

Report of the NAFO Joint Commission-Scientific Council Working Group on Risk-Based Management Strategies (WG-RBMS) Meeting

05-07 August 2026
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

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1. Opening by co-Chairs, Ray Walsh (Canada) and Diana González-Troncoso (European Union)

The co-Chairs, Ray Walsh (Canada) and Diana González-Troncoso (European Union) opened the meeting at 14:02 hours (UTC -3 hours) on Wednesday, 05 August 2026. The co-Chairs welcomed representatives in-person and virtually from Canada, Denmark (in respect of Faroe Islands and Greenland), European Union, Iceland, Japan, Norway, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, the United States of America and the Chairs of the Commission and the Scientific Council (Annex 1).

2. Appointment of Rapporteur

The NAFO Secretariat was appointed as rapporteur of this meeting.

3. Adoption of Agenda

The working group agreed to add one additional item under agenda item 4 to discuss the SC response to Commission request 4 on stock summary sheets for stocks that are managed under MSE. Additionally, three items under “Other Business” were added: SC response to Commission request 12 to consider a plan for carrying out benchmarks, the summary sheet traffic light application, and an update on the Scientific Council’s workload.

The agenda was adopted following the revisions above and is outlined in Annex 2.

4. 2+3KLMNO Greenland halibut

a. Application of the 2+3KLMNO Greenland halibut Management Strategy (COM Request 2)

The Scientific Council Chair, Diana González-Troncoso (European Union), provided an update on the Scientific Council response to Commission request 2, on the application of the 2+3KLMNO Greenland halibut Management Strategy ([SCS Doc. 26/12](#)). It was noted that exceptional circumstances are not occurring and that the lower TAC derived from the management procedure (MP) reflected the survey-based target and slope components of the MP, which indicated only limited recent improvement in the stock indices compared to the most likely forecast for the stock at the time of the review.

The working group highlighted an apparent misalignment between the recent increases in the survey indices compared to the decrease in the TAC. It was clarified that while some individual survey indices were increasing, others were not. The combined index used in the harvest control rule is increasing at a slower rate than had been projected, but remains within the range of the MSE simulations.

The projected rate was required to achieve the agreed stock rebuilding objective of reaching B_{msy} by 2044, which led to the introduction of a correction factor (control parameter μ) in 2024 that reduced the TAC output of the Management Procedure. It was noted that, without applying μ , the 2044 rebuilding target would not be achieved. However, no information was provided on when B_{msy} would be reached in the absence of the correction factor, and it was therefore not possible during the meeting to quantify the extent of the delay that would result from not applying μ .

The working group discussed whether it would be appropriate to request that Scientific Council conduct further analysis. However, the working group also reflected on the review of the MSE process that is scheduled to be completed in 2027 ([COM-SC Doc. 24-03](#) and [COM-SC Doc. 25-04](#)). It concluded that further analysis could form part of this work and could be captured as part of the Commission request for advice in 2027.

Noting the discussions, the WG-RBMS agreed to recommend to the Commission that the Management Procedure be applied to set the TAC for 2027, consistent with the Scientific Council advice.

b. Development of Stock Summary Sheets for NAFO managed stocks that are evaluated using MSE processes (COM Request 4)

Diana González-Troncoso (European Union) provided an update on the Scientific Council response to Commission request 4 ([SCS Doc. 26/12](#)) on the development of stock summary sheets for NAFO managed stocks that are evaluated using MSE processes. An example summary sheet for 2+3KLMNO Greenland halibut was presented and discussed by the working group. Noting that the stock summary sheet was not expected to add substantially to the Scientific Council workload, the working group agreed to adopt the template as presented and to incorporate MSE-managed stocks into the regular advice request (Commission request 1), with technical details provided in the STACFIS report and advice communicated through a summary sheet.

5. Progress on the MSE process for 3LN redfish (COM Request 3)

Mariano Koen-Alonso (Canada) provided an update on the Scientific Council response to Commission request 3, relating to the progress towards an MSE for redfish in Divs. 3LN ([SCS Doc. 26/12](#)). It was noted that work is ongoing to develop operating models for the stock and the Scientific Council considers it worthwhile to continue exploring such operating models, subject to resource availability and work prioritization, while reiterating that benchmark processes are considered by SC a higher priority than MSE at this time. The working group thanked the Scientific Council for their continued work on the Divs. 3LN redfish MSE process, flagging it as a priority item for the Commission, and noted their support for its continued development.

