



## Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization

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In all correspondence,  
please refer to:

NAFO/23-240

17 October 2023

TO: All Contracting Parties;  
Scientific Council Chairs; and  
Scientific Council Representatives

Dear Colleagues;

**Subject:** *NAFO Scientific Council Working Group on Ecosystem Science and Assessment (WG-ESA) Meeting Agenda, 14-23 November 2023*

The Provisional Agenda for the *NAFO Scientific Council Working Group on Ecosystem Science and Assessment (WG-ESA) Meeting* is hereby dispatched to Contracting Parties. Please note that this agenda is still a preliminary draft document and therefore subject to many changes.

The meeting will be held at the NAFO Secretariat in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, 14 – 23 November 2023. Webex capabilities will also be provided for online participation. The meeting timetable and detailed agenda, along with logistical information, is enclosed.

All relevant meeting documentation will be accessible on the NAFO Meetings SharePoint (<https://meetings.nafo.int/sc/2023/wgesa>) as it becomes available.

Yours sincerely,

Brynhildur Benediktsdóttir  
Executive Secretary

BB:dbm

cc: Diana González Troncoso, Scientific Council Chair, Alfonso Pérez Rodríguez, WG-ESA co-Chair and Mar Sacau, WG-ESA co-Chair

**16<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF NAFO SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL (SC) WORKING GROUP  
ON ECOSYSTEM SCIENCE AND ASSESSMENT (WG-ESA)**

NAFO Secretariat, Halifax, Canada  
14-23 November 2023

Details of the meeting ToRs and specific agenda items including timings are given in **ANNEX 1** and **ANNEX 2**, respectively. Logistical information can be found in **ANNEX 3**.

**Provisional Agenda and Terms of Reference (ToRs)**

- 1. Opening by the Chairs, Mar Sacau (EU) and Diana González (EU).**
- 2. Appointment of Rapporteur**
- 3. Adoption of Agenda**
- 4. Review of Annual Meeting 2023 outcomes**
- 5. Commission requests for advice on management in 2024 and beyond, requiring input from WG-ESA in 2023 to be presented at the Scientific Council meeting June 2024.**
  - a) COM. Request #4. The Commission requests that the Scientific Council continue to work on tiers 1 and 2 of the Roadmap, specifically to:
    - i. Annually provide catch information in relation to 2TCI, including recent cumulative catch levels and a scoping of expected cumulative catch levels;
    - ii. As practicable and taking into account Scientific Council capacity constraints, develop stock summary sheets for NAFO managed stocks that are evaluated using HCR or MSE processes.
  - b) COM. Request #9. The Commission request the SC to monitor and provide regular updates on relevant research related to the potential impacts of activities other than fishing in the Convention Area, subject to the capacity of the Scientific Council.
  - c) COM. Request #10<sup>1</sup>. The Commission requests that the Scientific Council at its 2024 meeting: summarize the information it currently has available regarding the current and future impacts of climate change on NAFO-managed stocks, non-target species, and associated ecosystems; and identify any consequential data gaps, research needs and opportunities for productive research.
- 6. Commission requests for advice on management in 2024 and beyond, requiring longer term input from WG-ESA.**
  - a) COM. Request #5. In relation to the habitat impact assessment component of the Roadmap (VME and SAI analyses), the Commission requests that Scientific Council:
    - i. Support the Secretariat in developing a centralized data repository using ArcGIS online to host the data and data-products for scientific advice;
    - ii. Continue working with WG-EAFFM towards developing operational objectives for the protection of VMEs and biodiversity in the NRA; and
  - b) Work towards the reassessment of VMEs and impact of bottom fisheries on VMEs for 2026.

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<sup>1</sup> SC proposed setting up a steering group to develop terms of reference (ToRs) for the consultant. These ToRs are currently under initial development and may be presented and discussed during the WGESA, if this document is more or less finalized.

**7. Review Recommendations**

**8. Other Business**

- a) Date and place of next meeting

**9. Adjournment**

## ANNEX 1. WG-ESA TERMS OF REFERENCE

### THEME 1: SPATIAL CONSIDERATIONS

**ToR 1.** Update on identification and mapping of sensitive species and habitats (VMEs) in the NAFO area.

1. *Update on VME indicator species data and VME indicator species distribution from EU; EU-Spain Groundfish Surveys and Canadian Surveys. (Bárbara/Sara/Santi/Mar/Pablo)*
2. *Update and discussion on standardized GIS data layers and data repository (COM. Request#5a). (Anna, Cam, Neil, Lauren, Tom)*
3. *Impact of Cerianthids on benthic biodiversity and Ecosystem Functioning in a Sub-Arctic Fjord. (Bárbara, Stephan Hamisch)*

### THEME 2: STATUS, FUNCTIONING AND DYNAMICS OF NAFO MARINE ECOSYSTEMS.

**ToR 2.** Update on recent and relevant research related to status, functioning and dynamics of ecosystems in the NAFO area.

