

**Meeting of CSAS and Regional RAP Coordinators  
November 13, 1996**

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Fisheries and Oceans  
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**Minutes**  
**Meeting of CSAS and Regional RAP Coordinators**  
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**MEETING OF CSAS AND REGIONAL RAP COORDINATORS**  
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The first annual end-of-year review meeting of Regional coordinators of the stock assessment review process and the Canadian Stock Assessment Secretariat staff was held on 13 November, 1996, in Ottawa. The agenda for the meeting and list of participants attached as Appendices I and II.

**1. FRCC - DFO stock assessment interface**

The Director General of Fisheries and Oceans Science reported that the FRCC is generally pleased with the type and timeliness of information obtained from DFO. Current areas of concern included:

- greater consideration of ecosystem processes and consideration of these effects in the provision of fisheries advice;
- cases when stock assessment results are inconsistent with observations of fishers; and
- the persistent latent capacity of the various groundfish fleets.

RAP coordinators reported that interactions with the FRCC were generally positive, although there was some dissatisfaction with the degree to which DFO staff occasionally were subjected to verbal abuse by individuals attending public meetings sponsored by the FRCC. Regional staff also were concerned that they had no sense of the long-term agenda of the FRCC, and would welcome more opportunity to discuss longer-term planning issues with the Council.

The timing of RAP activities and FRCC schedules were discussed at length. It was reported that the FRCC was considering dropping the major meeting in late June, where groundfish assessment results have been presented. This change would be welcomed by the Regional Assessment Coordinators.

Both Maritime and Newfoundland Regions tabled proposed schedules for review of stocks within the year. The proposed schedules are considered to be the most efficient match of availability of fisheries and survey data with Regional understandings of the needs of fisheries managers and the FRCC. Laurentian Region reported that changes to the schedule of assessments within the year would also increase quality and efficiency of reviews. However, further internal consultations were necessary before the Region would be able to propose an alternative schedule.

**Action Item:**

**The Coordinator of CSAS to collate proposed schedules of assessment reviews within all Regions. Headquarters Science officers will transmit the proposed schedules to FRCC for discussion, and discuss them with Fisheries Operations in Headquarters.**

The proposed schedule of assessments from Maritime and Newfoundland Region also specifies that not all stocks will be assessed every year. New SSRs will only issued when there has been a new review of stock status. The group endorsed this approach for stocks where little new information is being acquired annually, or where the stock is sufficiently depressed that a noteworthy change in status over the short term is highly unlikely. This approach has been in place for several years in Pacific Region groundfish, and has generally has worked well.

**Action Item:**

**Discussions of assessment schedules with FRCC and Regional fisheries managers should address inter-annual schedule.**

DFO Science participation in FRCC meetings and committees was reviewed. The general perception was that DFO input to committees is ineffective and spradic, and DFO members are poorly informed of FRCC committee activities.

There were several concerns regarding the interaction between individual DFO staff and both the FRCC and its subcommittees. When staff are asked to make a presentation or discuss a topic, there is no provision for peer review of the information presented, nor a record of what was presented. When presenting work individual scientists should clearly identify when their contributions are their own opinion, and not representative of disciplinary or departmental consensus. Nonetheless, there is no assurance that scientists always adhere to that principle, particularly on science issues not addressed by RAP meetings. Moreover, there are occasions when FRCC may request a presentation from a staff member who may not be the Department's preferred spokesperson on an issue, or who cannot convey the considerations of all Atlantic Regions.

**Action Item:**

**Senior Science managers to review DFO staff appointed as contacts for FRCC committees.**

**DG FOSD will propose to the Chairman of the FRCC that requests for DFO presentations on topics be channeled through the DG's office. The DG will discuss appropriate spokespersons with the Coordinator of CSAS and Science**

**Directors. When appropriate, more than one presenter will be proposed, to ensure the FRCC receives a balanced viewpoint.**

**The Coordinator CSAS will work with Regional RAP coordinators and Science managers to establish a process where material presented to the FRCC by individuals is distributed for information to other staff.**

The Head of Stock Assessment Division, Pacific Region reported on the status of a proposed Conservation Council in the Pacific. It is expected that one will be established, but its nature and mandate are unclear at this time. Discussions are underway between the Department and the Province of BC regarding an MOU on Roles and Responsibilities in fisheries. It is unlikely that a Conservation Council will be established until the MOU is in place.

