



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

09 April 2026  
via Webex

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**1. Opening by co-Chair, Ray Walsh (Canada)**

The co-Chair, Ray Walsh (Canada) opened the meeting at 09:02 hours (UTC -3 hours) on Thursday, 09 April 2026 via Webex. It was noted that the Scientific Council co-Chair position for the WG-RBMS remains vacant, and Contracting Parties were encouraged to identify a candidate to fill that role. The WG-RBMS co-Chair welcomed representatives from Canada, Denmark (in respect of Faroe Islands and Greenland), European Union, Japan, Norway, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, and the United States of America (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. Precautionary Approach Framework**

**a. Stocks with expected updated reference points for May 2026**

The Chair of the Scientific Council, Diana González-Troncoso (European Union), provided an update on the NAFO stocks where reference points have not yet been developed for application in the Revised Precautionary Approach Framework (PAF). It was also noted that the Precautionary Approach Working Group (PA-WG) was scheduled to meet in May 2026 to complete this work for stocks with full assessments in 2026, but that the Chair position for that working group remains vacant. As such, the May 2026 PA-WG meeting was canceled, and the work will be undertaken during the 2026 June Scientific Council meeting, which may have an impact on the workload of the Scientific Council as there are 10 stocks scheduled for full assessment this year in June.

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

The WG-RBMS co-Chair provided background for this agenda item, highlighting that at the 2025 Annual meeting, the Commission noted the prescriptive advice coming from the Scientific Council in June 2025 relating to Div. 30 redfish and requested that advice should be provided as a range of options with associated risks. The Scientific Council flagged that in the case of redfish in Div. 30, recent Fs have kept the stock in the Critical Zone. In addition, as the Div. 30 redfish is assessed using an index-based approach, it was not possible to provide the range of Fs required in the PA table. This happens with several stocks assessed and the Scientific Council requested guidance on how to proceed in these cases when going forward. It was noted that the intent of the revised PAF was to provide advice that informs the Commission's decisions, including risk tolerance, but not for the Scientific Council to prescribe management decisions and risk tolerance levels. It was noted that it would be difficult to provide concrete guidance for the Scientific Council during this meeting, but Canada agreed to work intersessionally, with assistance from interested Contracting Parties, to draft guidance for further discussion at the upcoming WG-RBMS meeting in August 2026.

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

The Chair of the Scientific Council provided an update indicating that there will be no exceptional circumstances triggered in 2026 relating to the availability of survey indices, as none of the inputs are exceeding two missing values from a five-year period. The occurrence of any additional exceptional

circumstances will be analyzed at the Scientific Council meeting in June 2026 and presented to the WG-RBMS at the August 2026 meeting. Participants thanked the Scientific Council Chair for the update and noted the improvement in the survey coverage in recent years.

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

Doug Butterworth (Japan) provided an update on progress for the MSE for Divs. 3LN redfish, noting that work is ongoing on the development of the operating models, which will be discussed further at the Scientific Council meeting in June 2026. A further update will be provided to WG-RBMS at the August 2026 meeting.

## **7. Initial discussions on Commission Request 11 ([COM Doc. 25-13](#)) relating to 3LNO shrimp**

### **a. Canadian MSE**

Nicholas Duprey (Canada) presented an overview on the northern shrimp MSE process that has been undertaken by Canada. The presentation highlighted that in December 2024, a new two-stock population structure and a new assessment model were adopted by the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS). It was also noted that the new two-stock population structure—comprising the North Stock Assessment Region and South Stock Assessment Region (which encompasses NAFO Divs. 3LNO)—was accepted by Scientific Council in September 2025. An overview of newly developed operating models, performance statistics and harvest decisions rules for the MSE, which were developed as part of a subsequent CSAS peer review process in Canada in December 2025, was also presented. It was noted that additional domestic decisions within Canada, which would have implications for the MSE process, are still pending; Canada will provide further updates to the WG-RBMS during the August 2026 meeting.