1. *Update on VME Connectivity analysis (Ellen's group)*
2. *Role of Astrophorina sponges (Demospongiae) in food-web interactions at the Flemish Cap (NW Atlantic) (Tanja Stratmann /Ellen's group)*
3. *VMS data filtering (Neil)*
4. *Up-date on the analysis on the functional significance of VME in relation to fish (Anna)*
5. *Up-date on the analysis of SAI impact thresholds based on the cumulative response curves (James Bell)*
6. *Workplan for next VME and SAI reassessments for 2026 (COM. Request#5c). (Andy, Anna, Ellen, etc)*
7. *Preliminary analysis of the methodology to study the bottom fishing footprint in the NRA (NEREIDA project) (Irene)*

### THEME 3: PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF ECOSYSTEM KNOWLEDGE TO FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

**ToR 3.** Update on recent and relevant research related to the application of ecosystem knowledge for fisheries management in the NAFO area.








1. *Preparation of the OECM nomination template, especially in relation to the seamount evidence, for the CBD and UNESCO WDC on OECMs (Andy, Daniela)*
2. *Summary of the Workshop to evaluate long-term biodiversity/ecosystem benefits of NEAFC closed and restricted areas (WKECOVME) (Ellen)*
3. *Overview of the effects seismic surveying on snow crab, and preliminary findings pertaining to groundfish, resources in the Newfoundland and Labrador offshore. (COM. Request#9) (Corey Morris)*
4. *Emerging research on abandoned well sites in the Newfoundland and Labrador offshore (COM. Request#9) (Corey Morris)*
5. *NEREIDA Planned Activities Overview: activities other than fishing in the NRA (Marine Litter and Offshore Oil & Gas) (COM. Request#9) (Pablo/Mar)*
6. *Continue working towards developing operational objectives for the protection of VMEs and biodiversity in the NRA (COM. Request#5b) (Andy)*
7. *Workplan for TCI and next ESS update in 2026 (COM. Request#4). (Mariano, Diana, Robert, etc)*












**THEME 4: OTHER MATTERS**

1. *Update on the FAO EAFM Symposium planning (Tony)*
2. *Update on the BBNJ Symposium (Daniela)*

## ANNEX 2: Detailed Agenda

**Please note: all times are flexible and subject to variation.**

START TIME	END TIME	TOR [COM]	ACTIVITY	LEADS	DURATION
<b>DAY 1: TUESDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER – 2023</b>					
10:00	11:00		<i>Opening, appointment of rapporteur, meeting arrangements, introductions, discussion of ToRs and approval of agenda.</i>	Mar	30 mins + Discussion
11:00	11:30		 <b>COFFEE BREAK</b>		
11:30	12:00		<i>Summary of meetings SC June 2023, WG-EAFFM August 2023, AM September 2023, etc</i>	Andy	30 mins + Discussion
12:30	14:00		 <b>LUNCH BREAK</b>		
15:30	16:00		 <b>COFFEE BREAK</b>		
<b>DAY 2: WEDNESDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER – 2023</b>					
11:00	11:30		 <b>COFFEE BREAK</b>		
12:30	14:00		 <b>LUNCH BREAK</b>		
15:30	16:00		 <b>COFFEE BREAK</b>		
<b>DAY 3: THURSDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER - 2023</b>					
11:00	11:30		 <b>COFFEE BREAK</b>		

12:30	14:00		 LUNCH BREAK		
15:30	16:00		 COFFEE BREAK		
<b>DAY 4: FRIDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER - 2023 (SHORT DAY)</b>					
11:00	11:30		 COFFEE BREAK		
12:30	14:00		 LUNCH BREAK		
15:30	16:00		 COFFEE BREAK		
<b>DAY 5: SATURDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER - 2023</b>					
11:00	11:30		 COFFEE BREAK		
12:30	14:00		 LUNCH BREAK		
15:30	16:00		 COFFEE BREAK		
17:45			<i>NAFO Reception</i>		
<b>DAY 6: MONDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER - 2023</b>					
11:00	11:30		 COFFEE BREAK		
12:30	14:00		 LUNCH BREAK		
15:30	16:00		 COFFEE BREAK		