## **2. Zonal and National Reviews**

### **2.1 National Marine Mammal Committee**

A national Marine Mammal Committee has been established, to conduct peer review of all marine mammal working papers and coordinate production of SSRs on marine mammals. It was agreed that the Chair should be at least at the Section Head level, experienced in stock assessment and provision of advice, but need not be a specialist in marine mammals. Central and Arctic needs to be consulted before selection of a Chair.

#### **Action Item:**

**The Coordinator CSAS is to work with regional science managers and RAP coordinators, to develop Terms of Reference for this Committee, and get it operational in 1997.**

**The Coordinator CSAS is also to review Terms of Reference and operating practices for SSSC and FOC, in light of the expanding mandate of the process.**

It is appropriate for SSSC to operate as a national committee, but it may be best to have separate fisheries oceanography committees for each coast.

### **2.2 Zonal Reviews**

All participants endorsed the need for zonal reviews of some assessments. For Unit 1, 2, 3 and NAFO Div. 3O Redfish the assessment review should continue to be zonal, because of the unclear stock boundaries. There are clear benefits from a zonal collation of the Atlantic salmon assessments. However, each Region will conduct RAP

meetings on Regional salmon stocks, and produce SSRs for salmon stocks at the Regional level. Regional salmon RAP coordinators will meet with the Zonal salmon chairperson to integrate results and prepare the Zonal salmon overview.

It was agreed that there would be small number of zonal reviews held annually for other stocks, where particular needs of zonal coordination were identified.

**Action Item:**

**In late winter of 1997 there will be a zonal RAP of herring assessments. Herring stocks in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Scotian Shelf, and Gulf of Maine will be assessed. The Newfoundland Region herring assessments conducted in fall of 1996 will be tabled for review of possible harvesting strategies, given the assessed stock status.**

There was also discussion of a zonal review of snow crab. It was concluded that the Regional reviews of the assessments themselves are sound, and it is the issue of management strategies which requires Zonal coordination.

**Action Item:**

**The Coordinator CSAS is to discuss with science managers and Regional RAP coordinators the value of a zonal meeting or a conference call on snow crab. Pacific Region should be included in these discussions.**

### **3. Workshops**

In addition to zonal RAP sessions, the CSAS will organize a small number of workshops each year. The 1997 workshop will look at Coastal and Offshore Cod Stock Components. The workshop will review evidence that there is some degree of distinctiveness of coastal and offshore stocks, as well as the implications of the results for assessment and management of Atlantic cod stocks. The workshop will be held in late February 1997, and include a few invited experts from outside Canada.

**Action Item:**

**The Coordinator CSAS will prepare and forward a draft agenda and request for contributions to DFO Science Directors by Nov. 22. Regional RAP coordinators will return comments by 2 December.**

#### **4. Regional Resource Assessment Processes**

It was reconfirmed that the conduct of Regional RAP meetings remains the responsibility of the Regions. CSAS will try to coordinate schedules to avoid scheduling conflicts and maximize the availability of similar information at similar times, but will not meddle in operational aspects of regional processes.

**Action Item:**

**CSAS staff will review the 1994 document "A Renewed Process for Assessment of Atlantic Stocks" in light of changes to the Department since 1994, and produce a revised draft for comment by Science Directors and RAP coordinators by the end of the calendar year.**

**The Secretariat will also develop and provide to Regional RAP coordinators and science managers a list of the things the Secretariat requires of the Regions through an operational year.**

Although it is accepted that Regions may approach the RAP process differently, it is acknowledged that at some point differences in approach may affect the perceived quality, if not the actual quality, of information and advice arising from the process. Particular concerns were noted with how peer review of habitat issues are dealt with across the regions, and how management approaches are evaluated.

