

MSC HANDBOOK

Guidelines for Developing
MSC Pre-Assessment and
Full Assessment Projects



WWF-US Oceans Program
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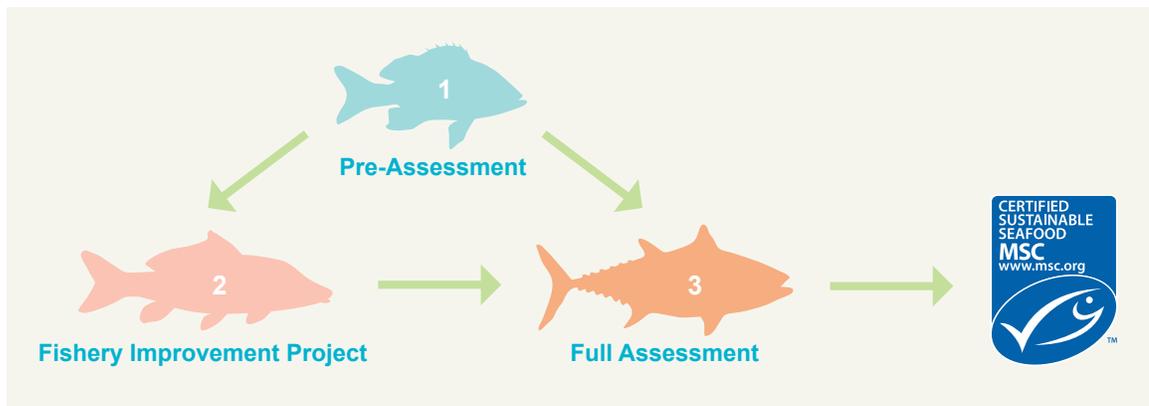
Executive Summary

For more than 15 years, WWF-US has worked to guide fisheries around the world through the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification process. Through implementation of more than 50 projects across all corners of the globe—and in partnership with WWF offices worldwide and hundreds of fishery stakeholders—we have developed and refined our approach to facilitating successful MSC pre- and full assessments.

A Three-Step Approach to Sustainability

WWF-US uses a three-step process to help a fishery identify its sustainability issues, implement improvements (if needed), and achieve certification:

- **STEP 1: MSC Pre-Assessment**
- **STEP 2: Fishery Improvement Project (FIP)**
- **STEP 3: MSC Full Assessment**



The *MSC Handbook* details the approach to MSC pre-assessment and full assessment developed by WWF-US in global collaboration with a number of WWF Network offices, fishers, governments, academics, private sector partners, and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In the following pages, we present a set of guidelines and an MSC Toolkit to help simplify the approach to MSC certification and improved sustainability.

We hope this handbook will help you join these efforts and develop, implement, or participate in a successful MSC certification project.

Let's get started.

About the MSC Handbook

The *MSC Handbook*. For fisheries engaging in MSC pre-assessment or full assessment, we present a set of guidelines and tools to help you develop and facilitate your own MSC certification projects. This handbook is not intended to provide a detailed description of each step in the MSC process, which is addressed by documentation developed by the MSC (see Appendix I on page 39), but instead serves as a guide for facilitating and coordinating a successful certification project.

The *FIP Handbook*. For fisheries working to develop a FIP, you can use the *MSC Handbook* in conjunction with the *FIP Handbook*. The *MSC Handbook* will help guide you through the MSC pre-assessment process, which is the first step in developing a comprehensive FIP. The *FIP Handbook* includes a toolkit, with various examples and templates, which guides stakeholders through the remainder of the FIP process.

Follow the link for more information about FIPs and to access the FIP Handbook: <https://sites.google.com/site/fisheryimprovementprojects/home>.

WWF's goal in sharing the MSC Handbook is to help fishery stakeholders facilitate successful MSC certification projects on their own in order to improve the sustainability of fisheries worldwide.

What Is a Fishery Improvement Project?

For fisheries that do not yet meet the MSC standard, a FIP offers a stepwise approach to achieving sustainable practices. FIPs are typically multi-year projects that involve the collaboration of fishery stakeholders—including fishers, buyers, managers, researchers, and NGOs—to improve fishing practices and management so a fishery can ultimately perform at a level consistent with the MSC standard.



Marine Stewardship Council Certification

The MSC is a global, non-profit organization that runs the world's leading certification and ecolabelling program for sustainable seafood. The MSC uses its fishery certification program and ecolabel to contribute to the health of the world's oceans by

- recognizing and rewarding sustainable fishing practices
- influencing the choices people make when buying seafood
- working with partners to transform the seafood market to a sustainable basis

MSC certification uses science-based criteria to confirm that seafood products come from well-managed, sustainable fisheries. Together, MSC certified fisheries and those in full assessment represent more than 10 percent of the annual global harvest of wild-capture fisheries.

Worldwide, more than 22,000 seafood products bear the blue MSC ecolabel.

For more information on the MSC program, please visit www.msc.org.





Why MSC?

A number of ecolabelling programs exist for wild-capture fisheries. The MSC, however, is a globally recognized and truly independent third-party certification program that holds the most credible sustainability standard for wild-caught fish for the following reasons:

- The MSC is fully compliant with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries and is consistent with the ISEAL Alliance codes of good practice on standard setting and impact monitoring (see Appendix I on page 39 for more information on the FAO Guidelines and ISEAL codes).
- Accredited, third-party Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) complete fishery assessments against the MSC standard.
- The MSC assessment methodology is fully defined and publicly available, as is the guidance for use of the methodology. Performance indicators are measurable with detailed scoring guideposts for each. See “MSC Scoring” on page 16.
- The MSC standard not only ensures that responsible management practices are in place, but also that fisheries are operating at sustainable levels (e.g., stocks are above the point of impaired recruitment; the fishery does not cause serious or irreversible harm to habitat structure or function).

A 2012 global analysis of wild-capture seafood sustainability certification programs determined that the MSC remains most compliant with international sustainability criteria—greatly exceeding the performance of other fishery certification programs.

(See Appendix I on page 39 for a link to the full report.)

- The program includes annual monitoring and review processes to ensure that certified fisheries continue to meet the MSC standard.
- A robust traceability system, the MSC Chain of Custody (CoC) certification program, ensures that MSC certified products can be traced back to a certified fishery at each point in the supply chain.
- The MSC certification process is fully transparent, and stakeholders (see page 11) play an active role in each assessment to reduce the risk of undue influence by any one party during the certification process. Each assessment team is required to consult with stakeholders at several points during the assessment process in order to ensure a scientifically robust outcome.

As a result of these factors, WWF believes that the MSC is the world’s best certification program for wild-caught seafood.

Benefits of MSC Certification

For fisheries, benefits of MSC certification could include

- retention of current markets (particularly for those selling to companies that are committed to sourcing MSC certified products)
- access to new markets
- preferred supplier status
- price premiums
- product differentiation
- international recognition of sustainable practices
- improved fishing practices
- improved fishery management
- increased knowledge about the fishery
- improved community organization and involvement
- motivation for improved practices by peer-group fisheries
- a credible sustainability claim
- confidence in the sustainability of the fishery
- security in fishing-related livelihoods for the future
- local pride

For seafood buyers, sourcing from an MSC certified fishery

- provides confidence in the sustainability of the product
- allows for a credible and traceable sustainability claim
- demonstrates a public commitment to sustainability
- helps to meet growing consumer demand for sustainable products

Additional information about the benefits of MSC certification can be found in the reports listed in Appendix I (page 39).

The MSC Standard

The MSC environmental standard for sustainable fishing has three overarching principles, each supported by a number of detailed performance indicators:

Principle 1: Sustainable fish stocks

The fishery must operate so that fishing can continue indefinitely and must not overexploit the resources.

Principle 2: Minimal environmental impact

Fishing operations should be managed to maintain the structure, productivity, function, and diversity of the ecosystem on which the fishery depends.

Principle 3: Effective management

The fishery must meet all local, national, and international laws and must have a management system in place to respond to changing circumstances and maintain sustainability.

Twenty-eight detailed performance indicators support the principles. Consult the most recent version of the MSC Certification Requirements (link available in Appendix I on page 39) for the detailed criteria and scoring guideposts.

For more information on the MSC standard, please visit www.msc.org.

Who Is Eligible for MSC Status?

The MSC standard is applicable to all wild-capture fisheries around the world (except for those that use poison or dynamite, or target sharks for their fins), including small-scale fisheries and fisheries in developing countries. In fact, a number of small-scale and developing country fisheries around the world have already received MSC certification.

Many small-scale fisheries lack sufficient data to be evaluated against certain performance indicators in the MSC's standard assessment tree. In response to this challenge, the MSC developed its Risk-Based Framework, which uses stakeholder feedback to assess risk in lieu of a quantitative analysis. This approach, described in the MSC Certification Requirements (see Appendix I on page 39), provides fisheries an additional way to be assessed when quantitative information is not available.



The MSC is driving fishery improvements at a global scale by incentivizing fishery stakeholders to meet its science-based sustainability criteria.

Using the MSC Process as a Sustainability Tool

As seafood purveyors around the world (such as Walmart, Sysco, and Carrefour) commit to sourcing from sustainable fisheries, more and more fisheries are striving to meet the MSC standard.

Company commitments to sourcing MSC certified products (see Appendix I on page 39 for more information) provide leverage for creating positive change on the water. Fisheries that want to be MSC certified typically make improvements both before entering the MSC process (in order to meet the MSC standard) and after being certified (in order to meet conditions of certification and remain certified).

WWF's Role in Market-Based Incentives

WWF is currently working with a number of corporate partners that have publicly committed to sourcing products only from fisheries that are MSC certified, in the MSC full assessment process, or in a comprehensive FIP.

WWF uses its corporate partnerships to create market-based incentives for sustainable fishing based on the MSC standard, and provides guidance to fisheries aspiring to become MSC certified or otherwise perform at a level consistent with the MSC standard. We have generated a number of significant conservation successes by engaging fisheries in both developed and developing countries in MSC certification projects.



MSC CASE STUDY

Ashtamudi Estuary Clam Fishery



India's first full assessment

BACKGROUND

Between 1,000 and 1,500 fishers collect short-necked clams in Ashtamudi Estuary by hand rake, diving, or handpicking.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, short-necked clams became depleted in Ashtamudi Estuary due to overexploitation caused by indiscriminate fishing practices. In response, clam fishers and fishery managers created an awareness program focused on the negative effects of harvesting undersized clams, established a minimum mesh size, and banned fishing activity during the peak breeding and spat settlement seasons.

These self-imposed conservation measures have had positive effects since 1994, when clam

production started to increase considerably and the fishers began to sustainably harvest the resource.

The fishery has a strong export market and sends a variety of product forms to Japan, Australia, Vietnam, Thailand, and the United Arab Emirates.

SPECIES: Short-necked clams
(*Paphia malabarica*)

SCOPE: Ashtamudi Estuary, India

PARTNERS: WWF, local fishing association, Ashtamudi Clam Governing Council, Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Kerala State Fisheries Department

The MSC certification process

After implementing sustainable fishing measures themselves and witnessing the benefits of these measures, the clam fishers in Ashtamudi Estuary and the local exporter were very interested in having the fishery certified as sustainable.

In October 2010, WWF-US and WWF-India completed a pre-assessment of the fishery in partnership with the local fishing association, to which approximately 90 percent of the clam fishers belong. The CAB found that the clam stock appears healthy, the harvesting methods are highly likely to be sustainable, and the impacts of the fishery on the marine environment are minimal because of the low-intensity gathering methods.

However, the pre-assessment identified a few minor concerns. Specifically, the fishery needed to provide

- management and information-gathering strategies related to possible effects of the fishery on retained, discarded, and endangered, threatened, or protected (ETP) species as well as on habitats (even if no impacts from the fishery exist);
- well-defined fishery-specific objectives; and
- evidence of a system (e.g., a governing council) in place for stakeholder engagement in decision-making.

Over a period of about two years, WWF worked with fishery stakeholders to address these issues so the fishery could initiate full assessment.

The clam fishery officially entered MSC full assessment in June 2013. WWF is a co-client in the assessment along with the Governing Council. We anticipate that the fishery will be certified sustainable by the MSC in approximately September 2014, and will be India's first MSC certified fishery.

Anticipated benefits of MSC certification

- Since the onset of this project, management of the clam resource has greatly improved, benefitting the marine habitat and improving clam fishers' livelihoods.
- The certification of the Ashtamudi clam fishery will represent the first MSC certified fishery in India. As such, we hope the fishery will catalyze interest in MSC certification and sustainability from other fisheries throughout coastal India.
- The newly formed Governing Council is the first of its kind in India for managing a resource.
- Through this project, WWF has built strong relationships with management officials and other stakeholders and become recognized as the leading environmental organization for fisheries work in the region.
- The fishery was profiled in a report by the Prince's Charities International Sustainability Unit titled, "Towards Global Sustainable Fisheries: The Opportunity for Transition." The report reviewed stories of progress in fisheries and the emerging consensus on solutions to sustain and increase seafood production.

Lessons learned

- The Governing Council took much longer than expected to establish due to competing schedules of the large number of stakeholders. We recommend budgeting more time than anticipated for activities requiring the involvement of a large number of stakeholders.

MSC Certification Stakeholders



The Client

The client of an MSC assessment represents the fishery that hopes to become certified and will serve as the certificate holder if certification is awarded. Various entities may serve as the client, including fishing associations, government agencies, or private companies.

It is important that the fishery client have the leverage to affect change in the fishery as needed. The client contracts a CAB to conduct the assessment and works directly with the CAB throughout the assessment process.

The Co-Client Relationship

Some fisheries find it helpful to have a co-client as a partner to help navigate the complexities of the MSC certification process. The co-client can help facilitate and coordinate the project (see page 22 regarding roles and responsibilities).

For WWF certification projects, we serve as a co-client in the pre- or full assessment along with a representative from the fishery who will be the certificate-holder if/when an MSC certificate is awarded. The co-client relationship provides WWF access to the process and certifier, allowing us to efficiently and effectively guide the process and provide technical support. Part of WWF's co-client role typically entails helping to fundraise for the assessment and then contracting the CAB directly for the work.

