

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

08 April 2025  
via Webex

1.	Opening by co-Chairs, Fernando González-Costas (European Union) and Ray Walsh (Canada) .....	2
2.	Appointment of rapporteur .....	2
3.	Adoption of agenda.....	2
4.	Progress on the MSE process for 3LN redfish .....	2
5.	2+3KLMNO Greenland Halibut MSE exceptional circumstances .....	3
6.	Precautionary Approach Framework (PAF) reference points .....	3
7.	Other Business.....	3
	a. Marine Stewardship Council requirements under its Standard 3.0 .....	3
	b. PAF outreach .....	3
8.	Recommendations .....	4
9.	Adoption of report .....	4
10.	Adjournment .....	4
	Annex 1. List of Participants.....	5
	Annex 2. Agenda .....	6

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

08 April 2025  
via Webex

### **1. Opening by co-Chairs, Fernando González-Costas (European Union) and Ray Walsh (Canada)**

The Chairs, Fernando González-Costas (European Union) and Ray Walsh (Canada) opened the meeting at 09:03 hours (UTC -3 hours) on Tuesday, 08 April 2025 via Webex, and welcomed representatives from Canada, Denmark (in respect of Faroe Islands and Greenland), European Union, Japan, Norway, Russian Federation, and the United States of America, as well as an accredited observer (Annex 1).

### **2. Appointment of rapporteur**

The NAFO Secretariat was appointed as rapporteur.

### **3. Adoption of agenda**

The agenda was adopted, as outlined in Annex 2.

### **4. Progress on the MSE process for 3LN redfish**

The Chair of the Scientific Council, Diana González-Troncoso (European Union) provided an overview and update on the progress of the management strategy evaluation (MSE) for redfish in NAFO Divisions 3LN from the 2025 January Scientific Council meeting ([SCS Doc. 25/02](#)) where new dynamic factor analysis (DFA) and updated SURBA models were presented. DFA models identified two common trends, one that described 3LN redfish adult survey indices and one that described juvenile indices that were related to a combination of lagged ocean climate drivers. However, it was noted that how to integrate the ocean climate drivers into existing models remained difficult given a lack of understanding of the mechanisms driving these processes. Updates to the existing SURBA models were also discussed and, in all cases, uncertainty estimates on the population processes remained high, indicating the model formulations did not appear to capture underlying population processes.

Scientific Council conclusions from the January 2025 meeting noted that given the updated results, moving forward with an MSE may not be worth the time and capacity required; however, it was agreed that simulation testing of example candidate management procedures may be helpful. It was also suggested at the January meeting that a viable way forward would be to produce a management procedure that complies with the revised Precautionary Approach Framework (PAF; Annex 4 of the [COM-SC Doc. 24-03](#)). It was flagged that the Designated Expert (DE) position for the stock was currently vacant and was not expected to be filled before the upcoming 05 May 2025 STACREC meeting. As such, it was noted that since January 2025 no progress has been made in addressing the Scientific Council conclusions and this would most likely not allow for enough time to address them before the June meeting. The progress that can be made on this matter will continue to be uncertain until a new DE is appointed and becomes familiar with the stock. The working group asked the Secretariat if the new Senior Science Coordinator would have the capacity to contribute to the MSE work; the Secretariat noted that discussions within the Scientific Council are still required before the Senior Science Coordinator projects and workload capacity are finalized.

It was also noted that the Scientific Council provided advice for two years for 3LN redfish in June 2024, whereas a TAC was set by the Commission for 2025 only, and a TAC decision for 2026 will be required by the Commission in September. It was noted that an issue exists since the Commission has not requested a full assessment for June 2025, therefore an interim monitoring report (IMR) will inform that decision. After some discussion on possible options and mechanisms to facilitate a request for a new assessment in June, the working group agreed to not pursue any action at this stage and wait until the Scientific Council finalized the IMR in June. The IMR will help determine if there is a significant difference in stock status, and Contracting Parties

could subsequently submit questions to the Scientific Council if necessary to inform their consideration of the Commission's decision on the 2026 TAC in September.

Doug Butterworth (Japan) provided a brief update on ongoing work to develop a simple production model for use as an operating model for the 3LN redfish MSE. A preliminary document was circulated, and details will be presented and discussed at the upcoming Scientific Council Meetings. The working group thanked Japan for their contribution and look forward to seeing the outcomes from the Scientific Council discussions at the July meeting.

## **5. 2+3KLMNO Greenland Halibut MSE exceptional circumstances**

The Chair of the Scientific Council, Diana González-Troncoso (European Union) reflected on the management procedure (MP) and revised exceptional circumstances protocol that were adopted by the Commission at the 2024 Annual Meeting ([COM Doc. 24-25](#)). It was noted that as in last year (2024), there are more than two survey values missing in a five-year period from a survey used in the MP (resulting from gaps in the EU-Spain 3L survey), as such, exceptional circumstances are occurring. The WG-RBMS noted the exceptional circumstances and agreed that the Scientific Council move forward with sensitivity tests (as in the previous year) to determine the impacts to the MP outputs and provide advice for 2026 following a similar approach to the one used last year ([COM-SC Doc. 24-03](#)).

## **6. Precautionary Approach Framework (PAF) reference points**

The Chair of the Precautionary Approach Framework Working Group (PA-WG), Fernando González-Costas (European Union), presented an update from the meeting that took place in December 2024 ([SCS Doc. 24/21](#)). In moving forward with applying the revised PAF, it was agreed that the DEs with a full assessment in a given year would work towards the development of reference points that can be used in the PAF that year. It was noted that the preference would be to use different methods to estimate the reference points based on available data and knowledge. The intention is to discuss and approve the final PA reference points at a meeting of the Scientific Council / PA-WG scheduled for 06 May 2025.

