

Policy Regarding Preparation of the SSC Report June 2007

Report preparation is one of the most important duties of SSC members. The SSC report should reflect the discussions of the SSC, as a body, during the SSC meeting. The report serves multiple purposes: (1) a record of what transpired at the meeting, (2) scientific advice to the Council and to the public, and (3) the “institutional memory” of the development of SSC guidance regarding various issues. As such, it is important that the SSC report be clearly written, accurate, and transparent. The following guidelines are meant to assist in achieving these goals.

1. Before the meeting, the SSC Chair will assign individuals to lead various agenda items.
2. Each individual should read the documents pertaining to their assigned agenda item(s) particularly carefully. Look for the key issues involved and research previous SSC comments on the item.
3. Be prepared to take the lead at the meeting in asking questions and formulating SSC advice on those agenda items. Generally, there is a presentation by staff, followed by SSC questions, public testimony, and finally SSC discussion and formulation of advice.
4. The Chair will summarize the main points that constitute SSC advice. Be sure to write these points down.
5. Get together with other individuals responsible for writing the report on the particular agenda item. Decide how to divide up the task. One person should assume the lead to assemble written and electronic submissions cohesively and to give the draft section to the SSC vice-chair.
6. The start of the SSC report should contain the agenda number and title and a list of staff members and the public who spoke before the SSC. After that, provide a summary of previous consideration of this item and address what are key issues being discussed by the SSC. For documents considered to be influential scientific information (ISI), according to the OMB Peer Review Bulletin, the SSC shall also characterize the nature of the public testimony in its report. The SSC written recommendations and discussion should demonstrate the SSC’s response related to the public testimony. Typically, the main ISI documents that the SSC reviews are the annual groundfish SAFE reports.
7. The SSC report should provide an accurate description of the scientific discussion. Therefore, sufficient detail should be provided to reflect the range of opinions that were expressed.
8. Use bold font to highlight key statements that should be emphasized by the Chair when presenting the report to the Council. Try to write the report with this aspect in mind. For example, detailed criticisms of methodology or results meant for the analysts should appear in separate paragraphs, so that the Chair can easily navigate through the reading of the report to the Council.
9. Other SSC members are encouraged to read the draft sections of all agenda items and provide comments to the leader of that agenda item. Please make your comments constructive and clear. If you have suggested changes, please write these out legibly. Avoid ambiguous advice such as “Put something in about ...”, “This is not clear to me”, “This needs work...”
10. You may come up with a brilliant idea that should have been considered at the meeting, but wasn’t. The idea does not belong in the SSC report. Reconsiderations by individual SSC members should be brought to the attention of the entire SSC and, if warranted, included in a subsequent SSC report.
11. Avoid recommending changes of a substantive nature that were not discussed at the meeting.
12. The SSC Chair has responsibility for final editing of the SSC report. The Chair may change or delete the report for clarity, scientific logic, and accuracy.
13. The SSC secretary will send the draft report out to all members, after the meeting, and members are encouraged to recommend final changes.