

Membership and Protocols for all Science Working Groups in 2017

This document summarises the protocols for membership and participation in all Science Working Groups including Fisheries Assessment Working Groups (FAWGs), the Aquatic Environment Working Group (AEWG), the Biodiversity Research Advisory Group (BRAG), the Highly Migratory Species Working Group (HMS), the South Pacific Working Group (SPACWG), the Antarctic Working Group (ANTWG), and the Marine Amateur Fisheries Working Group (MAFWG).

Working Group chairs

1. The Ministry will select and appoint the Chairs for Science Working Groups. The Chair will be an MPI fisheries or marine scientist who is an active participant in the Working Group, providing technical input, rather than simply being a facilitator. Working Group Chairs will be responsible for:
 - ensuring that Working Group participants are aware of the Terms of Reference for the Working Group, and that the Terms of Reference are adhered to by all participants;
 - setting the rules of engagement, facilitating constructive questioning, and focussing on relevant issues;
 - ensuring that all peer review processes are conducted in accordance with the Research and Science Information Standard for New Zealand Fisheries¹ (the Research Standard), and that research and science information is reviewed by the relevant Working Group against the *P R I O R* principles for science information quality (page 6) and the criteria for peer review (pages 12–16) in the Standard;
 - requesting and documenting the affiliations of participants at each Working Group meeting that have the potential to be, or to be perceived to be, a conflict of interest of relevance to the research under review (refer to page 15 of the Research Standard). Chairs are responsible for managing conflicts of interest, and ensuring that fisheries management implications do not jeopardise the objectivity of the review or result in biased interpretation of results;
 - ensuring that the quality of information that is intended or likely to inform fisheries management decisions, the development of environmental standards or the formulation of relevant fisheries policy is ranked in accordance with the information ranking guidelines in the Research Standard (page 21–23), and that resulting information quality ranks are appropriately documented in the Plenary and the Aquatic Environment and Biodiversity Annual Review (AEBAR);
 - striving for consensus while ensuring the transparency and integrity of research analyses, results, conclusions and final reports; and
 - reporting on Working Group recommendations, conclusions and action items; and ensuring follow-up and communication with the MPI Principal Advisor Fisheries Science, relevant MPI fisheries management staff, and other key stakeholders.

Working Group members

2. Membership of Science Working groups will be open to any participant with the agreement of the Working Group Chair.
3. Working Groups will consist of the following participants:
 - MPI fisheries science chair – required;

¹ Link to the Research Standard: <http://www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/Publications/Research+and+Science+Information+Standard.htm>

- research providers – required (may be the primary researcher, or a designated substitute capable of presenting and discussing the agenda item);
 - other scientists not conducting the presented research to act in a peer review capacity;
 - representatives of relevant MPI fisheries management teams; and
 - any interested party who agrees to the standards of participation below.
4. Working Group participants must commit to:
- participating appropriately in the discussion;
 - resolving issues;
 - following up on agreements and tasks;
 - maintaining confidentiality of Working Group discussions and deliberations (unless otherwise agreed in advance, and subject to the constraints of the Official Information Act);
 - adopting a constructive approach;
 - avoiding repetition of earlier deliberations, particularly where agreement has already been reached;
 - facilitating an atmosphere of honesty, openness and trust;
 - respecting the role of the Chair; and
 - listening to the views of others, and treating them with respect.
5. Participants in Working Group meetings will be expected to declare their sector affiliations and contractual relationships to the research under review, and to declare any substantial conflicts of interest related to any particular issue or scientific conclusion.
6. Working Group participants must adhere to the requirements of independence, impartiality and objectivity listed under the Peer Review Criteria in the Research Standard (pages 12–16). It is understood that Working Group participants will often be representing particular sectors and interest groups, and may be expressing the views of those groups. However, when participating in the review of science information, representatives are expected to step aside from their sector affiliations, and to ensure that individual and sector views do not result in bias in the science information and conclusions.
7. Participants in each Working Group will have access to the corresponding sections of the Science Working Group website including the Working Group papers and other information provided in those sections. Access to Science Working Group websites will generally be restricted to those who have a reasonable expectation of attending at least one meeting of a given Science Working Group each year.
8. Working Group members who do not adhere to the standards of participation (paragraph 4), or who use Working Group papers and related information inappropriately (see paragraph 10), may be requested by the Chair to leave a particular meeting or to refrain from attending one or more future meetings. In more serious instances, members may be removed from the Working Group membership and denied access to the Working Group website for a specified period of time.