The CAB

The CAB conducts the pre-assessment or full assessment of the fishery against the MSC standard. CABs are a third party, independent of both the MSC and the fishery client. A pre-assessment team typically comprises one or two expert team members, while a full assessment team consists of two to four experts. CABs may contract independent consultants (e.g., scientists or former fishery managers) to serve on an assessment team.

Fishery Stakeholders

Stakeholder involvement is a key part of the MSC process, particularly during full assessment. During full assessment, stakeholders are invited to provide feedback about nominations for assessment team members, the performance indicators to be used in the assessment, the performance of the fishery in relation to the MSC standard, peer reviewers, the public comment draft report, the final report, and the determination of whether or not a fishery should be certified.

Participants in an assessment will vary depending on the nature of the fishery and the extent of local interest, but fishery stakeholders often include

- producers
- other members of the fishery's supply chain
- fishery managers
- government officials
- academics
- environmental NGOs

Ideally, a diverse group of stakeholders should be part of the process so that all fishery sectors are represented and can provide as much information about the fishery as possible during the assessment process, ensuring an accurate and robust analysis by the assessment team.



For more information about serving as a stakeholder during an MSC assessment, please see the MSC's *A Stakeholder's Guide to the Marine Stewardship Council* (<http://www.msc.org/documents/get-certified/stakeholders>).

The MSC

The MSC serves as the standard holder. It ensures that the program keeps up with best practice guidelines and the best available science, and that CABs are applying the standard appropriately.

The MSC does not certify fisheries itself. Accreditation Services International (ASI) accredits independent CABs to conduct assessments against the MSC standard. This third-party approach ensures that the program is robust and credible, and meets best practice guidelines.

MSC CASE STUDY

Bahamas Spiny Lobster



Developing a FIP to move toward MSC certification

BACKGROUND

The Bahamian lobster fishery occurs over 45,000 square miles of the Great Bahama Bank and Little Bahama Bank. These relatively shallow and productive waters provide a valuable lobster fishery to more than 9,000 part- and full-time fishers who target lobster during the fishing season (August 1 - March 31) using wooden traps and casitas.

In 2011, landings reached 6.25 million pounds (tail weight) valued at \$66.3 million, with approximately 90% of all lobster caught exported overseas, mainly to the U.S. and France.

SPECIES: *Panulirus argus*

SCOPE: Entire Bahamian fishery

PARTNERS: WWF, Department of Marine Resources (DMR), Bahamas Marine Exporters Association, The Nature Conservancy, local NGOs

Measuring sustainability against the Marine Stewardship Council standard

In 2009, the Bahamian lobster fishery completed an MSC pre-assessment that compared the current status of the fishery against the MSC standard. The pre-assessment provided an important benchmark to help monitor and evaluate future management strategies and identified important issues that must be addressed before the Bahamian lobster fishery can proceed to an MSC full assessment.

A FIP is being implemented to address the issues raised in the pre-assessment, so that the fishery will perform at a level consistent with the MSC standard.

To help maintain the long-term sustainability of the fishery, the Bahamas Marine Exporters Association (BMEA), the Department of Marine Resources (DMR), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Friends of the Environment (FRIENDS), The Bahamas National Trust (BNT), the Bahamas Reef Environment Educational Foundation (BREEF), and WWF are working in partnership with lobster fishers to encourage more responsible fishing practices.

Through the implementation of a FIP, these collaborators are working to move the fishery in a step-wise approach towards MSC certification.

Room for improvement

The pre-assessment against the MSC standard indicated the Bahamian spiny lobster fishery needs to improve in key areas, including

- monitoring and enforcement to prevent illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing
- implementation of harvest control rules to manage fishing effort so that lobsters are not overfished

Steps toward progress

To date, FIP activities that have been completed include

- an improved data collection system in collaboration with local processors and the Bahamas DMR, which will facilitate the ease of updating the stock assessment
- formation of a Lobster Management Working Group, a multi-stakeholder group that will be responsible for developing a harvest control rule, developing a Code of Practice at Sea for fishers, agreeing on a research plan for the fishery, and improving compliance
- work with communications experts to support the development of a communications plan to help evaluate the success of specific FIP activities, such as outreach to fishers on existing fishing regulations
- initiation of a literature review to assess the habitat and ecosystem impacts of the fishery
- completion of a stock assessment in 2011, which was updated in 2012 and 2014

Next steps

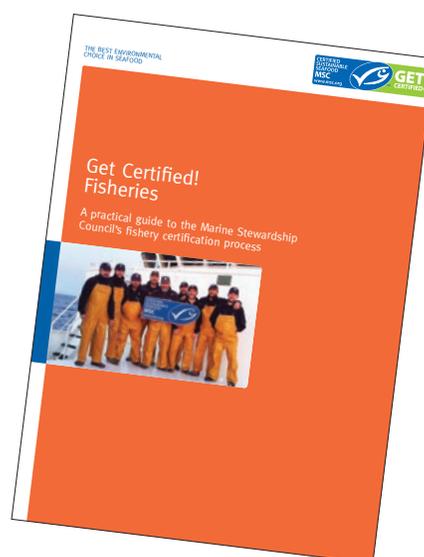
Activities to address deficiencies in the fishery are being guided by the FIP Action Plan and implemented in collaboration with local stakeholders. In May 2013 and May 2014, annual FIP review meetings were held with fishery stakeholders to assess the progress of the fishery against the MSC standard. The fishery anticipates beginning MSC full assessment by 2015.

The MSC Certification Process

There are two distinct components of the MSC certification process:

- **Pre-Assessment**—a preliminary (and, if desired, confidential) review to determine whether a fishery is ready for full assessment
- **Full Assessment**—a more intensive process that determines whether the fishery meets the MSC standard and can be certified.

The major steps in the MSC pre- and full assessment processes are illustrated here. For more details on the individual steps, please consult the MSC's *Get Certified* booklet (see Appendix I on page 39 for a link), or visit the MSC website at <http://www.msc.org/get-certified/fisheries/assessment-process>.



MSC Certification Process	
Pre-Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information gathering• Site visit• Client draft report• Final report• Decision about whether to proceed to full assessment	Full Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formation of assessment team• Building the assessment tree• Information gathering• Site visit• Scoring• Client draft report• Peer review draft report• Public comment draft report• Final assessment report and determination• Public certification report• Certificate issued

It is important to note that every certification project is different, and that the information here is intended to provide a framework for each pre-assessment or full assessment project within which stakeholders can develop and implement an approach that addresses their specific circumstances and goals.

MSC Pre-Assessment

Pre-assessment provides a brief analysis of the fishery against the MSC standard, and usually takes approximately six months to complete.

An MSC pre-assessment provides guidance as to whether or not a specific fishery is likely to meet the MSC standard for sustainable fishing. The goals of a pre-assessment are to

- obtain a clear understanding of the nature, scale, and intensity of the fishery
- evaluate the potential of the fishery to achieve MSC certification
- identify any issues that may compromise a full assessment

An accredited third-party CAB is contracted by the client to conduct the pre-assessment. The assessment team does not precisely score the fishery against the MSC criteria during pre-assessment, but will provide a brief red/yellow/green “traffic light” analysis of how the fishery aligns with each performance indicator and what issues would likely prevent the fishery from meeting the MSC standard. For more information about MSC scoring, refer to page 16.

Based on the analysis, recommendations and next steps include:

- If the pre-assessment finds the fishery likely to meet the MSC standard, the CAB will recommend that it proceed to full assessment.
- If the CAB identifies actions that should be undertaken by the client prior to proceeding with full assessment, the client may desire to work with stakeholders to develop a comprehensive FIP.

Although the pre-assessment process and report may remain confidential to the client, WWF recommends that the pre-assessment be made public so that stakeholders can openly discuss the findings and collaborate on a way forward. This is particularly important if the client expects to use the pre-assessment report to develop a FIP. It is critical that the fishery client and any co-clients discuss this disclosure before the pre-assessment begins.

An MSC pre-assessment helps identify issues preventing a fishery from meeting the MSC standard.

Why Conduct a Pre-Assessment?

The three primary reasons why a fishery might initiate a pre-assessment are to

- ensure that the fishery is ready for full assessment
- take the first step in developing a FIP
- highlight known sustainability issues

Even fisheries that anticipate they already meet the MSC standard often find it worthwhile to complete a pre-assessment before making the financial commitment to a full assessment.

Pre-assessment can lead to full assessment and certification. However, some fisheries choose to use the pre-assessment process for other purposes, including

- to help identify areas for improvement, possibly as the first step in developing a FIP to address issues preventing the fishery from meeting the MSC standard
- to bring sustainability issues to the attention of other stakeholders, such as management authorities

Some fisheries have used the pre-assessment process strategically to obtain an expert analysis that highlights poor practices of other actors fishing on the same stock or concerns about management deficiencies or illegal fishing (read the case study of the California red abalone fishery on page 24).

MSC Full Assessment

MSC full assessment will determine whether the fishery can be certified and is eligible to use the MSC ecolabel. Full assessment usually takes 12 to 18 months to complete.

Fisheries that are likely to meet the MSC standard (based on the results of a pre-assessment or FIP review meeting) are ready to enter the MSC full assessment process.

During MSC full assessment, the CAB evaluates whether the fishery complies with the MSC environmental standard for sustainable fishing. The full assessment process involves

- formation of an expert assessment team
- an information-gathering phase and site visit
- development of a detailed assessment report that scores the fishery against the MSC performance indicators
- client review of the assessment report
- peer review of the assessment report
- stakeholder review of the assessment report
- final determination of whether the fishery meets the MSC standard
- a period during which stakeholders can lodge objections to certification.

The full assessment process is public and involves stakeholder participation in many steps along the way (see page 11).

The MSC certificate is valid for five years, after which a fishery must be re-assessed in order to remain MSC certified.

Please visit the MSC website for more information on the full assessment process (<http://www.msc.org/get-certified/fisheries/assessment-process>).

To meet the MSC standard, a fishery must score at least 60 on every performance indicator, and an average score of 80 for each principle.

MSC Scoring

The MSC's scoring system was developed with the help of hundreds of fisheries and environmental experts from around the world.

The MSC standard's three principles (see page 18) contain a total of 28 performance indicators. Each indicator has three scoring guideposts: 60, 80, or 100:

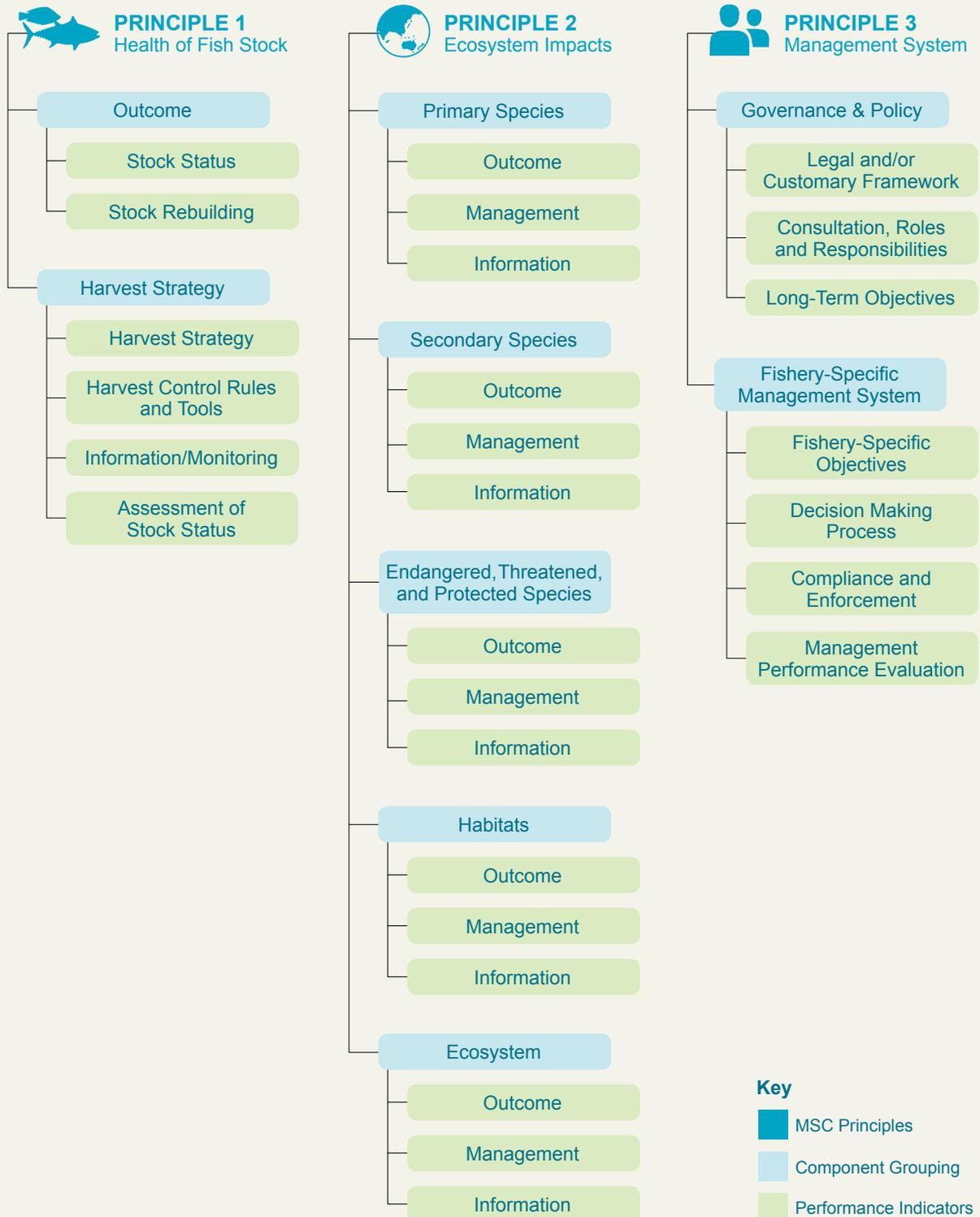
- A score of 60 represents the **minimum acceptable** limit for sustainability practice.
- A score of 80 indicates that the fishery adheres to **global best practice**.
- A score of 100 represents the performance expected from a **near perfect** fishery.

In order for a fishery to meet the MSC standard, it must score at least 60 on each performance indicator, but achieve an average score of at least 80 for each principle. This means that while a fishery must score 80 or above for most indicators, some scores are allowed to fall between 60-80.

