SCS8 Final Report and Regional Implementation Status

May 15, 2025

Update for the Council Coordination Committee

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SCS8 Workshop:
Applying ABC Control Rules in a Changing Environment

Hosted by New England Fishery Management Council in Boston, MA (August 2024)

SCS8 Workshop:
Applying ABC Control Rules in a Changing Environment

Goal: Provide actionable guidance on how to best support Councils in the management of fisheries, specifically the application of ABC control rules, in a changing environment.

Motivation: SSCs have been challenged in applying ABC control rules in a manner that reliably achieves management goals given the degree of ecosystem change and scientific uncertainty that Council regions are experiencing.

Image credit: NOAA Fisheries.

SCS8 Final Report Highlights

Sub-theme 1: Advances in ecosystem science and assessment to inform ABC control rules in a dynamic environment

Challenges	Recommendations
Data limitations	Basic research: funding and planning to address data limitations.
Regional differences	Consistent availability: identify differences in data and information available by region; commit to making resources available across the nation.
Stock assessment performance	Analytical advances: integrate climate impacts into stock assessments and in the definition of reference points.
Capacity limitations	Expand collaborations: Expand data collection and collaboration with partners, integrate local ecological knowledge.
Ad hoc uptake	Strategic guidance: Define opportunities and provide guidance for on-ramping ecosystem information into the decision-making process.

SCS8 Final Report Highlights

Sub-theme 2: Application of social science to achieve management goals under dynamic conditions

Challenges	Recommendations
Data Limitations	Address information gaps: identify and fill data gaps; address constraint of data confidentiality issues.
Regional differences	Engage and formalize use of social science: Respond to public testimony, foster relationships and trust; use LEK, cooperative research and industry input.
Capacity limitations	More coordination: Focus the available staff resources; define how SSCs can contribute; use cooperative research.
Ad hoc uptake	Strategic guidance: Define on-ramps for social science; consider alignment of scales of data, timing of science and decisions, and roles; adapt decision making process to incorporate social science.

SCS8 Final Report Highlights

Sub-theme 3: Adaptation of reference points, control rules, and rebuilding plans in a changing environment

Challenges	Recommendations
Data limits	Consistent availability: funding and planning is needed to address data limitations and the need for more mechanistic studies.
Inertia in science and management process	Analytical advances: integrate climate impacts into assessment and biological reference points, adapt risk tables and policies to incorporate climate risk.
ABC control rule performance	Performance evaluation: simulation testing robustness in a changing environment with management strategy evaluation or retrospective analyses.
System rigidity	Proactive actions: need address challenges and barriers to adaptation; examine where regulatory actions are required to allow future flexibility (e.g., phase-in, carryover); build flexibility into FMPs.

Regional Implementation

- Exploring use of dynamic reference points and control rules.
- Revising the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review process to increase assessment timeliness and throughput, leading to more flexibility.
- SSC Social and Economic panel discussing how to improve data in risk ratings index.

- Gulf and SA SSCs jointly identifying consistent approaches for evaluating:
  - Uncertainty in MSY estimates,
  - When to use proxies for reference points, and
  - Recruitment timeframes for projections.

- Planning MSE of the Council's ABC control rule, exploring carryover and phase-in approaches, and MSY estimation.

Regional Implementation

- Exploring how to move towards use of assessment updates that can be more frequent and responsive than benchmark assessments.
- Piloting how to use risk tables for all benchmark assessments conducted during the 2025-2026 stock assessment cycle.

- Planning workshop with SSC and NEFSC on improving engagement and support on stock assessments, climate and social science issues.
- Planning MSE to test the robustness of different control rules and management strategies to changing climate conditions and data uncertainties.

- Developing a Fishery Ecosystem Plan and Risk Assessment strategy that incorporates social science data and information.
- Continuing meetings with fishermen to help improve the very limited data on effort and landings.

Regional Implementation

- Developing management approaches and scenario planning appropriate for data-limited, small-scale, and or multispecies fisheries.
- Ongoing review of ACL framework (including P* and SEEM working group processes).
- Exploring ways to better integrate socioeconomic information into SSC recommendations.

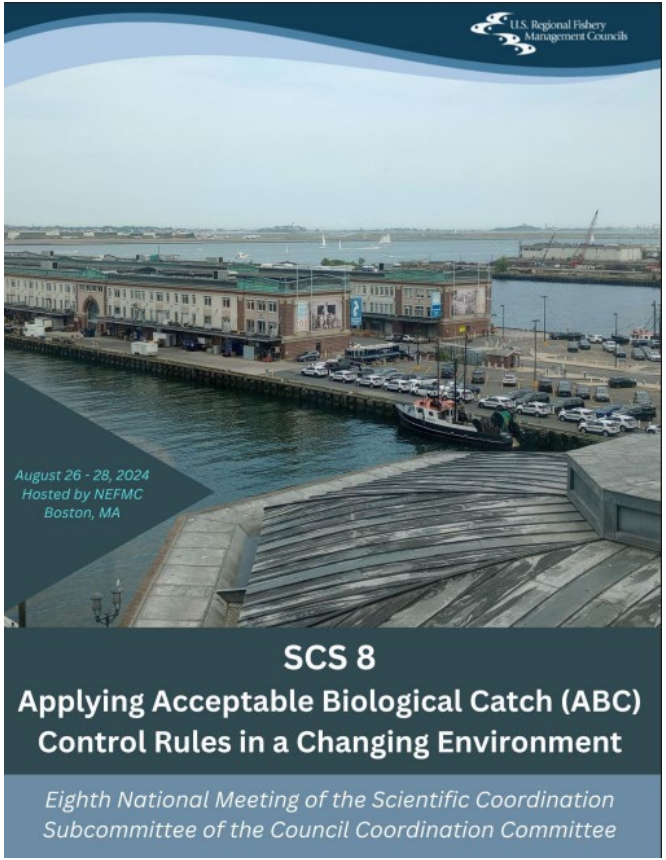
- Implementing a climate work plan: 1) SSC workshop on control rules: flexibility of current tier system vs what requires FMP amendments to modify, 2) testing control rules, and 3) goals and objectives for analysis of alternative control rules.

New England Fishery Management Council

- Developing an SSC workshop in early 2026 on how reference points are set and revised, working towards more consistency and adaptability.
- Created the SSC Social Sciences Subcommittee to improve social science data products and their integration into management.

Takeaways

- SSCs nationwide face challenges such as data limitations, uncertainty, and systemic constraints that hinder effective adaptation and decision-making.
- SCS8 highlighted the increasing use of environmental data in stock assessments and management, and emphasized the need to further incorporate social science into our fisheries decision making.
- SCS meetings are vital for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and tackling urgent national scientific challenges. They accelerate learning and spread effective approaches across regions.



U.S. Regional Fishery Management Councils