

## SCS 7 Briefing for CCC

May 2021

The NPFMC is slated to convene the 7<sup>th</sup> 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. The SCS7 Steering Committee has discussed this as well with most regional representatives expressing preference for this move. **As such, the NPFMC proposes postponing the planned SCS 7 meeting to 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 NPFMC was partially funded to host the National SSC workshop (SCS7) in 2019, the final year of that 5-year grant. We were able to secure two no-cost extensions of those 2019 funds (60K). Those carryover funds are now set to expire on December 31, 2021. However, the March 19, 2021 memo from OMB Acting Director Robert Fairweather provides the allowance for, and further guidance on, extensions for existing expiring awards. By authorizing our funding to be carried over an additional year, we would be able to host the SCS7 workshop in 2022.

**We request that NOAA Fisheries assist us in retaining carryover funds (up to 120K) through 2022 for the sole purpose of holding the SCS7 meeting as originally proposed.** While the OMB 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). Apparently, NOAA has yet to release guidance on the process to request further carryover, and without this guidance our NOAA Grants officer cannot offer advice on how to proceed. Any assistance that NOAA Fisheries can provide us in carrying over the SCS7 funds would be very much appreciated, as the full funding would allow us to host a more successful SCS7 meeting.

Regardless of the funding situation, the NPFMC will host the SCS7 meeting in 2022 at a reduced scale. After internal discussion, we determined that even if the extension of funds is not authorized, we would reallocate funds within our grant and absorb the costs from other activities, such that we can hold the SCS7 meeting in person in 2022. Should that be the situation, the NPFMC will look to substantially cut meeting expenses, which may include hosting the meeting outside of Alaska or in Anchorage rather than Sitka, limiting participation, keeping keynote presentations pre-recorded (rather than flying in international keynote speakers), and producing digital proceedings only.