At the end of the full assessment process, a fishery that meets the MSC standard is awarded certification.



MSC Assessment Tree



Conditions of Certification

Nearly every fishery that passes the full assessment process does so with conditions of certification. Conditions of certification are placed on a fishery for any aspect of a performance indicator that scores between 60 and 80. Conditions require that a fishery improve its performance in line with a specific, time-bound action plan so that it raises its score against the relevant performance indicator(s) to 80 or above during the certificate period.

A fishery must fulfill its conditions of certification before it can be recertified. As such, conditions of certification create incentives for continued improvement in certified fisheries.

Chain of Custody

Certification of a fishery alone does not allow the sale of product with the MSC ecolabel. This

requires separate CoC certification. The fishery assessment will identify the point at which fishery certification ends and chain of custody certification must begin.

CoC is the responsibility of those buying and selling the certified product. You might want to reach out to relevant points in the supply chain during the full assessment to inform them of this requirement.

A site visit is required to assess supply chain companies against the CoC standard, so there can be substantial cost-savings from having the CAB conduct CoC certification of any local companies at the same time as the full assessment of the fishery (assuming you are confident that the fishery will pass the assessment).

Please visit the MSC website for more information on the CoC process (<http://www.msc.org/get-certified/supply-chain>).



MSC CASE STUDY

Ben Tre Clam Fishery



Certification of a small-scale fishery in Vietnam

BACKGROUND

Ben Tre is located at the end of the Mekong River and covers four estuaries that flow to the South China Sea. The biodiversity of the area has helped support coastal communities for hundreds of years.

Around one thousand fishers who are part of the Ben Tre fishing cooperative collect clams by hand, usually with the aid of a rake, during the strong low tides of the lunar cycle. Annual catch is approximately 9,000 mt.

The main markets for Ben Tre clams are domestic, but clams have increasingly been exported to the European Union, Japan, China, Taiwan, and the United States.

SPECIES: Asiatic hard clam (*Meretrix lyrata*)

SCOPE: Ben Tre Province, Vietnam

PARTNERS: WWF, Ben Tre Peoples Committee Department of Fisheries, Ben Tre Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ben Tre clam cooperative

The MSC certification process

Pre-assessment of the fishery was completed in June 2007. The pre-assessment pointed out problems with the enforcement of regulations and illegal fishing, as well as inconsistencies in management, enforcement, and data collection. In addition, the pre-assessment identified issues with the instability of the clam brood stock and potential effects on stock health.

To help overcome these issues, a clam cooperative was formed to co-manage the fishery. The cooperative started collecting additional information on clam seed biomass and catches, and conducted research to address other information gaps. To address the risk of low clam seed levels, the cooperative promoted an increase in the clam brood stock level and began controlling sales of clam seed to other provinces.

The full assessment process began in August 2008, and in November 2009 the Ben Tre clam fishery became the first fishery in Southeast Asia to receive MSC certification.

Benefits of MSC certification

- Shortly after certification, the price of clams increased by more than 30 percent and the total value at landing increased 165 percent. Many new buyers from Europe and the US expressed interest in sourcing from this fishery, including in new forms of the product, with demand exceeding the fishery's supply.
- The MSC process helped to improve knowledge about the fishery by community members and local authorities, who are key to paving the way toward a sustainable future for the fishery. The fishing community is now better organized and fishers understand topics such as the importance of ecosystem protection.

- The community used the MSC process to lobby for changes to fishery management, including filling data gaps, developing new policies and regulations where necessary, and implementing stronger enforcement measures.
- After the pre-assessment pointed out the risks to stock health, the cooperatives promoted the expansion of the clam brood stock and control of the selling of clam seed to other provinces. Improved management of the fishery, particularly in ensuring healthy stock levels, will ensure the long-term sustainability of the clams and their environment, and thus promote more sustainable livelihoods for the fishing community.
- Significant international attention was brought to the Ben Tre clam fishery, as it became the first fishery in Southeast Asia (and the first clam fishery) to receive MSC certification. Interest in the fishery by scientific, economic, and social organizations—both within and outside of Vietnam—helps to support the long-term development of Ben Tre fisheries, in particular, and Vietnamese fisheries, in general.

Lessons learned

- Covering the costs of annual audits and re-assessment after the five-year certificate period is difficult for many small-scale fisheries. In Ben Tre, audit fees have been difficult to produce on an annual basis. Stakeholders recommend that communities develop a plan for covering annual audit fees and costs associated with implementing conditions of certification before becoming certified.
- With the increased value of clams from Ben Tre as a result of certification, the community experienced an influx of poachers from other provinces and organized thievery of clams at a large scale. It is wise to anticipate the potential social and economic impacts of certification and train relevant personnel to respond to issues that arise.

Roles and Responsibilities

Below is a brief description of the roles and responsibilities of some of the key players that might be involved in an MSC project. These roles and responsibilities will vary depending on the nature of the fishery under assessment and whether it is undergoing pre- or full assessment.

➔ Project Facilitator

The role of the the project facilitator is to guide the strategic planning and execution of the project and to ensure the project stays on track and delivers the desired results.

The project facilitator guides fisheries through the MSC certification process by

- managing the project
- helping to fundraise
- serving as a co-client
- contracting a CAB
- serving as liaison between the fishery, CAB, and MSC
- providing technical guidance
- reviewing reports
- assisting with communications

The project management aspect of the MSC certification process can be time consuming, and many fisheries do not have the time or resources to coordinate an MSC assessment themselves. A project facilitator can help ensure a smooth and thorough assessment process.

The project facilitator does not need to be based in the local region where the fishery occurs. For projects in which WWF-US is a partner, we typically serve as the project facilitator. For a project managed entirely in-country, a single person can often fulfil the roles of both project facilitator and project coordinator (see the following section).

➔ Project Coordinator

The project coordinator serves as the local, day-to-day manager of the certification project. The project coordinator should be based in the same region as the fishery and can come from an environmental NGO, from within the fishing industry, or from another stakeholder group such as a government agency. For projects in which WWF-US is a partner, we typically work closely with another WWF office or NGO that coordinates the project locally.

Project coordinators help gather information about the fishery to be used in the assessment, manage stakeholder relations, and provide technical and logistical support to the CAB.

General project activities that the project coordinator is responsible for include

- conducting outreach to key stakeholders
- gathering information about the fishery that addresses the MSC performance indicators
- organizing the site visit
- reviewing the draft report

See Appendix IX on page 59 for an example terms of reference for a project coordinator for a pre-assessment and Appendix X on page 63 for an example terms of reference for a project coordinator for a full assessment.

The effectiveness of the project coordinator is one of the most important factors contributing to the overall success of an MSC project. Effective project coordinators are organized, committed, and responsive; have at least a basic understanding of the MSC process; and have excellent working relationships with various fishery stakeholders.

➔ Fishery Client

The fishery client represents the fishery under assessment and is typically from an industry entity, such as a fishing company or association. However, a government agency can also play the role of the client. The client plays a key role in providing information about the fishery to the CAB and reviewing draft reports for accuracy. The fishery client will be responsible for ensuring that any conditions of certification are met during the certificate period.

➔ CAB

The role of the third-party certifier is to analyze the fishery against the MSC standard for sustainable fishing. The CAB will put together an assessment team of usually one to two people for a pre-assessment and three to four people for a full assessment.

The assessment team will visit the fishery to gather information and talk with key stakeholders, then write an assessment report and recommend whether the fishery should proceed from pre-assessment to full assessment or from full assessment to certification.

➔ Fishers

Fishers have a vast amount of knowledge about the fishery that is very valuable during the assessment process. Fishers can play a key role by participating in meetings and providing information to the CAB for use in the analysis.

➔ NGOs, Scientific Experts, and Researchers

Environmental NGOs, scientific experts, and researchers can help provide information to the CAB before or during the site visit. Fishery experts can also be helpful in reviewing draft assessment reports on behalf of the client.

➔ Fishery Managers/Authorities

Government representatives can play a key role by allowing staff to provide information about the fishery to the CAB and participate in project-related meetings, and/or by providing financial resources.

In many cases, a fishery may require significant changes related to its management that require government involvement and oversight in order to meet the MSC standard. Government support of the project is, therefore, critical.

➔ Private Sector

Many MSC certifications and FIPs are driven by market demand for products that are MSC certified or sourced from fisheries engaged in FIPs. This market demand for more sustainable sourcing makes the private sector (retailers, food service providers, suppliers, and exporters) a key stakeholder in an MSC project, with much to be gained by contributing to efforts to expand available sources of sustainable seafood.

Private sector companies can communicate to their supply chain the importance of an MSC pre-assessment or full assessment for the fishery (see Appendix II on page 41), and can help provide funding for the project.

MSC CASE STUDY

California Red Abalone Fishery



Using the pre-assessment process to identify deficiencies and set goals

BACKGROUND

The California Abalone Association (CAA) was formed in 1971 and is a volunteer organization based in Santa Barbara, California. The CAA has been an active participant in abalone fisheries management for over 40 years.

Abalone fishing in the waters fished by the CAA was closed in 1997, when the state of California created a moratorium on both commercial and recreational practices due to the depletion of the abalone stock. The state also mandated the creation of a recovery and management plan for the stock.

In January 2006, the CAA began collaborating with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) on the consideration of a limited abalone fishery at San Miguel Island (SMI). This idea

quickly engendered a heated debate among the commercial fishing, recreational diving, and conservation communities.

The California Fish and Game Commission (the Commission) stated that it would consider in January 2010 four different management alternatives for a potential fishery at SMI proposed by different stakeholders in the fishery, including the CAA.

SPECIES: Red abalone

SCOPE: San Miguel Island (Santa Barbara Channel Islands, California, United States)

PARTNERS: WWF, California Abalone Association, University of California at Santa Barbara, California Department of Fish and Game, California Fish and Game Commission

Measuring sustainability against the MSC standard

WWF partnered with the CAA to complete a pre-assessment of a potential red abalone fishery at SMI in the Santa Barbara Channel Islands.

The CAA hoped to use the MSC pre-assessment process to inform the development of management recommendations that were consistent with the MSC standard. Specifically, they wished to gain a third-party perspective regarding the likely performance and effectiveness of the CAA's proposed plan and to identify specific elements that the management plan must include in order for a reopened fishery to ensure the long-term viability and future health of the red abalone resource.

The project presented a unique opportunity to test the hypothesis that the MSC process can be used to encourage and ensure the recovery of a fishery. A site visit was held in October 2009, and the CAB completed the pre-assessment in December 2009.

Room for improvement

The pre-assessment report identified several issues in a potential red abalone fishery at San Miguel Island that would need to be addressed prior to performing at the level of the MSC standard:

- As red abalone cannot be aged, the stock assessment model in use would need to be justified or modified, and sensitivity testing of model performance conducted.
- While roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, there is no evidence of an agreed framework for reviewing fishery performance and for decisions on allowable catch in the presence of conflicting information.
- Further information is needed regarding how the endemic pathogen that caused the fatal abalone disease known as withering syndrome is transmitted, and whether or not fishing poses a risk to the spread of withering syndrome.
- There is no evidence of a strategic research plan in the fishery management system.

Next steps

The CAA shared the completed pre-assessment report with the CDFG and the Commission as part of the CAA's management recommendations for the proposed red abalone fishery at SMI. The findings were met with interest from CDFG, the Commission, and other stakeholders.

The California budget crisis and the state's reduced capacity for fisheries management have unfortunately currently stalled discussions about the potential reopening of the abalone fishery. As the pre-assessment provided crucial third-party analysis of the potential fishery, we intend for it to continue to guide the conversation as it moves forward.

Steps to MSC Certification

As a client or partner in a pre- or full assessment, you will need to:

- Establish project partners
- Secure funding
- Hire a CAB
- Gather information about the fishery to be used in the assessment
- Coordinate and plan the site visit
- Review and comment on the draft assessment report
- Review the final report
- Determine next steps

Establish Project Partners

Partnerships for MSC assessments can develop in a number of ways—often with an NGO, fishery, or the private sector expressing interest in collaborating on a project. When establishing a new project, it is important that the groups working together have shared goals and a good working relationship. You might want to have the parties sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) describing project goals, roles and responsibilities, and funding expectations.

If you are conducting a pre-assessment that is expected to lead to a FIP, we recommend that all parties that will be involved in developing and implementing the FIP (including scientific experts, fishery managers, fishers, and the private sector) participate in the pre-assessment process. This involvement includes staying informed about the progress of the project, participating in the site visit, and, if possible, contributing financially to the project. By being financially invested from the beginning, organizations and individuals are more likely to take ownership in the improvement effort and effectively and efficiently complete any FIP activities for which they are responsible.

Secure Funding

The average cost for obtaining MSC certification largely depends on the complexity of the fishery and region.

There are generally two sets of costs associated with an MSC project:

- **Facilitation costs** (costs associated with developing and coordinating the project, including staff time, travel, and communications)
- **Consultant costs** (costs for the CAB to conduct the assessment)

The cost for a CAB to conduct the work tends to range from US\$10,000-20,000 for a pre-assessment and from US\$50,000-100,000 for a full assessment, depending on the nature of the fishery. In addition, annual audits for a certified fishery can cost US\$10,000-20,000 per year. It is also wise to plan well in advance for the cost of going through the re-certification process before the five-year MSC certificate expires.

The high cost of certification can be an obstacle for many fisheries, but is not insurmountable. To address the funding issue we recommend seeking support from a number of sources, including government agencies, suppliers, major buyers, and grant-making groups.

Fisheries whose products are sold by companies that have made MSC commitments can oftentimes obtain partial funding from the company (often via the company's NGO partner, if they have one). The suppliers that sell to these companies also have a vested interest in the certification and should contribute.

Small-scale fisheries, in particular, often have challenges coming up with funds to cover the full assessment and annual audit costs. Market demand for the product and cost-share by relevant buyers can be critical for obtaining and retaining an MSC certificate.

Non-profit foundations such as the Resources Legacy Fund (<http://www.resourceslegacyfund.org/contact-us/>) can also help provide funds to fisheries in need. Be sure to factor several months into your project timeline for the proposal process and for any grant to be awarded.