DAY 7: TUESDAY 21 <sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER – 2023					
09:00	09:30		<i>Round-table on report drafting progress - checklist</i>	All	30 mins
<b>11:00</b>	<b>11:30</b>		 <b>COFFEE BREAK</b>		
			<i>Report drafting</i>		
<b>12:30</b>	<b>14:00</b>		 <b>LUNCH BREAK</b>		
			<i>Report drafting</i>		
<b>15:30</b>	<b>16:00</b>		 <b>COFFEE BREAK</b>		
16:30	17:00		<i>Report drafting</i>	All	
DAY 8: WEDNESDAY 22 <sup>ND</sup> NOVEMBER – 2023					
09:00	09:30		<i>Round table final check on report drafting - checklist</i>	All	30 mins
<b>11:00</b>	<b>11:30</b>		 <b>COFFEE BREAK</b>		
<b>12:30</b>	<b>14:00</b>		 <b>LUNCH BREAK</b>		
<b>15:30</b>	<b>16:00</b>		 <b>COFFEE BREAK</b>		
DAY 9: THURSDAY 23 <sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER – 2023					
09:00	09:30		<i>Round table final check on report drafting - checklist</i>	All	30 mins
09:30	10:30		<i>Review recommendations</i>	All	1 hr
10:30	11:00	7f	<i>Other business: Date and place of next meeting</i>	All	30 mins
<b>11:00</b>			<b>MEETING CLOSE</b> 		



### ANNEX 3: Logistical/Meeting Information

#### Location

The meeting will be held at the NAFO Secretariat in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. The Secretariat address is:

NAFO Secretariat  
Summit Place  
1601 Lower Water Street  
Suite 401  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
Canada B3J 3P6

The location can be found on Google Maps [here](#).

#### WebEx

For those Contracting Parties that are unable to attend the meeting in-person, WebEx capabilities will be provided.

The Secretariat staff will be available for technical support during the meeting. “Breakout rooms” will be available for smaller group meetings and/or bilateral consultations, as required.

#### Hotel Accommodations

In close vicinity to the NAFO Headquarters:

Courtyard by Marriott Halifax Downtown  
5120 Salter St., Halifax, NS  
Ph: +1 902-428-1900

Four Points by Sheraton Halifax  
1496 Hollis St., Halifax, NS  
Ph: +1 902-423-4444

The Hollis Halifax - a DoubleTree Suites  
1649 Hollis St, Halifax, NS  
Ph: +1 902-429-7233

Halifax Marriott Harbourfront Hotel  
1919 Upper Water St., Halifax, NS  
Ph: +1 902-421-1700

Residence Inn by Marriott Halifax Downtown  
1599 Grafton St., Halifax, NS  
Ph: +1 902-422-0493

The Prince George Hotel Halifax  
1725 Market St., Halifax, NS  
Ph: +1 800-565-1567

The Sutton Place Hotel Halifax  
1700 Grafton St., Halifax, NS  
Ph: +1 902-932-7548

Cambridge Suite Hotel Halifax  
1583 Brunswick St., Halifax, NS  
Ph: +1 902-420-0555

Muir, Autograph Collection  
1709 Lower Water St., Halifax, NS  
Ph: +1 902-407-6847

The Barrington Hotel  
1875 Barrington St, Halifax, NS  
Ph: +1 902-429-7410

Hotel reservations are to be made by participants directly with the hotel.

## Transportation

Taxi service provided by:

Casino Taxi

Ph: +1 902-425-6666 or +1 902-429-6666

[www.casinotaxi.ca](http://www.casinotaxi.ca)

Yellow Cab

Ph: +1 902-420-0000

[www.yellowcabhalifax.ca](http://www.yellowcabhalifax.ca)

## Public Transportation

Halifax Transit is Halifax's public bus and ferry service provider. For current schedules and fares, visit [Halifax Transit](#).

Tips on travelling to and from the airport:

- It takes about 30-40 minutes to get from the airport to downtown Halifax.
- Take the Metro Regional Express Bus (route #320) for just \$4.25 CAD (exact change or a \$5 bill).
- Head to the lower level of the airport to rent a car. You'll need \$1.25 CAD for the bridge toll (exact change) if you're heading to Halifax via Dartmouth.
- Take a taxi or limo right from the airport to downtown Halifax for \$55.00-\$65.00 CAD.
- Uber is now available in Halifax.
- You can find more information on transportation from the Halifax Airport [here](#).

## Dining Options

Downtown Halifax is the urban core of the region, complete with hundreds of food options within walking distance. Check out the [Official Halifax Visitor Guide](#) for ideas and more information.

## Tourist information

For additional tourist information, visit [www.discoverhalifaxns.com](http://www.discoverhalifaxns.com)