBFM).
- How to assess and develop fishing level recommendations for species exhibiting distributional changes?

Each topic session will have one or more keynote speakers as well as two representative case studies from different regions. The identification of both keynote speakers and case studies is still ongoing. Following the presentation of case studies, participants in the meeting would discuss a series of trigger questions in breakout sessions. Moderators and rapporteurs assigned to each breakout group will report back to the plenary at the end of the session on their group's discussion. We envision a minimum of three full days to adequately cover each of these themes while allowing sufficient time for various discussions and interactions amongst regional SSC representatives.

Rationale for postponement

The SCS7 Steering Committee tackled the question of trying to convene the meeting virtually. It has quickly become apparent, however, that the real benefit of the SCS meeting is the ability for SSC members from the different regions to share their experiences with similar issues across the country. While the SCS meetings also include presentations and discussion of the very nationally and globally relevant theme topics, the ability to also achieve this personal experience sharing is inherently limited in the virtual setting. A virtual meeting would be constrained to three 4-hour days (maximum) with much of the interactive sessions pared down to a minimum if at all. Reporting out on any additional initiatives or examples would also be severely pared down and discussion by the overall group would be quite limited. Information on climate change initiatives, multi-species modeling progress and other nationwide and global initiatives could also be more adequately discussed and highlighted with an in-person meeting in 2022 that would be limited in the virtual setting.

Implications for funding

The Council was funded to host the National SSC workshop (SCS7) in 2019, the final year of that 5-year grant. We were able to secure two extensions of those funds, which were partially made possible by the COVID CARES Act. Those funds are now set to expire on December 31, 2021. Recently, memo M-21-20 was released to provide further guidance on providing extensions for existing expiring awards. With this additional funding, we would be able to host the SCS7 workshop in 2022 as originally anticipated.

While the memo supports flexibility in allowing extensions on existing grant funds there is still some speculation on the ability to secure these funds for a third year (or eight grant years in total). After internal discussion, the NPFMC has determined that even if the extension of funds may not be granted, it is worth the cost to postpone the meeting until 2022 in order to hold it in person. If extension of the existing grant funds is not authorized, the NPFMC will look save substantially on costs, which may include hosting the meeting in Anchorage versus Sitka, keeping keynote presentations pre-recorded (rather than flying in international keynote speakers), and producing digital proceedings only.