Hire a CAB

A third-party CAB, recognized by Accreditation Services International to assess fisheries against the MSC standard for sustainable fishing, must complete pre- and full assessments. A complete list of accredited CABs can be found at <http://www.accreditation-services.com/archives/standards/msc>.

For full assessment, you might find it beneficial to contract with the same CAB or lead auditor that conducted the pre-assessment because of his or her prior knowledge of the sustainability issues specific to the fishery.

Any CAB that has served as a FIP consultant for a fishery is not eligible to conduct the full assessment. This is because a FIP consultant makes recommendations to a fishery to improve its practices, and having this same person or organization assess the completed activities during full assessment would present a conflict of interest.

When choosing a CAB, be sure to look for those accredited to apply the MSC fisheries standard, not just the chain of custody standard.

Steps to Hiring a CAB

- **Complete a fishery profile.** A fishery profile can be used to provide a short summary of the fishery to potential CABs when seeking proposals for the work. A template can be found at Appendix III on page 43. It is best to work with the fishery client or other stakeholders to complete the profile and ensure its accuracy. The more information you can provide to the CAB, the better the CAB can estimate its costs. Attach the fishery profile when requesting a bid, so the CAB can understand the scope of the project and put together an accurate budget.
- **Request bids from CABs** for the work (via email). Refer to Appendix VI on page 49 for a bid letter template. It is best to seek estimates from at least three different CABs in order to compare relevant experience, proposed costs, and potential team members.
- **Select a CAB.** Work with project partners to compare the proposals received and select a CAB for the assessment. You will want to base your decision on their overall competency, experience in the region and/or with the species under assessment, proposed team members, and proposed cost. It can be helpful to speak with others who have used a particular CAB about their experiences before making a decision.
- **Contract with a CAB.** Whoever is paying for the work should contract with the CAB. It is possible for more than one party to contract with the CAB if two or more groups are contributing financially, but we recommend that at least one of the contracts cover all deliverables. See Appendix XI on page 67 for an example pre-assessment contract and Appendix XII on page 72 for an example full assessment contract.

When possible, ensure that at least one local fishery expert serves on the pre-assessment or full assessment team.

Gather Information about the Fishery

It is the client's responsibility to provide the CAB with information about the fishery in relation to the MSC criteria, particularly during the pre-assessment process.

The template "Information Required for Assessments" (Appendix VII on page 51 in English and Appendix VIII on page 55 in Spanish) can be used to compile information about the fishery for the CAB in advance of the site visit. This spreadsheet uses simple language to reflect the MSC performance indicators. This spreadsheet should be completed and provided to the CAB before the site visit. Be sure to consult the latest version of the MSC Certification Requirements (see link in Appendix I on page 39) to ensure that you are covering all topics in the most current version of the assessment tree.

For pre-assessments, complete the template to the extent possible and include known references to primary or gray literature. For full assessments, it is best to provide detailed and complete information, with peer-reviewed references, to address each specific MSC performance indicator.

In addition, meetings during the site visit allow you to provide or reinforce information about the fishery. You can arrange for the CAB to meet with any key stakeholders that can provide additional information or clarify the information provided.

Coordinate the Site Visit

The CAB has two primary goals during the site visit:

- 1) See the fishery in action.**
- 2) Talk with stakeholders to gather additional information about the fishery.**

It is not always possible for the site visit to take place during the fishing season (due to constraints on timelines and the limited availability of fishers while working). In this case, it is still helpful for the CAB to visit the boats and points of landing.

Key stakeholders should meet with the CAB during the site visit to discuss the current status of the fishery in relation to the MSC performance indicators. These stakeholders can include representatives from

- government
- scientific community
- industry (fishers, processors, exporters, etc.)
- environmental NGOs

Stakeholder meetings are usually coordinated by the client and led by the CAB. The client is often not allowed to attend these meetings, but this is up to the CAB; ask for permission if you would like to attend. If no one on the assessment team speaks the local language, you might need to arrange a translator for the CAB.

If the CAB expects to use the MSC's Risk-Based Framework for data-deficient fisheries, you will need to coordinate a meeting (or multiple meetings, depending on stakeholder dynamics) in order for the CAB to ask questions of stakeholders as part of the risk-based approach.

Prior to the site visit, it is recommended that the project coordinator discuss the project with key stakeholders so they know what to expect and how to prepare. Depending on their level of prior knowledge, you may wish to share information about the MSC process or performance indicators.

While a site visit is required for full assessment, at times a CAB may give the option of a "desktop" analysis for the pre-assessment. A desktop analysis reduces overall costs, as travel expenses are limited. If you know that the CAB is already familiar with the fishery, this can be a good option. However, we generally recommend that the CAB always conduct a site visit, as seeing the fishery and meeting with stakeholders in person often lead to a more thorough and accurate analysis.



Review and Comment on the Draft Assessment Report

The client has the opportunity to review draft reports to ensure accuracy and provide any missing information before they are finalized.

During both pre-assessment and full assessment, you should review the client draft report for accuracy and ensure that it addresses all MSC performance indicators and provides a clear rationale for the conclusions. Provide comments to the CAB if you think that any of the information is inaccurate, the analysis is not thorough, or the conclusions are unclear.

For a fishery that is expected to begin a FIP, it is especially important that the pre-assessment is thorough and accurate, as the FIP will be based on the findings of the report.

Review the Final Report

After the CAB produces a final version of the pre- or full assessment report, you should review it carefully to ensure you are satisfied with the final analysis. If you believe that any part of the assessment is inaccurate, contact the CAB to discuss your concerns.

After you receive the final report you might wish to share it with key stakeholders, depending on the nature of the project. For a pre-assessment in particular, where you will want stakeholder engagement in future steps, we suggest translating the final report into the local language before sharing it with stakeholders and meeting with them in person to discuss the results.

Determine Next Steps

The pre-assessment will determine whether a fishery is ready to enter MSC full assessment. If the CAB recommends proceeding to full assessment (and the fishery client wishes to proceed), you may initiate the full assessment process.

For more information on how to enter into MSC full assessment, please see the MSC website (www.msc.org) and additional materials listed in Appendix I on page 39. You might wish to contact a fisheries outreach manager or fisheries assessment manager at the MSC (see www.msc.org/about-us/offices-staff/msc-staff) to discuss the full assessment requirements in more detail.

For select fisheries that are not likely to meet the MSC standard, WWF has developed a process to help corporate partners engage in a new or existing FIP. Using the results of an MSC pre-assessment, a FIP outlines the steps a fishery needs to take in order to meet the MSC standard and be considered sustainable. Stakeholders can then work together to improve the fishery so that it can be eligible for MSC certification in the future. Please see the *FIP Handbook* for more information if you are interested in using this process to develop a FIP.

Follow the link for more information about FIPs and to access the *FIP Handbook*: <https://sites.google.com/site/fisheryimprovementprojects/home>.

MSC Project Timelines

The time and costs associated with facilitating a pre- or full assessment vary depending on the assessment team, the scope and complexity of the fishery, and the level of stakeholder participation.

In general, a pre-assessment project (including fundraising and project development) will take six to 12 months from start to finish, with the actual pre-assessment spanning an average of six months. See Appendix IV on page 45 for an example pre-assessment timeline.

A full assessment project (including fundraising and project development) will likely take two years, with the full assessment spanning 12 to 18 months. See Appendix V on page 47 for an example full assessment timeline.



Communications

Maintaining good communication with project partners is key to ensuring a smooth MSC project.

Before the project begins: We recommend setting guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders regarding communications related to the project. For example, if a client or project partner would like to issue a press release, fact sheet, or other document about the project, then it is helpful to identify in advance who would be responsible for drafting, reviewing, and finalizing the document.

Pre-Assessment: Especially if the pre-assessment is the first step in a FIP, clear communication on the progress and status of the project is essential in order to keep stakeholders continually engaged and set the stage for the development

and implementation of the FIP. After completion of the pre-assessment, reach out to stakeholders regarding the results of the project and next steps. You can consider communicating with stakeholders directly or through a press release to the media.

Full Assessment: At the end of a successful full assessment, work with the MSC to develop and distribute a press release announcing the certification of the fishery and describing why it is significant. You may want to work with a communications expert on developing materials to announce the success of the project and target key media outlets. Once a fishery achieves certification, you may also wish to throw a launch party or other event to celebrate the fishery's achievement.

MSC CASE STUDY

Spencer Gulf Prawn Fishery



Certification of a well-managed prawn fishery

BACKGROUND

The Spencer Gulf king prawn trawl fishery comprises 39 vessels that catch approximately 1,900 mt of king prawns per year. The majority of the catch is taken from a small area covering less than 15 percent of the Spencer Gulf, with more than 60 percent of the catch taken from two fishing grounds covering less than 8 percent of the Gulf.

Spencer Gulf king prawns are sold predominantly on the domestic market, with a small amount exported to Southeast Asia, the European Union, and the US.

SPECIES: King prawn
(*Penaeus (Melicertus) latisulcatus*)

SCOPE: Spencer Gulf, South Australia

PARTNERS: WWF, Spencer Gulf and West Coast Prawn Fishermen's Association (the Association)

The MSC certification process

For many years, WWF worked with the Spencer Gulf prawn fishing industry and local and federal government entities in supporting the fishery's ecosystem sustainability and successful co-management practices. WWF considers the fishery one of the best prawn fisheries in the world due to its excellent management practices, which include effort restrictions, closed fishing periods, closed areas, and real-time harvest strategies to regulate the total catch.

WWF and the Association worked to obtain MSC certification for the fishery to more firmly establish it as a global leader in sustainable prawn/shrimp fishing practices and encourage similar efforts in other prawn/shrimp fisheries around the world.

In August 2009, WWF and the Association facilitated an MSC pre-assessment of the fishery. To prepare for the full assessment, WWF reviewed the pre-assessment results and discussed the full assessment process with the Association. WWF then conducted outreach to fishery stakeholders to raise awareness of the MSC process in preparation for the site visit.

WWF and the Association served as co-clients in the full assessment. The Spencer Gulf prawn fishery was certified in August 2011.

Benefits of MSC certification

- This fishery became the first king prawn fishery in the world to be certified by the MSC and the first prawn fishery certified in Australia and the greater Asia-Pacific region, bringing much local, regional, and international attention to the fishery and its practices.
- MSC certification opened up new international markets for the fishery, enabling Japan's first certified prawns to hit grocery store shelves.

Lessons learned

- Developing the client action plan to address conditions of certification was initially challenging because the Association lacked experience and capacity. To assist, WWF provided technical assistance to support the Association in developing a meaningful plan. The Association then fostered support for the plan from the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) and Primary Industries and Regions, South Australia (PIRSA).

It was important for these two government entities to assist with the development of the action plan and to assume a level of ownership, given that successful completion of some recommendations and conditions of certification required their commitment and resources. Working together improved the co-management relationship and enhanced the ability of SARDI and PIRSA to meet the MSC standard.

- Australian fisheries and other stakeholders embraced the concept of MSC certification in the early days of the MSC. However, for a number of reasons this momentum lapsed, and Australian fisheries shifted to a period of low interest in MSC certification.

Given this history, WWF proactively issued a media release regarding the assessment prior to the official MSC announcement. The release was a joint effort between WWF, the Association, and the MSC. Several mainstream newspapers and radio stations ran the story. This release raised awareness within the stakeholder community about the MSC and sustainable fisheries. In the end, the certification was celebrated not only by fishery stakeholders but also by mainstream media and food bloggers that embraced the MSC's sustainability concept.

MSC Success Factors

Several factors can help ensure that an MSC project is developed and implemented successfully:

Securing strong on-the-ground support. Having a local project coordinator (who speaks the local language) is extremely important for communicating with the fishery client and other stakeholders. A local project coordinator can build strong relationships with stakeholders and help gain their support and commitment for any potential full assessment or FIP.

Ensuring stakeholder engagement. It is essential that stakeholders are engaged in the process and understand how they can participate in order to obtain a thorough and accurate assessment. This is especially important if you are working on a pre-assessment that will lead to the development of a FIP.

Managing expectations. It is important that all project partners have a common understanding that a pre-assessment might not recommend that a fishery proceed to full assessment, and that it may take a number of years until the fishery is ready to enter MSC full assessment. It is also important that FIP activities are completed before the fishery decides to enter full assessment in order to minimize the risk of the fishery failing the full assessment.

Obtaining resources. Financial resources are necessary to be able to complete an MSC project. Numerous parties, including fishers, suppliers, buyers, and government agencies, might benefit from a successful assessment process and should help support the work financially and/or dedicate staff time to the project.

Building momentum. It is important to ensure that the pre- or full assessment process runs according to schedule in order to build momentum for the entire project. Be sure to work with project partners and consultants who are available to complete tasks in a timely fashion.

Communicating in the local language. Using the local language to communicate can increase the engagement of local stakeholders. Ensure that information about the MSC standard, as well as the pre-assessment and full assessment processes, are translated into the local language and shared with stakeholders early in the assessment process. Discuss your translation needs with the MSC, as they may have translated materials available or be able to support their development. For a FIP, it is also important to translate the MSC pre-assessment report into the local language within a few weeks of receiving the final English version. Be sure to budget for translation costs and engage translators as needed in advance of starting the project.

Leveraging market demand. Use a seafood buyer's commitment to sourcing sustainable seafood to help develop and implement a certification project. Seafood buyers can send letters to suppliers, fishing organizations, and government representatives stating their sustainable seafood sourcing policy and encouraging the implementation of pre-assessment, FIP, and/or full assessment, as appropriate. This helps provide a market incentive for local partners to engage in the assessment process.

Conclusions



As seafood businesses around the world commit to sourcing from fisheries that meet the MSC standard or are engaged in a comprehensive FIP, opportunities for fishery certification and improvement work are greater than ever.

By bringing stakeholders together and taking advantage of the incentives provided by the MSC program, certification projects and FIPs are achieving progress in challenging fisheries around the world.

We hope this handbook will help you join these efforts and develop, implement, or participate in a successful MSC project.

