

Guidelines on Comments during SARC Peer Review Meetings

(Prepared by NEFSC, with NRCC review. Completed: 10/16/2014)

Introduction:

The Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC) is part of the Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW) process, which includes preparation of stock assessments, peer review, and publication. The main purpose of the SARC is to provide an independent peer review of fish and invertebrate stock assessments in the Northeast US, which includes both New England and the Mid-Atlantic. The SARC chair is responsible for running the peer review, controlling the flow of the meeting in relation to the meeting agenda, and deciding who may speak and for how long. SARC peer review meetings are open to the public and include public comment. This document provides written guidelines regarding the timing and types of comments¹ that may be taken from attendees (i.e., public comment) during future SARC peer review meetings.

Definition of “attendees”:

Attendees include a broad diversity of people at the SARC meeting, all of whom are seated in the audience (i.e., not at the front table). Those seated at the front table during the SARC are not considered to be attendees.

Two members of the SAW Working Group (WG) are seated at the front table during the peer review: the SAW WG chair and the lead assessment scientist. Other SAW WG members who are not seated at the front table are considered to be attendees. The role of SAW WG members is described further in the section “Guidelines for SAW Working Group members”.

The chair of the SAW process, the Chief of the Population Dynamics Branch, and a rapporteur are seated at the front table and are not considered to be attendees. Their roles are described in the “Description of the current process”.

A designated fishery management representative from the NEFMC, MAFMC, or ASMFC will be included with those seated at the front table during the peer review of a managed stock, and that person is not considered to be an attendee. The role of this person is described in the section “Designated representatives of fishery management agencies”.

Other members of the public who are seated in the audience are considered to be attendees.

¹ This document acknowledges that there are different types of comments, and they are sometimes difficult to categorize. They are provided to serve as guidelines for running SARC peer meetings.

Description of current process, used through 2013/2014:

The SARC Chair is responsible for running the peer review meeting. He/she controls the flow of the meeting, calls on people to speak, and decides which topics are to be discussed along with the amount of time per topic. The Chair should not allow any “attendee” to dominate the meeting by speaking for long amounts of time or by repeating points already made. The Chair should give people at the front table precedence in speaking before others. Those seated at the front table during the peer review include the SARC peer review panel, two principal members of the SAW WG (the SAW WG chair and the lead stock assessment scientist), a rapporteur, the chair of the SAW process, and the chief of the NEFSC Population Dynamics Branch. The chair of the SAW process and the NEFSC Population Dynamics Branch Chief coordinate the meeting and try to clarify issues that arise during the peer review. The rapporteur takes notes. The peer review meeting is broadcast to the public via conference call and Webex. The SARC peer review meeting has five stages, the first four of which are open to the public.

Stage 1. **Assessment presentation.** This is given by the lead stock assessment scientist. Comments from those at the front table and from attendees are generally restricted to clarifications and corrections (note: identification of needed corrections is allowed throughout the meeting).

Stage 2. **Discussion of the assessment presentation.** This involves the SARC panel, the lead stock assessment scientist, and SAW WG chair, all of whom are seated at the front table. Comments from attendees may be taken and can include clarifications and other types of comments (e.g., questions and opinions).

Stage 3. **Consideration of new analyses.** SARC panel considers new analyses prepared by the SAW WG at the request of the SARC panel. Comments from attendees may be taken and can include clarifications and other types of comments (e.g., questions and opinions).

Stage 4. **Edit draft Assessment Summary Report.** The SARC panel edits the draft Assessment Summary Report in consultation with others seated at the front table. The SARC panel edits the draft report so that it expresses—and is consistent with—the conclusions of the peer review. Comments may be taken from attendees and can include clarifications and other types of comments (e.g., questions and opinions).

Stage 5. **Writing of review panel reports.** The SARC panel meets in closed session to write its reports. Panel members draft their reports based on discussions during the open periods, and the panelists should not change any decisions made during the open periods. There is no public comment.

Changes to the current process:

Compared to the current process, the new guidelines reduce certain types of comments from attendees during Stage 4, but increase comments from attendees during a newly defined period following Stage 2 (**Table 1**). The types of comments taken during other meeting stages will remain the same as in the past. Likewise, the responsibility of the SARC Chair to run and control the flow of the meeting and to determine who may speak remains the same.

The new time slot for public comments between Stages 2 and 3 increases the opportunity for attendees to speak during the meeting. There will be a requirement to sign up to speak, and there will be a time limit per speaker (still to be determined, but on the order of a few minutes each).

Comments from attendees during Stage 4 will be limited to clarifications and corrections. The SARC Chair will generally not take other types of comments from attendees during Stage 4. However, as explained in subsequent sections, the SARC Chair still has flexibility in this regard.

A designated representative from the primary fishery management agency (NEFMC, MAFMC, or ASMFC) responsible for managing the stock will be included with those seated at the front table. (For details, see section “Designated representatives of fishery management agencies”.)

The purpose of Stage 5 is to provide a time for the review panel to write its reports. This stage was formerly closed to the public, but will now be open and only for the public to observe. There will be no public comment.

Table 1. Comparison between the current process used through 2013/2014 and the new process for use at SARC peer review meetings. For explanation of SARC review stages, see earlier section “Description of current process, used through 2013/2014”.

<u>Process</u>	<u>Stage within the SARC Review</u>					
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Comments	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Used through 2013/2014	C	C,O	N/A	C,O	C,O	-
New for the future	C	C,O	Comments	C,O	C	-

Key to Symbols in Table:		= Some form of Public Comment allowed
	N/A	= Not applicable
	-	= No Public Comment
	C	= Clarifications and Corrections allowed
	O	= Other forms of comments
	Comments	= A Defined time on agenda for Public Comments

Guidelines for SAW Working Group members:

The two SAW WG members who are seated at the front table (i.e., SAW WG chair and lead assessment scientist) represent the SAW WG. They are expected to speak for the WG in most situations during each stage of the peer review. SAW WG members who are not at the front table should speak if called on by the SARC chair, but they should allow the two SAW WG members seated at the front table to handle nearly all presentation and discussion that takes place during the peer review (but note “Exceptions”, below).

Designated representatives of fishery management agencies:

Designated representatives of fishery management agencies (e.g., MAFMC, NEFMC, ASMFC) are familiar with management measures and regulations for the stocks under review. During the peer review meeting, a designated fishery management representative for that stock can sit at the front table. The SARC chair may seek information, primarily about management and regulatory issues, from the designated representative. The designated representative is not a member of the peer review panel. The representative should be well informed about pertinent management issues related to that stock, and should prepare for the peer review by participating in SAW WG meetings and reading the assessment and background reports.

Exceptions:

1. For Presenters. If SAW WG members who are not normally seated at the front table are scheduled to give a presentation as part of the SARC meeting agenda, then these individuals should move up to the front table for their presentation and afterward return to a seat that is not at the front table.
2. For Attendees. It is the responsibility of the SARC chair to control the flow of the meeting so that it makes progress and to decide who may speak and for how long. The SARC chair is allowed to call on attendees during Stages 1-4 of the peer review if the SARC chair needs to acquire additional information that is not available from those seated at the front table. The SARC chair will make this decision on a case by case basis. An example of an appropriate use of this exception would be if the SARC requires information about a new topic that has not already been presented or discussed during the peer review.