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Report of the NAFO Working Group on Improving Efficiency of NAFO Working Group Process (E-WG) Meeting

02 December 2024

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Report of the NAFO Working Group on Improving Efficiency of NAFO Working Group Process (E-WG) Meeting

02 December 2024
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1. Opening by the Chair, Brynhildur Benediktsdóttir (NAFO Secretariat)

The Chair, Brynhildur Benediktsdóttir (NAFO Secretariat) opened the meeting on Monday, 02 December 2024 at 09:02 hours (UTC -4 hours, Time in Halifax) and welcomed the Chairs and co-Chairs of the NAFO subsidiary bodies, standing committees and working groups (Annex 1).

2. Appointment of Rapporteur

The NAFO Secretariat was appointed rapporteur.

3. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as circulated (Annex 2).

4. Finalize schedule for upcoming meetings scheduled for 2025 (COM-SC WP 24-02 Rev. 2)

The working group reviewed the tentative schedule of 2024–2025 NAFO Meetings as presented in COM-SC WP 24-02 (Rev. 2). The discussions of the working group are reflected in the COM-SC Working Paper 24-02 Rev. 3 (Annex 3); however, additional discussion was had for some of the meeting scheduling, as outlined below.

- **NAFO Joint Commission–Scientific Council Catch Estimation Strategy Advisory Group (CESAG) Meeting**

The Scientific Council discussed during its meetings in 2024 that there may be an opportunity to review the current CESAG method for the inclusion of the logbook (haul by haul) data, as well as updates to include all species to facilitate the TCI work. The CESAG co-Chair (Katherine Sosebee) noted that a virtual meeting would be needed to consider and identify potential refinements to the Catch Estimate Strategy. It was noted that a revised methodology for estimating catches would have to be adopted by the Commission, before being applied.

The working group further discussed if an additional meeting might be required. It was proposed that the first meeting take place earlier in the year (February) while the second meeting, if required, would be scheduled later in the year (sometime between June and September).

To prepare for the meeting, the Secretariat circulated the Terms of Reference for the NAFO Joint Commission–Scientific Council Catch Estimation Strategy Advisory Group (CESAG) ([COM-SC Doc. 17-09](#)), as well as the current catch estimation strategy (Annex 1 of [COM-SC Doc. 17-08](#)) to the working group.

- **NAFO Joint Commission–Scientific Council Working Group on Ecosystem Approach Framework to Fisheries Management (WG-EAFFM) Meeting and NAFO Joint Commission–Scientific Council Working Group on Risk-based Management Strategies (WG-RBMS) Meeting**

The Chair of the Scientific Council informed that the European Union expressed interest in extending an invitation to host the WG-RBMS and WG-EAFFM meetings subject to the meeting dates. It is proposed to schedule the two meetings back-to-back during the week of 14 July 2025, with each meeting to be 2 to 2.5 days each, with the WG-EAFFM scheduled earlier in the week.

The Secretariat will coordinate with the European Union to confirm venue availability for the proposed dates.

- **NAFO Ad hoc Working Group to Reflect on the Rules Governing Bycatches, Discards and Selectivity (WG-BDS) in the NAFO Regulatory Area**

As adopted at the 2024 Annual Meeting of NAFO and outlined in [COM Doc. 24-19](#), the *NAFO Ad hoc Working Group to Reflect on the Rules Governing Bycatches, Discards and Selectivity (WG-BDS) in the NAFO Regulatory Area* will reconvene to consider NAFO's current measures relating to directed fisheries and mitigating bycatch of moratoria species, as well as revisiting any still-unresolved elements of the Action Plan.

The working group discussed options for holding the WG-BDS meeting in conjunction with another meeting, such as holding a one-day meeting prior to the STACTIC Intersessional meeting in May; between the WG-EAFFM and WG-RBMS meetings in July; or directly prior to the Annual Meeting in September.

The timing of the meeting should be scheduled to ensure that key participants are able to participate. For example, scheduling the WG-BDS meeting in-between the WG-EAFFM and WG-RBMS meetings may be ideal for timing, but it might not enable key participants to attend.

Taking into account these elements, the Commission chair proposes holding a one-day virtual meeting in early April to scope the key tasks and questions related to advancing the directed fishing discussion as well as the remaining work under the Action Plan. Elements identified for the action of STACTIC and SC could then be taken up at their respective meetings in May and June, leading into a hybrid WG-BDS meeting in conjunction with the meetings of WG-EAFFM and WG-RBMS in July.