The working group thanked the PA-WG Chair and the Scientific Council for the update on this work. It was noted that the adoption of the PAF at the 2024 Annual Meeting was the result of considerable hard work by the Scientific Council and the WG-RBMS, and the working group looks forward to reviewing the results of the implementation of the PAF that are provided by the Scientific Council meeting in June 2025.

## **7. Other Business**

### **a. Marine Stewardship Council requirements under its Standard 3.0**

The WG-RBMS co-Chair, Ray Walsh (Canada), provided an updated in relation to recommendation 5 from the August 2024 WG-RBMS meeting ([COM-SC Doc. 24-03](#)). The recommendation was for the Commission to *send correspondence to the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), and other certifying bodies as appropriate, highlighting the adoption of the Revised Precautionary Approach Framework and noting the concerns and challenges of requiring a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for RFMO managed fisheries to receive certification*. Following the adoption of the recommendation by the Commission at the 2024 Annual Meeting, correspondence was sent to the MSC from the Chair of the Commission (NAFO/25-049) in February 2025. A response was received from the MSC acknowledging the receipt of the letter and noting that a detailed response will be provided; however, no further updates had been received at the time of this meeting.

### **b. PAF outreach**

The WG-RBMS co-Chairs provided an update on some outreach activities related to the adoption of the revised PAF in NAFO.

The co-Chairs participated in the FAO Deep-sea fisheries project (DSF) webinar on the *Application of the precautionary approach to the management of deep-sea fish stocks* that took place on 15 October 2024. The co-Chairs provided a presentation outlining the challenges with the original PAF in NAFO, the conclusions of the PA workshop that was held in August 2022, the work that went into the development and testing of the revised PAF, and information on the PAF that was adopted at the 2024 Annual Meeting. It was noted that the response from webinar participants was positive, and there was recognition of NAFO as a leader in this work.

The co-Chairs also noted that they have been invited to participate in another webinar being hosted by HarvestStrategies.org titled *Expanding the Reach: Management Procedures at General RFMOs* scheduled to take place on 29 April 2025. The presentation will be titled *The Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization's Leadership: First International MSE-Tested Management Procedure and New Precautionary Approach Framework* and will follow a similar structure to the presentation that was provided at the FAO-DSF webinar.

## 8. Recommendations

There were no recommendations from this meeting, but the overall conclusions from the WG-RBMS are outlined below.

In relation to progress on the MSE process for 3LN redfish:

The working group took note of the updates on the progress for the 3LN redfish MSE, and the Scientific Council conclusions from the January 2025 meeting, as well as other ongoing related work. The working group encouraged the Scientific Council to continue to explore next steps towards an MSE, as capacity allows.

In relation to the exceptional circumstances for the 2+3KLMNO Greenland halibut MSE:

The working group noted that exceptional circumstances are occurring due to recent gaps in the EU-Spain 3L series. The group encouraged the Scientific Council to proceed with sensitivity testing as in the previous year and work to provide advice on the total allowable catch for 2026 following a similar approach to the one used last year.

## 9. Adoption of report

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

## 10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:17 hours (UTC -3 hours).

The working group acknowledged and thanked the Scientific Council for their work and noted that the next WG-RBMS meeting will take place during the week of 14-18 July 2025 in Tallinn, Estonia, with the WG-RBMS being tentatively scheduled to start on the afternoon of 16 July 2025.

It was also noted that this would be the last NAFO meeting for Katherine Sosebee (United States of America), who has worked with the NAFO Scientific Council, including as past Chair of the Scientific Council and of other working groups, for many years. The working group participants thanked Katherine for all of her work in NAFO and wished her the best in her retirement.

**Annex 1. List of Participants**

<b>CO-CHAIRS</b>	González-Costas, Fernando (European Union) Walsh, Ray (Canada)
<b>SC CHAIR</b>	González-Troncoso, Diana (European Union)
<b>CANADA</b>	Burridge, Angela Byrne, Vanessa Fagan, Bob Johnson, Kate Koen- Alonso, Mariano Krohn, Martha Simpson, Mark Varkey, Divya
<b>DENMARK (IN RESPECT OF FAROE ISLANDS AND GREENLAND)</b>	Nygård Bak, Rebekka Svarrer Wang, Ulla
<b>EUROPEAN UNION</b>	Alpoim, Ricardo Belmonte, Luis Blazkiewicz, Bernard Fernández, Francisco Garrido Fernández, Irene Lopes, Luis Sommer, Tanja Tuvi, Aare Vielmini, Ilaria
<b>JAPAN</b>	Butterworth, Doug Rademeyer, Rebecca Taki, Kenji
<b>NORWAY</b>	Sandberg, Per
<b>RUSSIAN FEDERATION</b>	Fomin, Konstantin
<b>UNITED STATES OF AMERICA</b>	Jaburek, Shannah Kelly, Moira Sosebee, Kathy Warner-Kramer, Deirdre
<b>OBSERVERS</b>	<b>Ecology Action Centre:</b> Isnor, Holly
<b>NAFO SECRETARIAT</b>	Benediktsdóttir, Brynhildur Aker, Jana Bell MacCallum, Dayna LeFort, Lisa Perreault, Andrea

## **Annex 2. Agenda**

1. Opening by co-Chairs, Fernando González-Costas (European Union) and Ray Walsh (Canada)
2. Appointment of Rapporteur
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. Progress on the MSE process for 3LN redfish
5. 2+3KLMNO Greenland Halibut MSE exceptional circumstances.
6. Precautionary Approach Framework (PAF) reference points
7. Other Business
  - a. Marine Stewardship Council requirements under its Standard 3.0
  - b. PAF outreach
8. Recommendations
9. Adoption of report
10. Adjournment