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In all correspondence,
please refer to:

NAFO/24-244

04 October 2024

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, 12-21 November 2024

The Provisional Agenda for the *NAFO Scientific Council Working Group on Ecosystem Science and Assessment (WG-ESA) Meeting* is hereby dispatched to Contracting Parties.

The meeting will be held at the NAFO Secretariat in Halifax, Canada, 12–21 November 2024. Webex capabilities will also be provided for online participation. The 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/2024/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

**NAFO SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL (SC) WORKING GROUP ON ECOSYSTEM SCIENCE AND ASSESSMENT
(WG-ESA)**

NAFO Secretariat, Halifax, Canada

12-21 November 2024

Details of the meeting ToRs are given in **ANNEX 1**.

Provisional Agenda and Terms of Reference (ToRs)

- 1. Opening by the Chairs, Mar Sacau (EU) and Alfonso Pérez (EU).**
- 2. Appointment of Rapporteur**
- 3. Adoption of Agenda**
- 4. Review of Annual Meeting 2024 outcomes**
- 5. Commission requests for advice on management in 2025 and beyond, requiring input from WG-ESA in 2024 to be presented at the Scientific Council meeting June 2025.**
 - a) COM Request #1 (ANNEX A: Guidance for providing advice on Stocks Assessed).** In relation to Tier 1 of the Roadmap Scientific Council should provide annually catch information in relation to 2TCI, including recent cumulative catch levels and a scoping of expected cumulative catch levels.
 - b) COM Request #6.** In relation to the habitat impact assessment component of the Roadmap (VME and SAI analyses), the Commission requests that Scientific Council:
 - a. Continue the development of a centralized data repository using ArcGIS online to host the data and data-products for scientific advice, in conjunction with the NAFO Secretariat
 - b. Work towards the reassessment of VMEs and impact of bottom fisheries on VMEs for 2027; including potential management options in the reassessment of bottom fisheries.
 - c. Develop materials on the potential of submitting NAFO coral bottom fishing closed areas as OECMs for discussion at the 2025 WG-EAFFM meeting.
- 6. Commission requests for advice on management in 2025 and beyond, requiring longer term input from WG-ESA.**
 - a) COM Request #5.** In relation to the Ecosystem Roadmap as a whole, the Commission requests that the Scientific Council develop a reference document detailing the ecosystem roadmap, for completion in the next 1-3 years.
 - b) COM Request #10.** Noting the voluntary contribution of the United States to support a consultant to provide feedback on NAFO's processes to address climate change impacts, requests the SC to conduct an analysis of progress and/or outcomes of that work.
- 7. Other Business**
- 8. Date and place of next meeting**
- 9. Adjournment**

ANNEX 1. WG-ESA TERMS OF REFERENCE

Please note that this schedule is provisional and subject to changes.
There is flexibility and some items are still pending confirmation.

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/Mar*)
2. Visual observations from seabed surveys in the Flemish Pass area (NRA) and 30 coral closure (Canadian) (*Bárbara*)
3. Update on the centralized data repository using ArcGIS online portal [*COM. Request#6a*]. (*Neil, Lauren, etc*)

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 the review of NAFO VMEs: Species Distribution Models of VME taxa and individual VME Indicators [*COM. Request#6b*] (*Ellen, Cam, Javier Murillo, Bárbara, Anna, Sara, Claude Nozeres, etc*)
2. Assessment of SAI and reassessment of bottom fisheries impacts: Discussion about lead and timing for completion of the tasks [*COM. Request#6b*] (*All*)
3. Assessment of SAI and reassessment of bottom fisheries impacts: Provide potential management options as part of the reassessment of bottom fishing [*COM. Request#6b*] (*All*)
4. Update on the SAI work [*COM. Request#6b*] (*Andy*)
5. Presentation on the application of dRBS method (dynamic Relative Benthic Status) in SPRFMO: Framework for looking at impact assessments in NAFO [*COM. Request#6b*] (*Ashley Rowden, Owen Anderson, Bradley*)
6. Summary of the information regarding the current and future impacts of climate change on NAFO-managed stocks, non-target species, and associated ecosystems; and identification of any consequential data gaps, research needs and opportunities for productive research. [*COM request #10*] (*⊗: Pending confirmation*)
7. Voluntary contribution from USA for Climate Change contract (*⊗: Pending confirmation*)

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. Update on submitting NAFO seamount and sponge closed areas as OECMs, and developing support materials for coral closures as OECMs [*COM request #6c*] (*Andy, Ellen, Daniela, Brynhildur, etc*)
2. Studying the effect of seismic surveying on groundfish fisheries offshore Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada (*Corey Morris*).
3. Preparedness and response to accidental marine spills with a focus on environmental monitoring of oils and HNS. (*Miguel Santos ⊗: Pending confirmation*)
4. An integrated numerical framework for Environmental Risk Assessment in marine ecosystems affected by accidental spills (*Irene Martins*)

5. Update on seabed macrolitter on Flemish Cap (Div. 3M), Flemish Pass (Div. 3L) and Grand Banks of Newfoundland (Divs. 3NO): Sources, drivers of distribution and reviewed protocol for groundfish surveys (*Santi/Sara/Pablo/Esther/Mar*).
6. Regular Monitoring of Ecosystem Summary Sheets (ESSs) for Divisions 3LNO and 3M [*COM. Request#1*] (*Mariano, Diana*)
7. Formalization of a full Workplan for the 2027 ESSs update: Analysis of by-catch and discards and proposal for building an ETP species list. [*COM. Request#1*] (*Patricia, Mark, Diana, Javier Murillo, Jana*)
8. Update on Primary Productivity Estimates to inform EPP models for TCI calculations [*COM. Request#1*] (*Mariano, STACFEN, etc*)
9. Update on the work towards developing operational objectives for the protection of VMEs and biodiversity in the NRA (*Andy*)
10. Develop Table of Contents for the NAFO Roadmap reference document [*COM. Request#5*] (*Mariano*)
11. Brainstorming session on the approach to implement ecosystem knowledge into the single species stock assessment and scientific advice on management strategies. (Alfonso, all)

THEME 4: OTHER MATTERS

1. Update presentation on the work on carbon sediment content in Canada, protected area overlays and early work on trawling distribution (*Graham Epstein and Susanna Fuller*)
2. UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Conference of the Parties 16 (COP 16) outcomes + Updates on BBNJ Agreement (*Daniela Diz*)
3. Update on EAFM Symposium (*Tony Thompson*).

ANNEX 2: Logistical/Meeting Information

Location

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

NAFO Secretariat
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

The Hollis Halifax - a DoubleTree Suites

1649 Hollis St, Halifax, NS
Ph: +1 902-429-7233

Residence Inn by Marriott Halifax Downtown

1599 Grafton St., Halifax, NS
Ph: +1 902-422-0493

The Sutton Place Hotel Halifax

1700 Grafton St., Halifax, NS
Ph: +1 902-932-7548

Muir, Autograph Collection

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

Four Points by Sheraton Halifax

1496 Hollis St., Halifax, NS
Ph: +1 902-423-4444

Halifax Marriott Harbourfront Hotel

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

The Prince George Hotel Halifax

1725 Market St., Halifax, NS
Ph: +1 800-565-1567

Cambridge Suite Hotel Halifax

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

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

Yellow Cab

Ph: +1 902-420-0000

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