### **b. Commission Request #11**

The Chair of Scientific Council requested clarification on Commission Request 11 ([COM Doc. 25-13](#)). It was clarified that, given the peer review provided at the December 2025 CSAS meeting, the Commission was not seeking an in-depth peer review of the operating models developed for the South Stock Assessment Region (SSAR), but was requesting that the Scientific Council evaluate the general adequacy of the operating models developed in December 2025 in terms of their suitability for application in the NAFO context, drawing on experience from MSEs that have been implemented in NAFO previously. The review of the operating models is expected to occur at the June 2026 SC meeting. Further discussions on the MSE will take place at the August 2026 WG-RBMS meeting and the September 2026 Commission meeting.

## **8. Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) requirements under its Standard 3.0**

The WG-RBMS co-Chair provided 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 ([COM-SC Doc. 24-03](#); [COM-SC Doc. 25-02](#)). At the 2025 Annual Meeting, it was agreed to send follow-up correspondence to the MSC requesting an update, and a follow-up response was received and circulated to Contracting Parties on 08 April 2026 (NAFO/26-101). The response from the MSC indicated that, while not a final decision, the current proposal would not require NAFO fisheries to adopt harvest strategies tested using MSE. The MSC further noted that a second round of policy development is scheduled, with a review period expected for Q3/Q4 of 2026. WG-RBMS expressed an interest in continuing to monitor this issue, with some indicating support for direct engagement with a representative from MSC, including possibly through their attendance at a future meeting. The co-Chair agreed to discuss this with the NAFO President and NAFO Secretariat.

## **9. Other Business**

The Chair of Scientific Council noted the number of vacancies for Scientific Council Chair positions (WG-RBMS, WG-ESA, PA-WG and STACFEN) and Designated Experts (Northern Shortfin Squid in Subareas 3 & 4, thorny skate in Divs. 3LNO, white hake in Divs. 3NO and the Ecosystem Designated Expert for Divs. 3LNO) and

encouraged Contracting Parties to find ways to ensure that positions are filled before the June 2026 Scientific Council meeting.

#### **10. Recommendations**

There were no recommendations from this meeting.

#### **11. Adoption of report**

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

#### **12. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 10:52 hours (UTC -3 hours).

The next WG-RBMS meeting will take place from 05–07 August 2026 in Halifax, Canada.

**Annex 1. List of Participants**

<b>CO-CHAIR</b>	Walsh, Ray
<b>CANADA</b>	Bourgeois, Vanessa Burns, Adam Burrige, Angela Chapman, Bruce Duprey, Nicholas Fagan, Robert Koen-Alonso, Mariano Krohn, Martha Marsden, Dale Muir, Carlie Rayner, Gemma Rideout, Rick Rowell, Nicole Simpson, Mark
<b>DENMARK (IN RESPECT OF FAROE ISLANDS AND GREENLAND)</b>	Nygård Bak, Rebekka Svarrer Wang, Ulla
<b>EUROPEAN UNION</b>	Alpoim, Ricardo Belmonte, Luis Billiet, Stijn Demblon, Jessica Garrido, Irene Gonçalves, Patricia González-Costas, Fernando González-Troncoso, Diana (SC Chair) Granell, Ignacio Näks, Liivika Teixeira, Isabel Tuvi, Aare Vielmini, Ilaria
<b>JAPAN</b>	Butterworth, Doug Iwano, Taisuke Mitome, Haruki Taki, Kenji
<b>NORWAY</b>	Hallfredsson, Elvar Sandberg, Per
<b>RUSSIAN FEDERATION</b>	Fomin, Konstantin Tairov, Temur
<b>UNITED KINGDOM</b>	De Oliveira, José Gawlyk, Joe Weiland, Molly
<b>UNITED STATES OF AMERICA</b>	Jaburek, Shannah Kelly, Moira Tyhach, Lea Warner-Kramer, Deirdre Williams, Kirsten Wintering, Rebecca
<b>NAFO SECRETARIAT</b>	Benediktsdóttir, Brynhildur Aker, Jana Bell MacCallum, Dayna LeFort, Lisa Perreault, Andrea

## **Annex 2. Agenda**

1. Opening by co-Chairs, [SC co-Chair TBD] and Ray Walsh (Canada)
2. Appointment of Rapporteur
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. Precautionary Approach Framework
  - a. Stocks with expected updated reference points for May 2026
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