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MSC TOOLKIT

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Appendix I: MSC Resource List

Resource List

Certification Resources

- FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/012/i1119t/i1119t00.htm>
- ISEAL Codes of Good Practice
<http://www.isealliance.org/our-work/defining-credibility/codes-of-good-practice>
- WWF Comparison of Wild-Capture Fisheries Certification Schemes http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/wwf_report_comparison_wild_capture_fisheries_schemes__2_.pdf

MSC Process and Requirements

- MSC website
<http://www.msc.org>
- MSC Certification Requirements
<http://www.msc.org/documents/scheme-documents/msc-scheme-requirements>
- Guidance to the MSC Certification Requirements
<http://www.msc.org/documents/scheme-documents/msc-scheme-guidance-documents>
- Get Certified! Fisheries Guide
<http://www.msc.org/documents/get-certified/fisheries>
<http://www.msc.org/obtenga-la-certificacion/pesquerias>
- MSC Assessment Flow Chart
<http://www.msc.org/documents/get-certified/fisheries>
- Stakeholders' Guide to the MSC
<http://www.msc.org/documents/get-certified/stakeholders>

Impacts of MSC Certification

- Commercial commitments to sourcing MSC certified products
<http://www.msc.org/business-support/commercial-commitments>
- Report: MSC Global Impacts
<http://www.msc.org/business-support/global-impacts>
- Report: Net Benefits of MSC Certification
<http://www.msc.org/documents/fisheries-factsheets/net-benefits-report/Net-Benefits-report.pdf/view>
- Environmental Impacts of the MSC Program
<http://www.msc.org/documents/environmental-benefits>
- Gutiérrez NL, Valencia SR, Branch TA, Agnew DJ, Baum JK, et al. (2012) Eco-Label Conveys Reliable Information on Fish Stock Health to Seafood Consumers. PLoS ONE 7(8): e43765.
<http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0043765>
- Martin SM, Cambridge TA, Grieve C, Nimmo FM, and Agnew DJ. (2012) An Evaluation of Environmental Changes Within Fisheries Involved in the Marine Stewardship Council Certification Scheme. Reviews in Fisheries Science 20(2):61-69.
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10641262.2011.654287>

FIP Information

- WWF FIP website
<https://sites.google.com/site/fisheryimprovementprojects/home>

Appendix II: Template for Private Sector Letter to Fishery

Template for Private Sector Letter to Fishery

[return address]

Dear [Name]:

In [date], [company] developed a strategy for responsibly sourcing wild-caught seafood. We have made a commitment to [commitment (e.g., source 100 percent of our top 20 wild-caught seafood species from fisheries that are either certified as sustainable to the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) standard, in MSC full assessment, or engaged in a comprehensive fishery improvement project (FIP) by 2015)].

The MSC fishery certification process determines whether a fishery meets the three core principles that form the MSC standard: 1) sustainable fish stocks, 2) minimal environmental impacts, and 3) effective management practices. More information on the MSC standard and assessment processes can be found at the MSC website (www.msc.org).

To achieve our sustainable seafood goal, we ask that [fishery organization/supplier] encourage the [fishery] to complete an MSC pre-assessment, which will assess whether the fishery is likely to meet the MSC standard and is thus ready for full assessment.

After the pre-assessment is complete, we ask that [fishery organization/supplier] encourage the [fishery] to move forward into MSC full assessment or enter into a FIP, whichever is appropriate. A FIP is a multi-year project in which fishery stakeholders (government, private sector, fishers, and others) work collaboratively to improve the environmental performance of a fishery so that it will be able to perform at a level consistent with the MSC standard.

With the [fishery] engaging in the MSC certification process we will be able to achieve our sustainable seafood sourcing goal. We greatly appreciate your sustainability efforts.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Name]

[Title]

[Email or phone]

Appendix III: Fishery Profile Template

Fishery Profile Template

Target Species (Common and scientific name)	
Location (Please be as specific as possible)	
Fishing Methods	
Volume Caught	
Fishers (Describe the group of fishers. Are they women or men? How many are there? Is there a fishing organization/association?)	
Fishery History	
Stock Biology (How much is known about the stock and its size, structure, life cycle, trends in population abundance, etc.?)	
Data on Target Species Population (Is there a recent stock assessment? Is catch per unit effort or landings data collected? Who collects and analyzes the data? For approximately how many years are data available?)	
Ecosystem Impacts (e.g., habitat disturbance, species interactions, bycatch)	
Additional Sustainability Concerns (Describe any additional concerns related to the sustainability of the fishery. Is there anything being done to address these concerns?)	
Management Agencies (Describe the different institutions, agencies, or local management bodies involved in the management system and their interactions with each other.)	
Management Regime (Include general information on rules, regulations, closed areas/ seasons, quotas, licenses, etc. How often do managers review rules and regulations?)	
Community Participation in Management (Does the community participate in the management of the fishery? If so, please describe.)	
Management Compliance (Do fishers comply with the management regime? Are regulations actively enforced?)	
Processing and Marketing Information (Once the product is landed, what happens to it? Where are the main markets for the fishery? Please also include any figures regarding amount sold or exported and the overall value.)	
Stakeholders (List the relevant stakeholder groups that are involved in the fishery.)	
Issues Requiring Special Attention (Describe any local, regional or global controversies and/or conservation concerns that impact or involve the fishery.)	
Level of Interest in MSC Certification	
Additional Comments (Include any additional information about this fishery or important to working with this fishery.)	

Appendix IV: Example Pre-Assessment Timeline

Timeline for MSC Pre-Assessment of the [Fishery]

Client(s):			[Year]									
Activity	Objective	Lead ¹	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]
1	Develop project	Develop workplan and timeline; discuss stakeholder engagement. Identify fishery client if not already known.	Project facilitator and project coordinator									
2	Complete fishery profile	Summarize what is known about the fishery and provide background to the assessment	Project coordinator									
3	Develop stakeholder map	Identify stakeholders in the fishery and key actors who should be engaged	Project coordinator									
4	Solicit proposals from CABs ²	Obtain at least two proposals to compare CAB experts and costs	Project facilitator									
5	Collect information for pre-assessment	Provide CAB with documentation needed for the pre-assessment, addressing each specific MSC indicator as much as possible	Project coordinator									
6	Conduct stakeholder outreach	Lay groundwork for project and build relationships. Obtain broad industry and government support. Will likely be a continuous process.	Project coordinator									
7	Contract selected CAB	CAB signs agreement for pre-assessment work	Project facilitator									
8	Prep logistics, meetings for CAB site visit	Work with CAB to schedule agenda and meetings	Project coordinator									
9	Hold pre-assessment site visit	CAB to visit key stakeholders and fishing centers to talk with stakeholders and collect additional information	CAB, project coordinator, and client(s)									
10	Prepare pre-assessment report	Draft pre-assessment report delivered to clients	CAB									
11	Review and comment on pre-assessment report	Ensure pre-assessment report is thorough and accurate	Project facilitator, project coordinator, and fishery client									
12	Revise pre-assessment report, if necessary	Final MSC pre-assessment report complete	CAB									
13	Discuss next steps	If applicable, determine whether to proceed with a FIP or full assessment	Project facilitator, project coordinator, and fishery client									
14	Distribute pre-assessment results, seek feedback	Inform key stakeholders of the results and intended next steps. Pave way for future phase of the work.	Project coordinator									

¹ Based on the roles as described in the MSC Handbook. You may wish to assign roles and responsibilities in a different way.

² CAB = Conformity Assessment Body (i.e. certification body)

Appendix V: Example Full Assessment Timeline

Timeline for MSC Full Assessment of the [Fishery]

Client(s):		[Year 1]										[Year 2]				
		[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	[Month]	
Activity	Lead ¹															
1	Discuss issues identified in the pre-assessment report and the full assessment process	Project facilitator, project coordinator, and fishery client														
2	Address issues identified in the pre-assessment report (if minor and a FIP is not needed)	Client														
3	Solicit proposals from CABs ²	Project facilitator or client														
4	Gather information for full assessment	Project facilitator, project coordinator, and client														
5	Contract selected CAB	Project facilitator and/or client														
6	Coordinate dates and agenda for site visit	Project coordinator, client														
7	Announce full assessment	CAB														
8	Select and finalize assessment team	CAB														
9	Conduct consultation on indicators and guideposts	CAB														
10	Notify stakeholders of full assessment site visit	CAB														
11	Hold site visit, stakeholder meetings	CAB, project coordinator, client														
12	Hold scoring meeting	CAB														
13	Prepare draft full assessment report	CAB														
14	Client review of full assessment report	Project facilitator, project coordinator, and fishery client														
15	Revise report, if necessary	CAB														
16	Peer-review of full assessment report	CAB														
17	Revise report, if necessary	CAB														
18	Stakeholder review of full assessment report (30 d)	CAB														
19	Revise report, if necessary	CAB														
20	Publication of final certification report and certification determination	CAB														
21	Plan Communications	Project facilitator, project coordinator, fishery client, and MSC														
22	Objections period (15 working d)	CAB, MSC														
23	Certificate awarded	MSC														

¹ Based on the roles as described in the MSC Handbook. You may wish to assign roles and responsibilities in a different way.

² CAB = Conformity Assessment Body (i.e. certification body)

Appendix VI:
CAB Bid Letter Template

Bid Letter Template

Dear [CAB]:

[Organization] is helping the [fishery] secure bids for completing MSC [pre-/full] assessment, and we invite you to participate in the bidding process. Please find attached information about the fishery and this project.

Your bid must provide the following information:

- 1) A detailed scope of work, including:
 - a. A detailed **timeline** for completion of the assessment. Please estimate the time necessary to complete each of the certification requirements.
 - b. A list of likely team members for this project and a brief biography for each. (No commitments should be made, however, until a CAB has been selected by the clients.)
 - c. Your experience with MSC assessments. Please provide a list of full assessments completed and underway and, while respecting confidentiality concerns, relevant pre-assessments (particularly those focused on similar species, regions, and/or gear types).
- 2) A detailed **line-item budget** in [currency], including:
 - a. Cost estimates for each major step in the assessment process.
 - b. The costs associated with each team member.
 - c. All anticipated expenses, such as travel and overhead/administrative costs.

The [client(s)] will base our decision on your timeline, your record of completing assessments to the best of your ability in a timely manner, the experience and qualifications of your proposed team members, and your estimated budget.

[If relevant:] We anticipate that this fishery will be in need of improvement work before it can meet the MSC standard, and intend to use the pre-assessment as the basis for a Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) for the fishery.

We are looking to conduct the site visit in [month and year].

Your proposal must be received by [date], to be considered. Thank you very much, and please feel free to contact me at [email] or [phone] with any questions.

Best,

[Name]

Appendix VII: Information Required for MSC Assessments

Information Required for MSC Assessments in English

Performance Indicator	General Issue	Specific Question	Summary	Reference(s)
Principle 1	A fishery must be conducted in a manner that does not lead to over-fishing or depletion of the exploited populations and, for those populations that are depleted; the fishery must be conducted in a manner that demonstrably leads to their recovery.			
1.1.1	Stock status	<p>What is the geographic delineation of the stock?</p> <p>Describe recent trends in stock size, catches and/or CPUE (all if possible).</p> <p>Are there annual or seasonal measures of recruitment or an accepted stock/recruit relationship?</p> <p>What is the consensus (if any) about the status of the stock (e.g. very healthy, somewhat depleted, some concern, disagreement, etc.)?</p> <p>Are there accepted target and limit reference points for the stock (either direct measures of biomass such as BMSY, or proxy measures such as F or CPUE)? If so, how are they estimated?</p> <p>For low trophic level species, does the target reference point take into account the ecological role of the stock?</p> <p>Where is the stock in relation to the reference points?</p>		
1.1.2	Stock rebuilding [only considered if there is some evidence that the stock is depleted]	<p>What action is being taken to bring the stock back to a level consistent with the reference points, or by other means to a level known to be productive?</p>		
1.2.1	Harvest strategy	<p>Describe the management strategy for the stock (e.g. quotas, limited licences, closed seasons etc.).</p> <p>How is the harvest strategy evaluated and/or monitored?</p> <p>Does the management system provide any incentives for sustainable fishing?</p> <p>Does it provide any subsidies that might contribute to non-sustainable fishing?</p>		
1.2.2	Harvest control rules	<p>By what means can harvest be controlled to ensure that the stock status does not dip below reference points, or otherwise ensure that the stock remains productive?</p>		
1.2.3	Information and monitoring	<p>What types of information are collected about the stock (e.g. logbook data, scientific surveys, etc.)?</p> <p>How are stock abundance and fishery removals monitored?</p>		
1.2.4	Stock assessment	<p>How and by whom is the stock status evaluated in relation to reference points (e.g. stock-recruit models, other types of models)?</p> <p>What are the main sources of uncertainty in the above analyses? How are they incorporated into management decision-making?</p> <p>Is the stock assessment subject to peer review?</p>		

Performance Indicator	General Issue	Specific Question	Summary	Reference(s)
Principle 2				
A fishery must be conducted in a manner that does not lead to over-fishing or depletion of the exploited populations and, for those populations that are depleted; the fishery must be conducted in a manner that demonstrably leads to their recovery.				
2.1.1-2.1.3	Primary species	<p>Are any primary species caught by fishermen at the same time as the target species? If so, which species? Is their capture usual or unusual?</p> <p>What data are collected on catches of primary species in relation to the target fishery?</p> <p>What is the status of the stock of primary species (if known)?</p> <p>Is there any evidence that the target fishery poses any threat to the stock status of any of the primary species? How is this monitored?</p> <p>What measures are in place to maintain stocks of primary species? If so, what information is the management strategy based on? What evidence exists that it works?</p> <p>If any primary species are below the point of recruitment impairment, is there a recovery strategy in place that considers cumulative impacts by other certified fisheries?</p> <p>Has the fishery implemented alternative fishing gear and/or practices that have been shown to minimize the rate of incidental mortality of primary species?</p> <p>If applicable, is there any evidence of shark finning?</p>		
2.2.1-2.2.3	Secondary species	<p>Are any secondary species caught during fishing for the target species? If so, which species? Is their capture usual or unusual?</p> <p>What data are collected on secondary species?</p> <p>What is the status of populations of secondary species (if known)?</p> <p>Is there any evidence that the target fishery poses any threat to the stock status of any secondary species? How is this monitored?</p> <p>If necessary, are management measures in place to maintain stocks of secondary species? If so, what information is the strategy based on? What evidence exists that it works?</p> <p>If any secondary species are below biologically based limits, is there a recovery strategy in place that considers cumulative impacts by other certified fisheries?</p> <p>Has the fishery implemented alternative fishing gear and/or practices that have been shown to minimize the rate of incidental mortality of secondary species?</p> <p>If applicable, is there any evidence of shark finning?</p>		
2.3.1-2.3.3	Endangered, threatened or protected (ETP) species	<p>Does the fishery interact with any ETP species? If so, describe the species and th s in any way? If so, describe (even if very rare).</p> <p>If necessary, are management measures in place to manage the fishery's impact on ETP species? If so, what information is the strategy based on? What evidence exists that it works?</p>		

