# NMFS Advanced Sampling Technology Working Group
# Terms of Reference

Revised: July 2004

## Agency Needs

With increasing demands for accurate, precise, and timely information upon which to base assessments of living marine resources and their habitat, it is incumbent upon NMFS to encourage and be dedicated to the development, evaluation, and implementation of promising innovations in sampling technology. By establishing the Advanced Sampling Technology Working Group (ASTWG), the NMFS Science Board recognizes the need for the agency and its scientists to demonstrate leadership in the ongoing process of improving the quality of assessments of the abundance and dynamics of living marine resources through refinement of existing techniques and implementation of improved methods. This process should also focus on improved characterization and understanding of the environments in which our living marine resources exist and assessment of the impact of fishing activities on these environments, and address needs for sampling over a broad range of temporal and spatial scales.

## Mission

**Improve the accuracy and precision of living marine resource assessments by:**

- Identifying information needs through the quantification and prioritization of components of uncertainty in stock assessments;
- Identifying new technologies, innovative uses of existing technologies, and approaches that involve a combination of technologies to address these information needs; and
- Facilitating and conducting research to develop these sampling technologies and their standardized implementation.

## Membership

- Two representatives from each of the six NMFS Science Centers.
  - Representatives must be NMFS employees.
- One representative from the NMFS Office of Science and Technology.
- The Chair is elected from and by the ASTWG, subject to approval by the Science Board.
  - The Chair will preside for a maximum of 3 years with a one-year renewal for special circumstances.
  - Provided the nominee is willing, the Chair shall be elected by simple majority.
  - Successive chairs are to come from different Centers.
  - New Chair nominated in November and begins term in May.
- Experts invited on an *ad hoc* basis.

## Meeting Schedule

- Two meetings per year, in May and November with preference for the November meeting at NMFS headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland.

## Committees

- Committees or study groups shall be established as necessary to address specific needs or achieve specific tasks.
  - Such committees may include persons who are not Members, but all committees will include at least one Member.
  - The ASTWG may terminate committees at will.
  - Committees will submit a written report to the ASTWG, following completion of the assigned task.

## Responsibilities

### Member responsibilities

- At the minimum, one of the two Center Members must be present at each meeting.
- Submit an annual accounting and progress report to the Chair prior to the November meeting.
- Conduct tasks as assigned by the Chair.
- In addition to communiqués from the Chair, Members are responsible for disseminating ASTWG decisions and information to their respective Center, including informing or briefing their respective Center Director on all important issues, particularly proposed spending plans.
- Prior to the May meeting, solicit and prioritize stock survey and assessment challenges from within respective Center for the following fiscal year.
- Member from the Office of Science and Technology will serve as Meeting Rapporteur, and is responsible for recording meeting minutes, action items, and meeting report distribution.

### Chair responsibilities

- Organize and schedule meetings.
- Report to Science Board and others as needed.
- Collate annual accounting and progress report and submit to the Office of Science and Technology Director and Member.
- Participate in the Programming, Planning, Budgeting, and Execution System (PPBES) process as required.
- Disseminate ASTWG decisions and information to Science Center Directors.

### Working Group responsibilities

Identify information needs through the quantification and prioritization of components of uncertainty in stock assessments.

- Develop appropriate national research initiatives to meet the needs of the agency and Science Centers.
- Coordinate with stock assessment scientists involved in stock assessment, habitat assessment, ecosystem monitoring, and other research activities.
- Monitor and evaluate NMFS research activities that involve or may be benefited by technological innovation.

Identify new technologies, innovative uses of existing technologies, and approaches that involve a combination of technologies to address the information needs identified above.

- Prepare recommendations on how advanced technologies can be modified, expanded, and/or improved to support agency stewardship responsibilities.
- Investigate appropriate methods to mitigate the impediments associated with obtaining classified data and technology.
- Track and evaluate related efforts outside the agency (e.g., other NOAA offices, NASA, DOD, NRO, FWS, EPA, ONR, industry, international organizations) to capitalize on and seek collaboration with these other efforts.
- Evaluate the costs and benefits of proposed technologies.

Facilitate and conduct research to develop sampling technologies and their standardized implementation.

- Sponsor, encourage, and participate in research and development on advanced sampling methodology.
- Identify requirements for technical assistance and training related to the application of advanced technologies.
- Assist the development of new funding opportunities in collaboration with other organizations.
- Disseminate research results and products to appropriate audiences through a variety of media.

## Decision Making Process

- Each Science Center and the Office of Science and Technology casts a single vote.
- Issues decided by majority vote.