6. Precautionary Approach Framework

a. Updates on reference points (COM request 7)

Diana González-Troncoso (European Union) presented an update on the Scientific Council's progress towards updating stock reference points under the revised Precautionary Approach Framework in response to Commission request 7 ([SCS Doc. 26/12](#)). The working group thanked the Chair for the update, and noted that this work supports the core work of NAFO, and that the development of stock reference points needs to continue to be a priority. The working group also noted the stocks that could not be assessed in 2026 due to the lack of Designated Experts, and encouraged Contracting Parties to work towards filling these roles in the Scientific Council.

b. Guidance to the Scientific Council for providing advice under the revised PAF ([COM Doc. 25-16](#)) when projections are not possible

Following the discussions at the April 2026 WG-RBMS meeting ([COM-SC Doc. 26-01](#)), Canada presented a proposal to provide guidance to the Scientific Council for the provision of stock advice where projections are not possible under the revised Precautionary Approach Framework (COM-SC RBMS-WP 26-01). The working group had productive discussions on the working paper and welcomed the document. Canada noted that it would continue to seek input from Contracting Parties to further refine the proposal in advance of the 2026 Annual Meeting.

c. Initial review of outdated PAF references in the NAFO CEM

It was highlighted that the current text of the NAFO Conservation and Enforcement Measures (CEM) relating to 3NO cod in Article 7 and 3LNO American plaice in Article 8 include references to the previous Precautionary Approach Framework ([FC Doc. 04-18](#)). The working group noted these references and highlighted that these stocks are currently below the limit reference points, and that the potential upcoming work on benchmark assessments could inform the necessary changes to these Articles. The working group agreed to review this again at a future meeting.

7. Continued discussions relating to 3LNO shrimp (COM Request 11)

a. Scientific Council response to Commission request 11

Diana González-Troncoso (European Union) provided an update on the Scientific Council response to Commission request 11 ([SCS Doc. 26/12](#)), on their assessment and consideration of the operating models (OMs) underlining the MSE developed for the SSAR stock of shrimp by Canada. The SC advised that the OMs were considered suitable for application in the NAFO context, and were conceptually broadly consistent with other OMs developed by NAFO. The working group thanked the Scientific Council for their work and the Scientific Council Chair for the update.

b. Canadian MSE

Nicholas Duprey (Canada) provided an update on the Canadian Northern shrimp Management Strategy Evaluation, including objectives, operating models, key performance metrics, the harvest decision rule (HDR) and allocation approach, the upcoming MSE schedule and the advances to date in the exceptional circumstances protocol. Participants asked detailed questions relating to the objectives, HDR and allocation approach, and the performance metrics used in the MSE process, as well as on the ongoing development of the exceptional circumstances protocol. The working group accepted the Management Strategy and Canada confirmed that it will invite Scientific Council scientists to the triennial review processes to ensure NAFO participation.

8. Marine Stewardship Council Requirements Under its Standard 3.0

It was noted that there has not been an update on the ongoing correspondence with the MSC in relation to the progress on the review process focussed on the MSC Fisheries Standard Toolbox since the April 2026 WG-RBMS meeting ([COM-SC Doc. 26-01](#)). The latest correspondence indicated that the MSC review is ongoing and that a public review period is still expected in Q3/Q4 of 2026. The NAFO Secretariat will share any further updates received with Contracting Parties as they become available.

9. Other Business

a. Commission request 12 to Scientific Council to consider a plan for carrying out benchmarks

Diana González-Troncoso (European Union) provided an update on the Scientific Council response to Commission request 12 on considering a plan for carrying out benchmark assessments ([SCS Doc. 26/12](#)). It was noted that the Scientific Council had identified 3LNO American plaice and 3NO cod as candidate stocks to undergo a benchmark process together, in order to capitalize on shared expertise for review and consideration of shared data sources, common ecosystem considerations, and other relevant factors. Other stocks that could benefit from a benchmark process were also highlighted. The working group noted benchmark processes as high priority and supported the proposed benchmark process for 3LNO American plaice and 3NO cod. Further discussions on priority setting and resource allocation are expected to occur in September.