Performance Indicator	General Issue	Specific Question	Summary	Reference(s)
2.4.1-2.4.3	Habitats	<p>Describe the nature of the gear used (type, size, weight, number per boat), including interactions with the ocean floor, if applicable.</p> <p>Describe the habitat in which fishing takes place (e.g. rocky, mobile sand, mud), including water depth and usual tide/wave conditions. What types of habitats are commonly encountered? Vulnerable marine ecosystems? Minor habitats?</p> <p>What data are collected on habitat impacts?</p> <p>Do any maps of benthic habitat, or benthic surveys, exist for the area? Are any important benthic species/habitats known to occur in the fishing area (e.g. seagrasses, corals)? How well is their vulnerability known?</p> <p>If necessary, are management measures in place to manage the fishery's impact on habitats? If so, what information is the strategy based on? What evidence exists that it works?</p>		
2.5.1-2.5.3	Ecosystem	<p>Are the main prey and predators for the target species and the main bycatch species known for the area in question? How is the harvest strategy evaluated and/or monitored?</p> <p>Are the target species or major bycatch species known to be important prey for other species (e.g. seabirds, seals, predatory fish such as cod or tuna)?</p> <p>Are there any other possible ecosystem impacts this fishery might have (e.g. spread of non-native species or diseases, removal in grazing pressure, impact on species used as bait)?</p> <p>What data are collected on ecosystem impacts?</p> <p>If necessary, are management measures in place to manage the fishery's impact on the broader ecosystem? If so, what information is the strategy based on? What evidence exists that it works?</p>		
Principle 3				
There is an institutional and operational framework, appropriate to the size and scale of the fishery, for implementing Principles 1 and 2 that is capable of delivering sustainable fisheries in accordance with the outcomes articulated by Principles 1 and 2.				
3.1.1	Legal and customary framework	Describe the legal framework in which management takes place (no need to quote specific legislation). How does this framework incorporate dispute resolution and the rights of people who depend on the fishery for their livelihood?		
3.1.2	Consultation, roles, and responsibilities	Describe the main organizations involved in management of the fishery, with their roles and responsibilities. How do these organizations consult with each other? Is the management system consultative and collaborative?		
3.1.3	Long-term objectives	Does the fishery management system in general have long-term objectives? If so, summarise each briefly.		
3.2.1	Fishery-specific objectives	Does the management plan for this particular fishery have fishery-specific objectives? If so, summarise each briefly.		
3.2.2	Decision-making process	Describe the management decision-making process (e.g. the means by which it responds to new scientific information or to concerns of fishermen). Are responses transparent, timely, and/or adaptive? Does the process include consultation with stakeholders? If so, which stakeholder groups? Is the consultation process formal or informal?		
3.2.3	Compliance and enforcement	<p>Is there any evidence of non-compliance with management measures (e.g. failure to report catches properly, failure to respect closed areas, etc.)?</p> <p>By what means are regulations enforced? Is there any self-policing by the fishing groups?</p> <p>What sanctions exist for dealing with non-compliance? Are they effective?</p>		
3.2.4	Monitoring and management performance evaluation	Is the management system periodically evaluated, either formally or informally? If so, how and by whom?		

Apéndice VIII:

Información Requerida para la Evaluación MSC

Información requerida para la evaluación MSC

Indicador del Principio	Tema General	Pregunta específica	Resumen	Referencia(s)
Principio 1	La pesquería debe efectuarse de una manera tal que no conduzca a la sobreexplotación o al agotamiento de las poblaciones explotadas y, para las poblaciones agotadas, la pesca debe efectuarse de una manera que conduzca a su recuperación.			
1.1.1	Estatus de la población (Stock)	<p>¿Cuál es la delimitación geográfica de la población?</p> <p>Describir las tendencias recientes en el tamaño de la población, las capturas y/o CPUE (todos, si es posible).</p> <p>¿Existen medidas anuales o estacionales de reclutamiento o alguna relación aceptada entre la población y reclutamiento?</p> <p>¿Cuál es el consenso (si es que existe), acerca del estado de la población (por ejemplo, muy saludable, un poco agotado, de cierta preocupación, hay desacuerdo, etc)?</p> <p>Existen metas y puntos de referencia aceptados para la población (tanto medidas directas de biomasa como BMSY, o medidas indirectas como F o CPUE)? Si es así, cómo se calculan?</p> <p>Para especies de bajo nivel trófico, el punto de referencia objetivo toma en cuenta la función ecológica de la población?</p> <p>¿Dónde está la población en relación a los puntos de referencia?</p>		
1.1.2	Reconstrucción de la población	<p>¿Qué medidas se están adoptando para llevar a la población a un nivel compatible con los puntos de referencia, o por otros medios a un nivel que pueda ser considerado como productivo?</p>		
1.2.1	Estrategia de captura	<p>Describe la estrategia de manejo de la población (por ejemplo, cuotas, licencias limitadas, temporadas de veda, etc.)</p> <p>¿Cómo se evalúa o se monitorea la estrategia de captura?</p> <p>¿El sistema de manejo proporciona incentivos para la pesca sostenible?</p> <p>¿Proporciona subsidios que podrían contribuir a una pesca no sostenible?</p>		
1.2.2	Reglas de control de la captura	<p>¿Por qué medios se controla la captura para asegurar que el estado de la población no cae por debajo de los puntos de referencia, o cómo se garantiza que la población sigue siendo productiva?</p>		
1.2.3	Información y monitoreo	<p>¿Qué tipo de información se colecta sobre la población (por ejemplo, datos de los libros de bitácora, encuestas científicas, etc)?</p> <p>¿Cómo se monitorea la abundancia de la población y las capturas?</p>		
1.2.4	Evaluación de población	<p>¿Cómo y quién evalúa el estado de las poblaciones en relación a los puntos de referencia (por ejemplo, los modelos de stock-recluta, otros tipos de modelos)?</p> <p>¿Cuáles son las principales fuentes de incertidumbre en el análisis anterior?</p> <p>¿Cómo se incorpora esto en la toma de decisiones de manejo?</p> <p>La evaluación de las poblaciones está sujeta a una revisión por pares científicos?</p>		

Indicador del Principio	Tema General	Pregunta específica	Resumen	Referencia(s)
Principio 2	Las operaciones pesqueras deben permitir el mantenimiento de la estructura, productividad, función y diversidad del ecosistema (incluido el hábitat y especies asociados y dependientes ecológicamente) de las que depende la pesca.			
2.1.1-2.1.3	Especies primarias	<p>¿Existen especies primarias que son capturado por los pescadores al igual que ocurre con las especies objetivo? Si es así, que especies son? Es habitual o no, su captura?</p> <p>¿Qué datos se recogen sobre las capturas de especies primarias en relación con la pesca objetivo?</p> <p>¿Cuál es la situación de las poblaciones de las especies primarias (si se conoce)?</p> <p>¿Hay alguna evidencia de que la pesca objetivo represente una amenaza para el estado de la población de cualquiera de las especies primarias? ¿Cómo se monitorea esto?</p> <p>Se han implementado medidas de manejo para mantener las poblaciones de aquellas especies que son primarias? Si es así, ¿en qué información está basada la estrategia? ¿Qué pruebas existen de que las mismas funcionan?</p>		
2.2.1-2.2.3	Especies secundario	<p>¿Existen especies secundario que se capturan durante la pesca de las especies objetivo? Es su captura/mortalidad usual o inusual?</p> <p>¿Qué datos se recogen sobre las especies secundario?</p> <p>¿Cuál es la situación de las poblaciones de las especies secundario (si se conoce)?</p> <p>¿Hay alguna evidencia de que la pesca objetivo pudiese representar una amenaza para el estado de la población de cualquier especies secundario? ¿Cómo se monitorea esto?</p> <p>En caso de ser necesarias, existen medidas de manejo implementadas para mantener las poblaciones de aquellas especies secundario? Si es así, ¿en qué información está basada la estrategia? ¿Qué pruebas existen de que la misma funcione?</p>		
2.3.1-2.3.3	Especies en peligro, amenazadas o protegidas (EPAP)	<p>¿Interactúa la pesquería con cualquier EPAP? Si es así, describa las especies y las interacciones. ¿Son estas interacciones habituales o se pueden considerar inusuales?</p> <p>¿Qué datos se recogen de las EPAP?</p> <p>¿Hay alguna evidencia de que la pesquería cause de alguna manera mortalidad adicional a las EPAP? Si es así, describa (aún cuando este hecho sea muy poco frecuente).</p> <p>En caso de ser necesarias, existen medidas de ordenamiento implementadas para manejar el impacto que la pesquería ejerce sobre las EPAP? Si es así, ¿en qué información está basada la estrategia? ¿Qué pruebas existen de que la misma funcione?</p>		
2.4.1-2.4.3	Habitats	<p>Describe la naturaleza de los artes de pesca utilizados (tipo, tamaño, peso, número por barco), incluyendo las interacciones con el suelo del océano, en caso de ser aplicable.</p> <p>Describe el hábitat en que se realiza la pesca (por ejemplo, rocas, arena móvil, barro), incluyendo la profundidad y las condiciones de marea/olas.</p> <p>¿Qué datos se recogen sobre los impactos al hábitat?</p> <p>¿Existen mapas de los hábitats bentónicos, o estudios bentónicos, de la zona?</p> <p>¿Existen importantes especies bentónicas/hábitats importantes en la zona de pesca (por ejemplo, algas marinas, corales)?</p> <p>En caso de ser necesarias, existen medidas de ordenamiento implementadas para manejar el impacto que la actividad de pesca pudiera ocasionar sobre los hábitats? Si es así, ¿en qué información está basada la estrategia? ¿Qué pruebas existen de que funcione?</p>		

Indicador del Principio	Tema General	Pregunta específica	Resumen	Referencia(s)
2.5.1-2.5.3	Ecosistemas	<p>Para la zona en cuestión, se conocen las principales especies presas y depredadores de las especies objetivo además de las especies de captura incidental?</p> <p>Se sabe si las especies objetivo o especies de captura incidental son presas importantes para otras especies (por ejemplo, aves marinas, lobos marinos, peces depredadores como picudos o atún)?</p> <p>¿Existen otros posibles impactos hacia los ecosistemas que esta pesquería pudiese generar (por ejemplo, propagación de especies no nativas o enfermedades, impacto sobre las especies utilizadas como carnada)?</p> <p>¿Qué datos se recogen sobre los impactos en los ecosistemas?</p> <p>En caso de ser necesarias, existen medidas de ordenamiento para manejar el impacto que la actividad de pesca pudiera ocasionar sobre el ecosistema? Si es así, ¿en qué información está basada la estrategia? ¿Qué pruebas existen de que funcione?</p>		
Indicador del Principio	Tema General	Pregunta específica	Resumen	Referencia(s)
Principio 3	La pesquería está sujeta a un sistema de gestión eficaz que respeta las leyes y estándares locales, nacionales e internacionales e incorpora marcos institucionales y operativos que requieren el uso de los recursos de manera responsable y sostenible.			
3.1.1	Marco Legal	Describe el marco jurídico en el que la gestión se lleva a cabo (no es necesario citar legislación específica). ¿Cómo este marco incorpora la solución de controversias y los derechos de las personas que dependen de la pesquería para su sustento?		
3.1.2	Consulta, roles y responsabilidades	Describe las principales organizaciones que participan en la gestión de la pesquería, con sus funciones y responsabilidades. ¿Cómo estas organizaciones realizan consultas entre ellas? ¿Es el sistema de manejo, de consulta y de colaboración?		
3.1.3	Objetivos de largo plazo	¿El sistema de manejo de la pesquería en general, posee objetivos a largo plazo? Si es así, resúmalos brevemente.		
3.2.1	Objetivos específicos de la pesquería	¿El plan de manejo para esta pesquería en particular tiene objetivos específicos? Si es así, resúmalos brevemente.		
3.2.2	Procesos de toma de decisiones	Describe el proceso de la toma de decisiones de manejo (por ejemplo, los medios por los que se responde a nueva información científica o a preocupaciones de los pescadores). Son respuestas transparentes, oportunas, y/o adaptativas? ¿El proceso incluye consultas con las partes interesadas o actores clave? Si es así, con qué grupos de interesados se trabaja? Es el proceso de consulta formal o informal?		
3.2.3	Cumplimiento e implementación	<p>¿Hay alguna evidencia de no cumplimiento de las medidas de manejo (por ejemplo, la falta de reporte de capturas correctamente, la falta de respeto de las zonas de veda, etc)</p> <p>¿Por qué medios se implementan las normas? ¿Hay algún tipo de medida de autocontrol por parte de los grupos de la pesca?</p> <p>¿Qué sanciones existen para tratar los casos de incumplimiento?</p> <p>¿Son eficaces?</p>		
3.2.4	Monitoreo y evaluación de la efectividad del manejo	Es el sistema de manejo evaluado periódicamente, bien sea de manera informal o formal? Si es así, cómo y quién realiza esta actividad?		

Appendix IX:
**Example Terms of Reference for a
Project Coordinator (Pre-Assessment)**

Example Terms of Reference for a Project Coordinator for Pre-Assessment

Background

[Provide background on the project, including a brief description of the fishery, reasons for interest in certification, and whether you anticipate that a FIP will be needed before the fishery can meet the MSC standard.]

Scope of Work

Pre-assessment is the first formal stage of the MSC fishery assessment process and provides a basis for understanding the fishery in the context of the *MSC Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Fishing*. The pre-assessment clarifies with the client the philosophy and expectations of the MSC and identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the fishery relative to the MSC assessment criteria. The main purpose of the pre-assessment is to obtain a clear understanding of the nature, scale, and intensity of the fishery and to identify any issues that may prevent the fishery from passing full assessment. An accredited Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) will be contracted to evaluate the potential of the fishery to achieve certification and identify issues that should be addressed by the clients prior to proceeding with full assessment.