Some co-Chairs expressed concern that this option would make it difficult to appropriately consider the participation and expert input of STACTIC members who typically do not attend either of these meetings. STACTIC members would be asked to participate in technical discussions in a hybrid format which is not optimal. For this reason, the Commission Chair requested additional time to explore options and possible next steps.

To prepare for the meeting, the Secretariat circulated the Terms of Reference for the NAFO Ad hoc Working Group to Reflect on the Rules Governing Bycatches, Discards and Selectivity (WG-BDS) in the NAFO Regulatory Area to the working group ([FC Doc. 13-25](#)).

5. **Consider the three two-week periods during the NAFO year for scheduling of possible intersessional meetings in 2026 (COM-SC WP 24-07)**

To assist in meeting planning, the working group selects three two-week periods annually in which meetings of NAFO subsidiary bodies and working groups may be held. It was noted that as always, these two-week periods would not require meetings of NAFO subsidiary bodies to meet during those dates nor would they preclude the scheduling of meetings of NAFO subsidiary bodies outside those dates.

The three two-week periods during the NAFO year, proposed for scheduling possible intersessional meetings in 2026, was presented in COM-SC WP 24-07; however, it was noted that the second two-week period falls during Easter 2026. The proposed two-week periods were revised as follows, as reflected in COM-SC WP 24-07 (Revised):

The Working Group on Improving Efficiency of NAFO Working Group Process recommends that:

- **For the 2026 NAFO year, the following two-week periods, be considered for NAFO intersessional meetings:**
 - **16 – 27 February 2026;**
 - **13 – 24 April 2026; and**
 - **10 – 21 August 2026**

6. Recommendations to forward to the Commission and Scientific Council

The three two-week periods, as presented in COM-SC WP 24-07 (Revised), will be forwarded to the Commission for consideration and adoption at the 2025 Annual Meeting of NAFO.

7. Other matters

a. Meeting formats and participation

The working group reviewed meeting formats and participation noting that meeting formats (in-person, virtual, hybrid) have been discussed by several NAFO bodies, standing committees, and working groups.

The Chair of the Scientific Council noted that the preference of the Scientific Council is that the June meeting format is in-person, with virtual participation for those presenting under specific agenda items.

The Chair of the Commission suggested referring these discussions to the Commission at the next Annual Meeting to discuss potential formats for the upcoming meetings. This would allow a broader discussion among Contracting Parties about the format (in-person, virtual, or hybrid) and scheduling of each meeting.

8. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting to be scheduled virtually in November 2025.

The exact date and time(s) to be determined following the Annual Meeting of NAFO in September 2025.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 hours (UTC -4 hours, Time in Halifax).

Annex 1. List of Participants

CHAIR OF COMMISSION	Warner-Kramer, Deirdre (USA)
CHAIR OF SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL	González-Troncoso, Diana (European Union)
VICE-CHAIR OF SC	Simpson, Mark (Canada)
CHAIR OF STACFAD	Fagan, Robert (Canada)
CHAIR OF STACTIC	Moran, Patrick (United States of America)
CO-CHAIRS OF CESAG	Sosebee, Katherine (USA) Warner-Kramer, Deirdre (USA)
CO-CHAIRS OF WG-EAFFM	Mencher, Elizabethann (USA) Sacau Cuadrado, Mar (European Union)
CO-CHAIRS OF WG-RBMS	González-Costas, Fernando (European Union) Walsh, Ray (Canada)
NAFO SECRETARIAT	Benediktsdóttir, Brynhildur Aker, Jana Bell MacCallum, Dayna Goodick, Stan Guile, Sarah LeFort, Lisa

Annex 2. Agenda

1. Opening by the Chair, Brynhildur Benediktsdóttir (NAFO Secretariat)
2. Appointment of Rapporteur
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. Finalize schedule for upcoming meetings scheduled for 2025 (COM-SC WP 24-02 Rev. 2)
5. Consider the three two-week periods during the NAFO year for scheduling of possible intersessional meetings in 2026 (COM-SC WP 24-07)
6. Recommendations to forward to the Commission and Scientific Council
7. Other matters
 - a. Meeting formats and participation
8. Date and Time of Next Meeting
9. Adjournment

Annex 3. 2024–2025 NAFO Meeting – Tentative Schedule**
(COM-SC Working Paper 24-02 Rev. 3)

The following NAFO Meetings are scheduled, or are to be scheduled, for 2024:

Date	Title	Venue
02 Dec.	NAFO Working Group on Improving Efficiency of NAFO Working Group Process (E-WG) Meeting	Virtual
05 Dec.	NAFO Scientific Council Intersessional and Precautionary Approach Working Group (PA-WG) Meeting	Virtual