b. Stock summary sheet traffic light application

Diana González-Troncoso (European Union) presented an update from the Scientific Council on the traffic light approach used in the stock summary sheets that stemmed from the revised Precautionary Approach Framework ([SCS Doc. 26/12](#)). The working group thanked the Scientific Council Chair for the update.

c. Scientific Council workload

Diana González-Troncoso (European Union) provided an update on the ongoing Scientific Council workload challenges. It was noted that the workload for the June meeting was very heavy, and that increases in requests have made it difficult to address all requests fully over the year. The SC Chair flagged the ongoing Designated Expert and Chair vacancies, and the challenges which these have created. Some Chair positions in the Scientific Council have been filled but it was noted that some Chairs have had to take on multiple Chairing roles. It was noted that vacancies in the Designated Expert positions resulted in two stocks, 3LNOPs thorny skate and 3NOPs white hake, not being assessed or monitored in 2026, and so advice was not given. A similar situation will occur in September if a Designated Expert is not appointed for SA 3+4 squid. In addition, due to workload constraints, 3LNO American plaice did not undergo a full assessment. The working group reiterated their concern with the current capacity issues with the Scientific Council and noted that several core elements to the work have not been completed. The working group encouraged Contracting Parties to find solutions to fill the vacant positions and roles.

10. Recommendations

The WG-RBMS agreed to forward the following conclusions and recommendations to the Commission:

- 1. In relation to the application of the 2+3KLMNO Greenland halibut Management Strategy, WG-RBMS recommends, consistent with the Scientific Council advice, the continued application of the harvest control rule to set the TAC for 2027.**
- 2. In relation to the template for the stock summary sheet for stocks under MSE proposed by the Scientific Council in [SCS Doc. 26/12](#), WG-RBMS recommends that the Commission adopt the template and to incorporate MSE-managed stocks into the regular advice request (Commission request 1).**
- 3. In relation to the Scientific Council workload, WG-RBMS recommends that all Contracting Parties should aim to provide the necessary human resources to fill the vacant positions and roles in the Scientific Council to ensure they can complete their work.**

11. Adoption of the Report

The report was adopted via correspondence following the end of the meeting.

12. Adjournment

The working group paused to commemorate the recent passing of Dr. Ricardo Alpoim (Portugal), a great scientist, colleague, and friend. His contributions to the Scientific Council and the joint working groups over his near 30 years of experience with NAFO are immeasurable. To say that he will be greatly missed is an understatement.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:33 hours (UTC -3 hours) on Thursday, 06 August 2026.

Annex 1. List of Participants

CO-CHAIRS	González Troncoso, Diana (European Union) Walsh, Ray (Canada)
SC CHAIR	González Troncoso, Diana
COM CHAIR	Paardekooper, Joost
CANADA	In-person Bourgeois, Vanessa Burns, Adam Chapman, Bruce Duprey, Nicholas Fagan, Robert Fuller, Susanna Koen Alonso, Mariano Krohn, Martha Muir, Carlie Rayner, Gemma Simpson, Mark Virtual Coombs, Samantha Rideout, Rick Rowsell, Nicole
DENMARK (IN RESPECT OF FAROE ISLANDS AND GREENLAND)	Virtual Svarrer Wang, Ulla
EUROPEAN UNION	In-person Billiet, Stijn Demblon, Jessica Virtual Belmonte, Luis Cortina Burgueño, Ángela Garrido Fernández, Irene Gonçalves, Patrícia Leocadio, Ana Mancebo, C. Margarita Näks, Liivika Teixeira, Isabel Tuvi, Aare
ICELAND	In-person Bragi Bragason, Agnar
JAPAN	Virtual Butterworth, Doug S. Iwano, Taisuke Taki Kenji Mitome, Haruki

NORWAY	Virtual Hallfredsson, Elvar H. Sandberg, Per
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	Virtual Fomin, Konstantin Tairov, Temur
UNITED KINGDOM	In-person Gawlyk, Joe Sharples, James
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	In-person Jaburek, Shannah Williams, Kirsten Wintering, Rebecca Tyhach, Lea Virtual Kelly, Moira Mencher, Elizabethann
NAFO SECRETARIAT	In-person Benediktsdóttir, Brynhildur Aker, Jana Bell MacCallum, Dayna Guile, Sarah LeFort, Lisa Perreault, Andrea Thompson, Catherine

Annex 2. Agenda

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