[Project facilitator] serves as a co-client in MSC certification projects along with a representative of the fishery that would be the MSC certificate holder if/when a certificate is awarded. The co-client relationship allows [project facilitator] access to the process and certifier in a way we would not have if not a client, allowing [project facilitator] to efficiently and effectively help guide the process and provide technical support. [Project coordinator] will work closely with fishery stakeholders and government agencies in [country] throughout the pre-assessment process.

The actual conduct of a pre-assessment and its outcomes are confidential unless the client chooses to make them public. In this case, we are requiring the pre-assessment to be made public so that the results will be available to multiple stakeholder groups to assist in the development of a FIP to help the fishery meet the MSC standard.

Pre-Assessment Process

1. Information Gathering

In the first stage of pre-assessment, the CAB will gather information for the analysis via documentation and in-person meetings. During pre-assessment, the status of the fishery is established based on information provided by the clients. The CAB will also identify stakeholders in the fishery, including fishers, processors, retailers, and scientific and environmental groups that should be consulted during a full assessment.

The CAB will discuss with [client group] their information needs as well as the scope of the pre-assessment. [Project coordinator] will be responsible for working with stakeholders to gather information for the CAB about the fishery under pre-assessment. **Any information not provided to the CAB will not be included in the analysis**, so it is very important that as much information as possible be provided regarding each MSC indicator.

2. Analysis of Information and Reporting

The CAB will then analyze the information received and write a pre-assessment report. The report will identify potential obstacles to MSC certification and make a recommendation as to whether the fishery clients should proceed with full assessment. [Project coordinator] will help review the report for accuracy.

The final pre-assessment report by the CAB will:

- Identify specific “units of certification”
- Evaluate the status of the stocks and identifiable trends
- Consider the objectives of the management organization(s)
- Identify all stakeholders relevant to the fishery
- Determine interactions with other fisheries
- Assess the availability and suitability of information for use in a full assessment
- Briefly assess the extent to which the fishery is consistent with the MSC Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Fishing
- Identify potential obstacles to certification
- Recommend whether the fishery should proceed with MSC full assessment.

Should a fishery not wish to proceed with full assessment, the pre-assessment report will still be provided to the clients for their records. [If appropriate:] In this case, we expect that the pre-assessment report will help facilitate the development of a Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) to help the fishery meet the MSC standard.

Roles and Responsibilities

[Project coordinator] will lead and implement the project locally, and in doing so will:

- Provide relevant information about the fishery to the CAB with regard to each MSC indicator. Information may be provided in the form of published documentation (official or unofficial) or through arrangement of in-person meetings with the assessment team;
- Provide key contacts for the fishery to CAB in preparation for the site visit;
- Manage stakeholder relations, including the government and private sector, as applicable;
- Maintain good communication with local partners and provide information from the CAB and [project facilitator] (and vice-versa) about the progress of the pre-assessment;
- Identify unforeseen challenges or potential obstacles and work with [project facilitator] to develop needed solutions to successfully complete the pre-assessment;
- Provide comments on the draft pre-assessment report along with [project facilitator] and designated local partners; and
- Share the pre-assessment results with key stakeholders.

Detailed responsibilities for [project coordinator] include:

1. Preparing for the pre-assessment

- Establish contacts as needed with governmental agencies, universities, research institutes, and other key stakeholders from whom information on the fishery can be obtained. Engage with key stakeholders to ensure their participation in the pre-assessment.

- Provide requested information about the fishery to the CAB, ensuring that key sources are consulted. Information can be transferred through documentation and/or by arranging meetings with the assessor. Fishery information is most helpful to the certifier when explicit reference is made regarding what documentation addresses which specific MSC performance indicator.

2. Coordinating the pre-assessment site visit

- Arrange meetings for the CAB with key stakeholders in order to obtain additional information about the fishery in relation to the MSC standard. Dates for the meetings are to be coordinated with the CAB.
- Exchange information and opinions with the CAB about the accuracy of information compiled from different agencies or other sources, if applicable.

3. Reviewing the pre-assessment report

- Review the draft pre-assessment report completed by the CAB and send comments/edits to [project facilitator]. [Project facilitator] will then coordinate the submission of comments to the CAB, who will make any changes and submit to the clients a final report.
- If applicable (to be discussed with [project facilitator]), deliver the draft report to local partners for their review, and forward comments from all partners to [project facilitator].
- If applicable, determine with [project facilitator] the next steps regarding fishery improvement work to help the fishery meet the MSC standard.

4. Communications

- Coordinate with [project facilitator] regarding the completion of the pre-assessment and stakeholder engagement in the process. It will be important that supplier and supply chain engagement be coordinated with [project facilitator], as there are linkages between [project facilitator], corporate partners and local players in the supply chain.
- Establish close communication with key fishery stakeholders and generate a schedule for meetings, visits, and/or workshops, as needed.
- Keep [project facilitator] informed of the progress of the pre-assessment and exchange information to ensure a smooth process.
- After the final report is received, discuss the key outcomes with stakeholders and the proposed way forward.

The [project facilitator] will help ensure a smooth, thorough, and technically sound assessment by:

- Helping to fundraise;
- Providing technical guidance as requested about the pre-assessment process as well as the MSC standard; and
- Helping to review the draft pre-assessment report.

Timeline

The timeline for this work will be [X] months ([date range]) with the potential to continue the work based on measurable results and available funding.

Deliverables

- 1) Regular updates to [project facilitator] via email/phone regarding project progress;
- 2) Completion of site visit by [date];
- 3) Review of draft pre-assessment report by [date];
- 4) Final project report by [date].

Appendix X: Example Terms of Reference for a Project Coordinator (Full Assessment)

Example Terms of Reference for a Project Coordinator for Full Assessment

Background

[Provide background on the project, including a brief description of the fishery, previous pre-assessment and FIP work, and any sustainability issues that need to be addressed before full assessment should begin.]

Scope of Work

[If applicable:] The [time period, e.g., first year] of the project will be spent ensuring that the [fishery] is fully prepared for the MSC full assessment process.

During the [time period, e.g., second year] of the project, the full assessment will determine if the [fishery] complies with the environmental standard for sustainable fishing set forth in the Principles and Criteria of the MSC. As required by the MSC, each fishery must be independently evaluated by an accredited third-party Conformity Assessment Body (CAB).

The full assessment will cover the following unit of certification

Species	
Geographical Area	
Methods of Capture	
Stock	
Management	
Client Group	

Full Assessment Process

During MSC full assessment, the CAB fully evaluates whether the fishery complies with the MSC environmental standard for sustainable fishing. The full assessment process involves:

- the formation of an expert assessment team
- an information-gathering phase and site visit
- the development of a detailed assessment report that scores the fishery against the MSC performance indicators
- client review of the assessment report
- peer review of the assessment report
- stakeholder review of the assessment report
- a final determination of whether the fishery meets the MSC standard
- a period during which objections to certification can be lodged by stakeholders.

The full assessment process is public and involves stakeholder participation in many steps along the way. Full assessment usually takes 12-18 months to complete.

The MSC certificate is valid for five years, after which a fishery must be re-assessed in order to remain MSC certified.

More information on the full assessment process can be found on the MSC website (<http://www.msc.org/get-certified/fisheries/assessment-process>).

Client Group

[Project facilitator and/or project coordinator] will be a co-client in the full assessment along with [name of fishery client], who will be the certificate holder if/when an MSC certificate is awarded. The co-client relationship allows [project facilitator and/or project coordinator] access to the process and CAB in a way we would not have if not a client, allowing us to efficiently and effectively help guide the process and provide technical support.

The fishery co-client must be capable of implementing any conditions or recommendations of certification and is responsible for ensuring compliance with any conditions and the MSC standard throughout the life of the certificate.

Roles and Responsibilities

[Name of project coordinator] of [organization] will be responsible for coordinating the full assessment locally and in doing so will work closely with local stakeholders, particularly the [fishery client], toward completion of the MSC full assessment. [Name of project facilitator] of [organization] will serve as overall facilitator for the project.

[Insert CAB and assessment team information, if known.]

Responsibilities of [Project Coordinator]

[Project coordinator] will be responsible for 1) working with fishery stakeholders to address the issues identified during pre-assessment, and then 2) helping to coordinate the full assessment locally.

Specifically, under this agreement [project coordinator] will be responsible for:

- Working with stakeholders to address the issues identified during pre-assessment and ensuring that the [fishery] can meet the MSC standard and is ready for full assessment;
- Determining with stakeholders the appropriate co-client for the full assessment (and eventual holder of the MSC certificate) and obtaining agreement from said entity;
- Acting as a liaison and coordinating between the fishery co-client, [project facilitator], and CAB, helping to ensure that the certification process of the fishery is conducted as expeditiously, effectively, and accurately as possible;
- Providing comments on documents developed by the CAB, including summary materials for the MSC, proposed assessment team members, proposed peer reviewers, and drafts of the assessment report;
- Ensuring that the CAB is informed about relevant stakeholders and providing contact details as needed (e.g. fishery managers, scientists and control and enforcement officers; academics, including those that may be conducting independent research into aspects of the fishery; environmental organizations; processors; etc.);
- Providing information required for the assessment to the CAB, in advance of the site visit, that addresses all MSC performance indicators as described in the current version of the MSC Certification Requirements;
- Coordinating the dates and agenda for the full assessment site visit meetings, in consultation with the fishery co-client, CAB, and key stakeholders, and helping to organize meetings as needed;

- Accompanying assessment team members during the site visit as required/requested by the CAB, and participating in any stakeholder workshops;
- Working with the fishery co-client to draft an action plan that will meet any conditions of certification;
- With [project facilitator] and the MSC, helping to draft press materials to announce the fishery receiving certification;
- Maintaining good communication with the fishery and providing information from the CAB and [project facilitator] (and vice-versa) about the progress of the full assessment;
- Identifying unforeseen challenges or other potential obstacles and working with [project facilitator] to develop needed solutions for successfully completing the full assessment process;
- In general, contributing to all other areas required to bring the certification process to a successful conclusion.

Responsibilities of [Project Facilitator]

The [project facilitator] will help ensure a smooth, thorough, and technically sound assessment by:

- Helping to fundraise
- Serving as a co-client
- Contracting the CAB
- Liaising between the fishery, CAB, and MSC
- Providing technical guidance as requested about the full assessment process as well as the MSC standard; and
- Helping to review the draft full assessment reports.
- Assisting with communications

Additional Notes

Maintenance of Certification

Once certification has been approved, a contractual agreement will be established between the CAB and the fishery co-client for ongoing annual surveillance audits. Certification is valid for five years and within this period the fishery must be subject to annual audits. To maintain certification, the fishery is re-assessed in its fifth year. Annual audits and re-assessment will be the sole responsibility of the fishery co-client. It is important that these expectations are clear up front.

Chain of Custody

Certification of a fishery alone does not allow the sale of certified product. This requires separate Chain of Custody (CoC) certification. The fishery assessment will identify the point at which fishery certification ends and chain of custody certification must begin. Chain of Custody is then the responsibility of those buying and selling the certified product. [Project coordinator] may want to reach out to relevant points in the supply chain during the full assessment to inform them of this. As a site visit is required to assess supply chain companies against the CoC standard, there can be substantial cost-savings from having the CAB conduct CoC certification of any interested local companies at the same time as the full assessment of the fishery (assuming you are confident that the fishery will pass the assessment).

Timeline

The timeline for this work will be [X] months ([date range]), with certification anticipated in [month] [year].

Deliverables

- 1) Regular updates to [project facilitator] via email/phone regarding project progress;
- 2) Completion of site visit by [date];
- 3) Review of client draft assessment report by [date];
- 4) Final project report by [date].

Appendix XI:
Example Terms of Reference for a CAB
(Pre-Assessment)

Example Terms of Reference for a CAB for Pre-Assessment

Overview

This contract is for a Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) pre-assessment of the [fishery] in [location]. The pre-assessment will be conducted by [CAB], with [name of lead assessor] as lead assessor and [name(s)] as additional team member[s].

[Fishery client] and [co-client] are co-clients for the pre-assessment. [Name of project coordinator] of [organization] will coordinate the pre-assessment locally and in doing so will work closely with the [fishery client]. [Name of project facilitator] of [organization] will provide additional coordination and guidance.

Background: Fishery

[Provide background on the project, including a brief description of the fishery, reasons for interest in certification, and whether you anticipate that a FIP will be needed before the fishery can meet the MSC standard.]

Background: [CAB]

[Provide brief background information about the CAB and likely assessment team members (this can usually be taken from their proposal for the work).]

Scope of Work

Pre-assessment is the first formal stage of the MSC fishery assessment process. Pre-assessment provides a basis for understanding the fishery in the context of the *MSC Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Fishing* and informs the client of the likelihood of achieving certification of their fishery. The pre-assessment clarifies with the client the philosophy and expectations of the MSC and identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the fishery relative to the MSC assessment criteria. The main purposes of the pre-assessment are to obtain a clear understanding of the nature, scale, and intensity of the fishery and to identify any issues that may prevent the fishery from meeting the MSC standard.

The MSC unit of certification is defined as the target fish stock (biologically distinct unit) combined with the geographic area of fishing, the fishing gear used, the management group(s), and the vessels/ organization(s) taking responsibility for the certificate. The pre-assessment will help to define the appropriate unit(s) of certification based on the following information:

Species	
Geographical Area	
Methods of Capture	
Stock	
Management	
Client Group	

Pre-Assessment Process

[CAB] will perform the following activities in order to complete the pre-assessment:

- Appoint an appropriately qualified individual or team to conduct the pre-assessment evaluation.
- Set up initial meetings with [client group] to review the process and requirements of the pre-assessment.
- Hold a substantive meeting with the client to review the fishery, environmental impacts, and management measures involved, with a site visit if requested and/or necessary.
- Review documentation provided by the client to assure coverage related to all key components of the MSC standard.
- Prepare a report for the client, using the MSC format, that addresses the items and issues generated by a brief analysis of the fishery against the MSC Principles and Criteria, including any issues that may be an impediment to certification.
- Identify knowledge gaps, confirm the appropriate unit of certification, and evaluate the fishery's state of preparedness for full assessment.
- Identify actions that should be undertaken by the client prior to any announcements regarding full assessment, including the type and extent of data and information that should be made available by the client to the CAB's assessment team in the event of a full assessment.