The following NAFO Meetings are scheduled, or are to be scheduled, for 2025:

Date	Title	Venue
TBD	Performance Review Working Group to develop Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the 2026 Performance Review of NAFO	Virtual
Jan./Feb. TBD	NAFO Scientific Council Intersessional Meeting: 3LN Redfish MSE (and other matters if needed). Proposed: In consultation with the SC Chair, a doodle poll is to be circulated to identify a suitable date for a one-day virtual meeting during the weeks of 27 Jan. and 03 Feb.	Virtual
22–24 Jan.	NAFO STACTIC Observer Program Review Working Group (WG-OPR) Meeting	Boston, Massachusetts, USA
17–28 Feb.	<i>* First period for the scheduling of Working Group meetings</i>	
11–13 Mar.	FAO/ ICES/NAFO Joint Symposium “Applying the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management in ABNJ”	Rome, Italy
11–12 Mar.	Joint Advisory Group on Data Management (JAGDM) Meeting	TBD
31 Mar.– 11 Apr.	<i>* Second period for the scheduling of Working Group meetings</i>	
Spring 2025	NAFO Joint Commission–Scientific Council Working Group on Risk-based Management Strategies (WG-RBMS) Meeting (if required) Proposed: This meeting will be dependent on outcomes of the Jan./Feb. SC Meeting. If the meeting is required, it will be held virtually.	Virtual
Prior to 30 Apr.	NAFO Joint Commission–Scientific Council Catch Estimation Strategy Advisory Group (CESAG) Meeting Proposed: A virtual meeting to consider and identify potential refinements of the Catch Estimate Strategy. The Secretariat to circulate Terms of Reference to the E-WG members.	Virtual
Prior to STACTIC May Mtg.	STACTIC Ad hoc Meeting to discuss the compliance review template	Virtual
05–07 May	NAFO Standing Committee on International Control (STACTIC) Intersessional Meeting	Bergen, Norway

Date	Title	Venue
05 or 06 May (TBC)	NAFO Scientific Council STACREC Data Review Meeting Proposed: The 05 May or 06 May to be confirmed with the Designated Experts (DEs)	Virtual
May TBD – Prior to June SC Mtg.	NAFO Scientific Council Intersessional and Precautionary Approach Working Group (PA-WG) Meeting	Virtual
29 May–12 Jun	NAFO Scientific Council and its Standing Committees Meeting	Halifax, Nova Scotia
14– 25 Jul.	<i>* Third period for the scheduling of Working Group meetings</i>	
Week of 14–18 Jul. (TBC)	NAFO Joint Commission–Scientific Council Working Group on Ecosystem Approach Framework to Fisheries Management (WG-EAFFM) Meeting Proposed: 2 to 2 ½ days for the meeting during the week of 14 Jul. The Secretariat to confirm with the European Union venue availability and meeting dates.	Estonia (TBC)
Week of 14–18 Jul. (TBC)	NAFO Joint Commission–Scientific Council Working Group on Risk-based Management Strategies (WG-RBMS) Meeting Proposed: 2 to 2 ½ days for the meeting during the week of 14 Jul. The Secretariat to confirm with the European Union venue availability and meeting dates.	Estonia (TBC)
09-11 Sep.	NAFO Scientific Council and STACFIS Shrimp Assessment Meeting	Halifax, Nova Scotia
Prior to the Annual Meeting	NAFO Ad hoc Working Group to Reflect on the Rules Governing Bycatches, Discards and Selectivity (WG-BDS) in the NAFO Regulatory Area Proposed: To be held in conjunction with another meeting. The Secretariat to circulate Terms of Reference to the E-WG members.	Hybrid
15–19 Sep.	NAFO 47 th Annual Meeting The Secretariat to confirm venue availability for either Friday or Saturday for potential scheduling of the WG-BDS Meeting.	Halifax, Nova Scotia
24 Sep.	Joint Advisory Group on Data Management (JAGDM) Meeting	TBD
Oct./Nov. TBD	NAFO STACTIC Editorial Drafting Group of the NAFO CEM (EDG) Meeting	Virtual
04–13 Nov.	NAFO Working Group on Ecosystem Science and Assessment (WG-ESA) Meeting	Halifax, Nova Scotia
Nov. TBD	NAFO Working Group on Improving Efficiency of NAFO Working Group Process (E-WG) Meeting	Virtual

* As always, these two-week periods would not require meetings of NAFO subsidiary bodies to meet during those dates nor would they preclude the scheduling of meetings of NAFO subsidiary bodies outside those dates.

** Please note, the meeting dates have not all been confirmed and may be subject to change.