Working Group papers and related information

9. Working Group papers will be posted on the MPI-Fisheries website prior to meetings if they are available. As a general guide, PowerPoint presentations and draft or discussion papers should be available at least two working days before a meeting, and near-final papers should

be available at least five working days before a meeting if the Working Group is expected to agree to the paper. However, it is also likely that some papers will be made available for the first time during the meeting due to time constraints. If a paper is not available for sufficient time before the meeting, the Chair may provide for additional time following the meeting for additional comments from Working Group members.

10. Working Group papers are “works in progress” intended to facilitate the discussion of analyses by the Working Groups. They often contain preliminary results that are receiving peer review for the first time and, as such, may contain errors or preliminary analyses that will be superseded by more rigorous work. **For these reasons, no-one may release the papers or any information contained in these papers to external parties. In general, Working Group papers should not be cited.** Exceptions may be made in rare instances by obtaining permission in writing from the Principal Advisor Fisheries Science, and the authors of the paper. It is also anticipated that Working Group participants who are representing others at a particular Working Group meeting or series of such meetings may wish to communicate preliminary results to the people they are representing. Participants, along with recipients of the information, are required to exercise discretion in doing this, and to guard against preliminary results being made public.
11. From time to time, MPI commissions external reviews of analyses, models or issues. Terms of Reference for these reviews and the names of external reviewers may be provided to the Working Group for information or feedback. It is extremely important to the proper conduct of these reviews that all contact with the reviewers is through the Chair of the Working Group or the Principal Advisor Fisheries Science. Under no circumstances should Working Group members approach reviewers directly until after the final report of the review has been published.

Working Group meetings

12. Meetings will take place as required, generally January–April and July–November for FAWGs and throughout the year for other Working Groups (AEWG, BRAG, HMSWG, SPACWG, ANTWG and MAFWG).
13. A quorum will be reached when the Chair, the designated presenter, and at least three other technical experts are present. In the absence of a quorum, the Chair may decide to proceed as a sub-group, with outcomes being discussed with the wider Working group via email or taken forward to the next meeting at which a quorum is formed.
14. The Chair is responsible for deciding, with input from the entire Working Group, but focussing primarily on the technical discussion and the views of technical expert members:
 - the quality and acceptability of the information and analyses under review;
 - the way forward to address any deficiencies;
 - the need for any additional analyses;
 - contents of research reports, Working Group reports and AEBAR chapters;
 - choice of best models and sensitivity analyses to be presented; and
 - the status of the stocks, or the status/performance in relation to any relevant environmental standards or targets.
15. The Chair is responsible for facilitating a consultative and collaborative discussion.
15. Working Group meetings will be run formally, with agendas pre-circulated, and formal records kept of recommendations, conclusions and action items.

16. A record of recommendations, conclusions and action items will be posted on the MPI-Fisheries website after each meeting has taken place.
17. Data upon which analyses presented to the Working Groups are based must be provided to MPI in the appropriate format and level of detail in a timely manner (i.e. the data must be available and accessible to MPI; however, data confidentiality concerns mean that some data may not necessarily be made available to Working Group members).
18. Working Group processes will be evaluated periodically, with a view to identifying opportunities for improvement. Terms of Reference and the Membership and Protocols may be updated as part of this review.
19. MPI fisheries scientists and science officers will provide administrative support to the Working Groups.

Information Quality Ranking

20. Science Working Groups are required to rank the quality of research and science information that is intended or likely to inform fisheries management decisions, in accordance with the science information quality ranking guidelines in the Research Standard (pages 21–23). Information quality rankings should be documented in Working Group reports and, where appropriate, in Status of Stock summary tables. Note that:
 - Working Groups are not required to rank all research projects and analyses, but key pieces of information that are expected or likely to inform fisheries management decisions, the development of environmental decisions or the formulation of relevant policy should receive a quality ranking;
 - explanations substantiating the quality rankings will be included in Working Group reports. In particular, the quality shortcomings and concerns for moderate/mixed and low quality information should be documented; and
 - the Chair, working with participants, will determine which pieces of information require a quality ranking. Not all information resulting from a particular research project would be expected to achieve the same quality rank, and different quality ranks may be assigned to different components, conclusions or pieces of information resulting from a particular piece of research.

Record-keeping

21. The overall responsibility for record-keeping rests with the Chair of the Working Group, and includes:
 - keeping notes on recommendations, conclusions and follow-up actions for all Working Group meetings, and to ensure that these are available to all members of the Working Group and the Principal Advisor Fisheries Science in a timely manner. If full agreement on the recommendations or conclusions cannot readily be reached amongst technical experts, then the Chair will document the extent to which agreement or consensus was achieved, and record and attribute any residual disagreement in the meeting notes; and
 - compiling a list of generic assessment issues and specific research needs for each stock, species or environmental issue under the purview of the Working Group, for use in subsequent research planning processes.