[If applicable:] Upon completion of the pre-assessment, WWF expects to initiate with stakeholders the development of a Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) to move the fishery toward meeting the MSC standard, as opposed to the fishery entering full assessment. The pre-assessment will help identify performance indicators requiring improvement.

Site visit

[Insert anticipated locations, dates, and relevant stakeholders for the site visit.]

To ensure an open, transparent, and thorough pre-assessment process [if applicable: and help set the stage for the anticipated Fishery Improvement Project], the client will identify key stakeholders that should be involved during the assessment process, notably during the site visit.

Client Role

The client's main role in the certification process is to ensure that the assessment team has unrestricted access to data and information about the fishery. This can include providing additional information and data upon request from the assessment team. The client is also responsible for disclosing any information of relevance about the fishery to the assessment team even if the information is not favorable.

The client will have the responsibility for providing documentation for the fishery sufficient for [CAB] to address the following MSC requirements:

- Overview of the fishery and a clear definition of the unit of certification being proposed
- General historical background information on the area of the fishery
- Scientific reports, particularly regarding stock status
- Details on retained species, bycatch, ETP species, marine habitat interactions, and other ecosystem impacts
- The fishery's management policy objectives and/or relevant regulations
- Governance and political stability issues
- Domestic consumption and export information
- Other fisheries in the vicinity not subject to certification but that may interact with the fishery being assessed.
- External factors (such as environmental issues) that may affect the fishery and its management
- A list of key stakeholders in the fishery and their special interests, where relevant
- If relevant, information for any subsequent Chain of Custody certification

[CAB] cannot be responsible for conclusions drawn from incomplete or erroneous information provided by the client.

Communications

[CAB] is to ensure that [project facilitator] and [project coordinator] are included on all communications to the clients about the project.

Confidentiality

The existence, process, and outcomes of the pre-assessment remain confidential to the client and the CAB unless otherwise directed by the client. [CAB] will keep confidential the client's intention to proceed to certification until the client signs (or confirms) an assessment contract, or until the client directs otherwise.

OR:

[Project facilitator] intends for this pre-assessment to be a public process in order to help garner stakeholder support in preparation for the development of a FIP. However, due to potentially sensitive subject matter, we ask that if [CAB] wishes to talk about the project with stakeholders in the fishery with whom [project facilitator or project coordinator] has not directly connected [CAB] or with any individuals outside the scope of the fishery, that you please check with [project facilitator or project coordinator] first.

Timeline

The start date for this contract is [date]. The end date is [date].

[CAB] expects to carry out the site visit in [month and year] on dates mutually agreed upon by the client(s) and in the location(s) agreed upon by the clients. [CAB] will deliver a report to [project facilitator] within six week(s) following the site visit. The pre-assessment should be complete by [month and year].

Deliverables

[CAB] will provide to [project facilitator] the following deliverables, with invoices:

- [Date]: Completion of site visit
- [Date]: Client draft pre-assessment report
- [Date]: Final pre-assessment report

Payment will be made upon delivery to our satisfaction of each deliverable by the specified date. Time is of the essence in the performance of this agreement.

Appendix XII:
Example Terms of Reference for a CAB
(Full Assessment)

Example Terms of Reference for a CAB for Full Assessment

Overview

This contract is for a Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) full assessment of the [fishery] in [location]. The assessment will be conducted by [CAB], with [name of lead assessor] as lead assessor.

[Fishery client] and [co-client] are co-clients for the assessment. [Name of project coordinator] of [organization] will coordinate the full assessment locally and in doing so will work closely with the [fishery client]. [Name of project facilitator] of [organization] will provide additional coordination and guidance

Background: Fishery

[Provide one-two paragraphs on the fishery, the pre-assessment, and any issues that were identified during pre-assessment.]

Background: [CAB]

[Provide brief background information about the CAB and likely assessment team members (this can usually be taken from their proposal for the work).]

Scope of Work

The full assessment will determine if the fishery complies with the MSC's environmental standard for sustainable and well-managed fisheries. Certified fisheries can assure buyers that their products have not contributed to the problem of unsustainable fishing practices. To achieve the MSC standard, a fishery must undergo an extensive assessment by an accredited, third-party Conformity Assessment Body (CAB), in this case [CAB].

Unit of certification

The MSC unit of certification is defined as the target fish stock (biologically distinct unit) combined with the geographic area of fishing, the fishing gear used, the management group(s), and the vessels/ organization(s) taking responsibility for the certificate. The full assessment will cover the following unit of certification:

Species	
Geographical Area	
Methods of Capture	
Stock	
Management	
Client Group	

Assessment team

The process defined by the MSC for completing full assessments includes the appointment of suitable independent experts to serve on the assessment team. In selecting the team, [CAB] will request client comments and suggestions. For the full assessment, [name] will serve as lead auditor.

Full Assessment Process

MSC requires specific steps for the assessment as outlined below:

Prior to assessing the fishery

Prior to assessing the fishery, [CAB] will ensure relevant and adequate information is available to aid the fishery assessment, ensure that opportunities to participate in the assessment process are provided to interested parties, and ensure that the assessment process is unambiguous and transparent to interested parties.

Assessment team selection

Assessment team selection commences after the assessment contract is signed. [CAB] will ensure that the team includes a mix of technical expertise in fish stock assessment, fish stock biology/ecology, fishing impacts on aquatic ecosystems, fishery management and operations, current knowledge of the country and fishery under assessment, and third-party auditing techniques. [CAB] intends that the team will be unbiased and be broadly acceptable to the client and stakeholders. Brief details of the selected individuals must be posted on the MSC web site to allow stakeholders and other interested parties the opportunity to comment.

Determining the assessment tree

Following selection of the team, the team will review the current version of the MSC Certification Requirements (CR). While the CR is designed to apply to all fishery assessments, the assessment team will review the performance indicators and weighting specifically for the [fishery] and propose revisions if appropriate to the species or fishery. [CAB] will also preliminarily determine if the Risk-Based Framework (RBF) will be used in the assessment.

Data and documentation review

The client will be provided with a summary list of anticipated objective evidence required by the assessment team. The client will be responsible for assembling all information relevant to the assessment and providing the information to the assessment team. Following determination of the assessment tree, the team will review all data and documentation provided by the client to determine whether sufficient information exists to provide a basis for scoring the fishery. During the information-gathering phase, [CAB] will confirm with the client whether sufficient information exists to conduct a traditional assessment, or whether it will be necessary to invoke the RBF on any applicable performance indicators. The team will identify gaps in the documentation received and any additional information needed for scoring the fishery.

Assessment visit

The full assessment team will conduct an on-site assessment visit with the client, management agency, and stakeholders, and will provide notice at least 30 days in advance of the first on-site visit. Examples of stakeholders the team wishes to speak with include representatives from fisheries management organizations (e.g., fishery managers, scientists, and control and enforcement officers); academics that may be conducting independent research into aspects of the fishery; environmental organizations; and processors.

Scoring the fishery

After the evidence is compiled and assessed by the assessment team, the team will determine whether the fishery has succeeded in meeting the certification requirements. Individual members of the team will score each performance indicator on a scale of 0-100 using the scoring guideposts. At the end of the scoring process, the team confers on the results until it reaches a consensus. MSC requires that the fishery obtains a score of 80 or more on each of the three Principles, based on the weighted average score for all criteria scored under that principle, in order to be certified. If a fishery achieves a score of less than 80 on any Principle, certification is not awarded.

If a fishery achieves a score of less than 60 on any performance indicator or criterion, certification is not awarded. Where the fishery achieves a score of less than 80 but of at least 60 for any individual performance indicator, the assessment team will set one or more conditions for continuing certification. The intent of the condition(s) is to ensure improvement in the fishery's performance to at least the 80 level within a period set by the assessment team. It is the client's responsibility to meet the conditions.

Client Draft Report

Within two months of the end of the assessment visit, a preliminary draft report will be sent to the client for review and comment. The client draft report contains the scores and weightings for each performance indicator, the rationale behind these scores, conditions, and the draft certification outcome as to whether or not the fishery is recommended for certification.

Where there is concern by the client that insufficient information is available to support the assessment team's decisions, or that a decision has been taken in error, the client shall be provided with an opportunity to question the assessment team and have the issue re-examined. However, the assessment team is not obligated to accept client requests for changes in the report, but must provide justifications for whatever responses are made to client comments. The client is also required to agree on and develop an action plan that will meet any conditions of certification. The draft report will subsequently be edited by the assessment team.

Peer Review Draft Report and external peer review

The draft report incorporating client comments and team responses becomes the Peer Review Draft Report. [CAB] arranges for the Peer Review Draft Report to be reviewed by a group of expert peer reviewers considered to be, at a minimum, the peers of the experts comprising the assessment team. A minimum of two people are retained as peer reviewers.

[CAB] is required to notify the MSC and stakeholders of the proposed peer reviewers and allow 10 days for stakeholders and the MSC to submit written comments and/or objections as to the selection of a proposed member of the peer review panel. The CAB's decision on the choice of peer reviewers is final.

Upon receipt of the peer reviewers' written comments on the report, the assessment team will explicitly address the issues raised and incorporate any appropriate changes into the draft report.

Public Comment Draft Report and review by stakeholders

Following review by the client and peer reviewers and having taken account of the comments, the certification body shall make the Public Comment Draft Report available for review by stakeholders for a period of 30 days. The Public Comment Draft Report contains the full comments from the unidentified peer reviewers. In responding to the Public Comment Draft Report, stakeholders are advised that they are to provide objective evidence in support of any additional claims or any claimed errors of fact.

Final Report

The assessment team shall review the stakeholder comments received and revise the report as appropriate. [CAB] will make a determination and release a final report that incorporates scores, weightings, conditions, and rationale; written comments by the peer reviewers; all written comments by stakeholders; responses to peer reviewer and stakeholder comments; and the final determination.

The determination will be one of the following:

- Unconditional certification (certification with no conditions)
- Certification with conditions to be met within specified timeframes following certification
- Certification only when specific pre-conditions have been met (possibly with additional conditions following certification)
- Certification withheld

The final report will be posted on the MSC website and the MSC will actively distribute to the public a statement that explains the meaning of the determination and the process to follow for raising an objection to a determination.

Objections

The MSC has a formalized objections procedure that allows stakeholders who disagree with the certification determination to challenge the decision. No formal certificate or logo licensing agreements may be issued or entered into relating to any fishery product until the objections procedure has run its course in accordance with MSC methodology and the objections procedure and the determination is finalized. Depending on the nature of the objection, the client may be liable for additional costs.

Public Certification Report and certificate

Once the objections procedure is completed and the final certification decision has been reached, [CAB] will prepare the Public Certification Report and certificate. For a successful certification assessment, the issuing of the certificate marks the end of the fishery assessment process.

Maintenance of Certification

Certification is valid for five years and within this period the fishery must be subject to annual audits. Once certification has been approved, a contractual agreement will be established between [CAB] and the fishery for the annual surveillance audits. To maintain certification, the fishery must be re-assessed in its fifth year.

[If project facilitator or project coordinator is serving as a co-client:] The [fishery client] will be the certificate holder. As such, [project facilitator/coordinator's] obligation to this fishery assessment is guaranteed only for the duration of this contract. [CAB] will undertake a separate contract with the [fishery] to cover annual audits.

Chain of Custody

Certification of a fishery alone does not allow the sale of certified product. This requires separate Chain of Custody (CoC) certification. The fishery assessment will identify the point at which fishery certification ends and chain of custody certification must begin.

Client and Stakeholder Roles

Client Role

The client's main role in the certification process is to ensure that the assessment team has unrestricted access to data and information about the fishery. This can include providing additional information and data upon request from the assessment team. The client is also responsible for disclosing any information of relevance about the fishery to the assessment team even if the information is not favorable.

The client needs to ensure that the CAB is properly informed about relevant stakeholders and any issues of their interest. This ensures that all relevant stakeholders are informed of the assessment and given an opportunity to contribute their views. It also means the stakeholder engagement process is properly designed, appropriately costed, and proceeds in a timely manner.

The certificate holder must be capable of implementing any conditions or recommendations of the certification and is responsible for remaining in compliance with any conditions and ensuring full compliance of the fishery with the MSC standard throughout the life of the MSC certificate. In this case, the certificate holder will be [fishery client].

Stakeholder consultation

To ensure an open, transparent, and thorough assessment process, stakeholders will be informed of the assessment and their views and information sought throughout the assessment process. [CAB] will establish a database of contact details for relevant stakeholders. Public notice will be provided through both the MSC website and through direct contact with registered stakeholders. The assessment team will review all stakeholder input and ask stakeholders for clarification of relevant points if required.

Key elements of stakeholder input include:

- Team member nomination and comment on final nominees
- Consultation on the performance indicators and scoring guideposts
- Comment and/or information on the fishery proposed for certification
- Invitation to meet with team members during the assessment visit and subsequent meetings as appropriate
- Consultation on proposed peer reviewers
- Consultation on public comment draft report
- Consultation on final report
- Potential entering of objections procedure

Communications

[CAB] is to ensure that [project facilitator] and [project coordinator] are included on all communications to the clients about the project.

Timeline

The start date for this contract is [date]. The end date is [date].

The full assessment is expected to take [#] months. [CAB] expects to carry out the site visit in [month and year] on dates mutually agreed upon by the client(s). The certification process should be complete by [month and year].

The schedule will be roughly as follows:

[Insert timeline provided by the CAB]

Deliverables

[CAB] will provide to [project facilitator] the following deliverables, with invoices:

- [Date]: Formal announcement of full assessment
- [Date]: Completion of site visit
- [Date]: Client draft full assessment report
- [Date]: Publication of final certification report and determination, as described above, on MSC website

Payment will be made upon delivery to our satisfaction of each deliverable by the specified date. Time is of the essence in the performance of this agreement.

Contributors

WWF-US wishes to thank the following organizations for their contribution to this handbook:

California Abalone Association

Marine Stewardship Council

Spencer Gulf and West Coast Prawn Fishermen's Association

The Bahamas Department of Marine Resources

The Nature Conservancy – Bahamas

WWF Australia

WWF India

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