**Action Item:**

**The Coordinator of CSAS will raise both of these issues with Atlantic Zone Science Directors and the meeting on November 15.**

With regard to non-DFO participation at RAP sessions, there was strong consensus that the process has benefited greatly from attendance of industry members and academics. Although many non-DFO participants lack technical expertise in stock assessment, the information they contribute is often useful and insightful. There have been few instances where contributions have been disruptive or intentionally biased.

Notwithstanding the benefits to quality and credibility of assessments from industry participation, legitimate concerns were identified. The credibility of the Department and Conservation Councils can be undermined if results of RAP meetings are discussed prior to formal release of the SSRs. Also there are concerns about conflict of interest, particularly in IQ fisheries, when a small number of industry members have advance knowledge of assessment results.

## **Action Item:**

**Regional RAP coordinators will ensure non-DFO participants continue to be requested to agree to treat RAP discussions as completely confidential until the SSRs are released. In IQ fisheries, RAP participants must agree not to buy or sell quota between the time of receipt of RAP documents and public release of the SSRs.**

**RAP coordinators will continue to allow participation by invitation only, acknowledging that particularly when industry organizations fund assessment activities, their suggestions for representation should be considered carefully.**

## **5. Documents**

CSAS requires copies of Research Documents, SSRs, and briefing notes in a timely manner following RAP meetings. The protocols for preparation of these documents was reviewed.

### **Stock Status Reports**

- SSRs are prepared in Draft form in the Regions, in formats which are compatible with Internet access
- Draft SSRs are transmitted from Regional Directors of Science to the ADM Science a minimum of 15 days prior to the scheduled release date
- Headquarters Science officers coordinate a final review of text, and draft memos approving release of SSRs for signature by the ADM.

These memos may have suggestions for revision prior to final release: the very large majority of suggested revisions have been minor corrections or changes in wording to improve clarity or reduce technical terminology.

- When the Regional Science Directors convey the draft SSRs to the ADM Science, the Regional administrative staff preparing the SSRs should contact the Assistant Coordinator, CSAS, to ensure electronic copies are available to CSAS, and will be on the CSAS Internet site at the release date.
- Each package of draft SSRs sent to headquarters by Regional Directors of Science must be accompanied by a Briefing Note for the Minister, summarizing major points in the SSRs. In some Regions RDGs wish to sign off the Briefing Notes prior to forwarding to the ADM Science.



In discussion it was noted that there are discrepancies among Regions in the detailed format of the SSRs. There was consensus that all SSRs should provide a common image of the Branch and Department.

**Action Item:**

**The CSAS Secretariat will prepare a single common format for the first page of all SSRs, and provide the template to Regional administrative staff prior to commencement of 1997 assessments.**

There is also a need to standardize the extent of background and technical details in SSRs. CSAS staff will work with Regional RAP coordinators on this topic over the coming year. Because new SSRs will not be prepared for all stocks in each year, it is necessary to establish a permanent numbering system for SSRs.

**Action Item:**

**CSAS staff will develop a proposal for numbering all SSRs at the national level, and circulate the proposal to Regional coordinators for comment by the end of 1996. Regional staff are invited to suggest approaches for numbering to the CSAS staff over the next weeks.**

There was also discussion about the requirement to translate all SSRs into both official languages in all Regions. It was agreed to follow Regional communications policy on the routine provision of SSRs. Whenever a request is received for an SSR in either official language, the request will be met.

**Research documents** need to be completed in a timely manner following RAP sessions, and forwarded to CSAS for duplication. Because of the diversity of fonts and formats used in preparing text, tables, and figures in Research documents, only the Title page and Abstract (in both official languages) will be mounted on the Internet site. All SSRs require a supporting science document. Although the supporting document will generally be a Research Document in the CSAS series, when other documents such as primary publications are available and relevant, they can be substituted.

The **Proceedings** series has encompassed a variety of products of RAP processes. Regions will continue to prepare minutes of RAP sessions and other documents related to stock assessment review as they require. Copies are to be forwarded to CSAS to be numbered and archived. All distribution of Regional contributions to the Proceedings series will be done at the Regional level.

The distribution of stock assessment documents by CSAS and Regions requires further coordination. In general Regions distribute SSRs and Proceedings, and authors of Research Documents receive some copies for their own use. CSAS responds to

requests for Research Documents and SSRs. When Regions receive requests for SSRs produced by more than one Region, those requests can be forwarded to CSAS.

**Action Item:**

**To improve efficiency of mailings, Regional coordinators are asked to update their mailing lists and forward a copy electronically to the Assistant Coordinator CSAS.**

## **6. Other Communications**

The 1996 video was considered to be an overall success, although there is room for improvement. It was agreed that the 45 minute video was too long, and several targeted videos would be more effective. If videos are to be continued, they will be most effective if ready at the time of release of the SSRs. It was also thought that effectiveness increased when videos were shown in settings like industry association meetings, where discussion can be encouraged, rather than just over cable channels. Much more work is needed to coordinate video preparation and release with Communications Branch staff and their interests and activities.

**Action Item:**

**Regional coordinators are to discuss possible videos in 1997 with their staff and Science Directors, and send a short list of proposed topics to CSAS by December 20. Selection and planning for production will be given high priority thereafter.**

The migration of SSRs to SeaLane has been a mixed success. The SSRs themselves, and the CSAS home page, look extremely good. Most of the associated SeaLane site is incomplete or non-existent, and the overall impression is poor. Moreover the success with the SSRs was only achieved through intensive efforts by the Assistant Coordinator CSAS, the Headquarters Science officer on Atlantic marine fisheries, and several committed staff in the Regions. Much of the work was done by students or temporary contractors. It will not be possible to allocate this level of effort to the task in future years.

**Action Item:**

**Atlantic Science Directors will be alerted to the need for a significantly greater commitment of Informatics support to SeaLane.**

## **7. Other issues**

Concerns were expressed about assessment and management of fisheries on new stocks and species. These have workload implications for science activities and problems of provision of credible assessments through RAP. The FRCC is reported to have drafted a document on emerging species. Both Maritimes and Pacific Regions have draft policy documents on new and developing fisheries, which spell out approaches to assessment and management at different stages of development of the fisheries.

### **Action Item:**

**The Director, Fisheries Research will try to obtain copies of all three documents, and circulate them among attendees.**

**APPENDIX I**

**Attendance of the CSAS and Regional RAP Coordinators  
November 13, 1996**

M. Ajersch	CSAS
D. B. Atkinson	Newfoundland Region
K. Bruce	Headquarters
W.G. Doubleday	Headquarters
D. Gascon	Laurentian Region
M. Henderson	Pacific Region
C. Matula	CSAS
R. O'Boyle	Maritimes Region
G. Perry	Newfoundland Region
H. Powles	Headquarters
J. Rice	CSAS

## APPENDIX II

### Agenda

#### Regional Coordinators Meeting

Nov. 13-14, 1996

1. Status of the Canadian Stock Assessment Process
  - Structure and responsibilities
  - Status of FOC, SSSC, national marine mammals committee
2. Regional Review Processes
  - Principles
  - Process
  - Schedule for 1997
  - Multi-year SSRs
3. Zonal Reviews
  - Redfish
  - Salmon
  - Others requested by regions
4. Documentation
  - Research Documents
    - Delivery
    - Electronic files
  - Stock Status Reports
    - Format, Content
    - Identification, Numbering, Archiving
    - Zonal Assessments
    - Approval Process
  - Briefing Notes
  - Proceedings
  - Minutes
  - Other Regional Series
  - Regional Distribution Lists
5. Dissemination of Scientific Information
  - Paper copy of information
  - Internet
    - SeaLane
  - Meetings with clients
  - Other media
    - Video
6. FRCC Interface
  - General Issues
  - June meeting 1996, 1997
  - Public consultations
  - FRCC Subcommittee representatives
7. Improvements for 1997
8. Initial Regional Plans for 1997 RAP Sessions