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***Science and Technology
ST Policy on Document Preparation and Clearance***

NMFS POLICIES ON SCIENTIFIC & TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS

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1.0 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and its predecessor organizations have conducted research activities on living marine resources of interest to the United States for more than 120 years. Beginning with the first annual scientific report for the year 1871, the agency has continuously published information and research findings of the highest quality. The resulting contributions to the scientific literature number many thousands and are available in a broad range of publication formats with a worldwide distribution.

This document establishes policy guidelines to ensure that NMFS fulfills its mandate to make the results of its scientific investigations available in a timely manner, that the highest levels of quality are maintained, and that they are distributed effectively and readily accessed. Therefore, publication and dissemination by the agency are guided by the principles outlined herein.

2.0 PUBLICATIONS

NMFS produces formal scientific publications as the final step in its research programs. These receive varying levels of internal and external reviews; they include the peer-reviewed journal *Fishery Bulletin* (FB) and its associated NOAA Technical Report NMFS series (TR), the peer-reviewed journal *Marine Fisheries Review* (MFR), and the NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS (TM) series.

2.1 Peer-reviewed Publications

2.1.1 *Fishery Bulletin*

The quarterly *Fishery Bulletin* (FB) is the oldest and one of the finest fisheries science journals in the world. It is the U.S. counterpart to other highly regarded international government-sponsored fisheries science publications. It publishes original research or interpretative articles in all scientific fields that bear on marine fisheries, protected species, and ecosystem science. NMFS authors are encouraged to use this journal as their principal publication outlet for original research findings and technical notes.

2.1.2 NOAA Technical Report NMFS

The NOAA Technical Report NMFS (TR) of the *Fishery Bulletin* provides a flexible outlet for publishing a variety of high quality manuscripts which, owing to length or other reasons are inappropriate for the FB, such as taxonomic keys, comprehensive review manuscripts, FAO format species synopses, Flora and Fauna subseries manuscripts, etc. These manuscripts are equal in quality to *Fishery Bulletin* articles and undergo the same rigorous peer-review process.

The TR series is not used for annotated bibliographies, lengthy data sets, or computer programs. Such materials may be more appropriately published in the TM series or perhaps in microfiche or electronic form.

2.1.3 *Marine Fisheries Review*

The *Marine Fisheries Review* (MFR), a quarterly journal, publishes review articles, ongoing research reports, technical notes, and news articles on fisheries science, engineering and economics, commercial and recreational fisheries, protected species studies, aquaculture, and U.S. and foreign fisheries developments. Emphasis, however, is placed on in-depth review articles and practical or applied aspects of marine fisheries rather than basic scientific research.

2.2 Not Peer-reviewed Publication

2.2.1 NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS

NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS (TM Series) produced by NMFS Headquarters, Regional Offices, and Fisheries Science Centers are used for more timely documentation and communication of preliminary results, interim reports, and localized or special-purpose information that may not have received formal outside peer reviews or detailed technical editing. The originating Office or Center is responsible for reviews and technical accuracy of TM's. The TM's are numbered by their issuing organization and can be cited in the scientific literature. For the latter reason, and because the TM's are readily available through the National Technical Information Service (NTIS), the series should not be used if the author anticipates publication in a peer-reviewed journal or report series. Instead, the Administrative, Laboratory, or Processed Report designation should be used (see 2.3 below).

2.3 Informal (Grey Literature) Documents

2.3.1 Administrative or Laboratory Reports

In addition to the TM series, another type of agency documentation is available. These include Administrative, Laboratory, Contract, Saltonsall-Kennedy, or Processed Reports. These outlets serve a very specific purpose and contain material that is generally:

- A. For internal Center/Laboratory/Office purposes only or for preliminary reviews requested by Fisheries Management Councils or their committees.
- B. On file only at the respective Centers/Laboratories/Regions.
- C. Produced in less than 100 copies and restricted in distribution. If cited in a paper, they should be footnoted as either an unpublished ms. or “data on file at...”
- D. Carry the disclaimer that “This document does not constitute a formal publication and is for information only. Its contents should not be formally cited or reproduced.”
- E. Produced only as photocopies.
- F. Numbered for internal filing and retrieval.
- G. Self-covered.
- H. Not written or printed in a format that would make them appear similar to a TM, TR, or other peer-reviewed literature.

2.3.2 Periodical Reports and Newsletters

These include quarterly, bimonthly, or annual reports and newsletters. They are produced at the discretion of the various Science Center and Office Directors and are generally used to transmit information to the public and specific constituents of the agency. When published for external dissemination, they must conform to standard DOC, NOAA, and NMFS publication policies and guidelines. Materials in these reports are generally prepared and presented in more of a news style format.

Authors and editors of these materials must exercise care and judgment in preparation of these documents such that any future publication of the scientific research in a peer-reviewed journal is not jeopardized. Reports or newsletters should carry the disclaimer that “This report (or newsletter) does not constitute a formal publication and is for information only. Its contents should not be formally cited or reproduced.”

2.3.3 Data for Regulatory Use

Appropriate data and results from ongoing research requested by regulatory groups (e.g. Fishery Management Councils) are supplied by the appropriate Science Center or Office. Given the special relationship with NMFS scientific advice presented to management bodies, the provision of such material will not jeopardize later publication. However, such reports or documents should clearly state that they are limited in distribution, are for discussion or administrative or regulatory use only, and are not to be cited in the formal literature. For later publication it may be necessary to rewrite, augment, reanalyze, or condense such material. Authors of such manuscripts must inform the editor to whom the manuscript is submitted for formal publication whether or not the manuscript has been previously published or disseminated, in whole or in part.

2.4 Electronic Publishing

Directives governing new electronic media and their use have been developed by the Government Printing Office (GPO), NOAA, and other Federal agencies. NMFS will coordinate with the appropriate Federal agencies (in the Department of Commerce, GPO, Depository Library System, etc.) to produce and disseminate appropriate data in electronic form.

NMFS also encourages exploration of electronic forms of dissemination of its formally published research, including appropriate lengthy data sets, laboratory studies or field keys of fishes or fish larvae, extensive bibliographic data, and other lengthy scientific and technical materials that lend themselves to electronic storage and dissemination.

2.5 Microfiche

NMFS endorses the use of microfiche, generated either through GPO contract or via NTIS, for such publications or dissemination as appropriate (i.e. for “publishing” excessively long (250+ pages) reports or data sets or for mailing formal or informal NMFS publications to foreign publication exchange partners).

3.0 SCIENTIFIC PUBLISHING

3.1 Publications Advisory Committee (PAC)

The NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries (AA) established the NMFS Publications Advisory Committee (PAC) in January 1981, which succeeded the NMFS Publications Policy Review Board.

3.1.1 PAC Membership

Membership of the PAC includes at least one representative from each of the six regional Science Centers (usually a former FB-TR Scientific Editor), the current FB Scientific Editor, and the MFR Editor, and is chaired by a staff member from the Office of Science and Technology, Assessment and Monitoring Division (F/ST4). The NMFS Scientific Publications Office (SPO) Chief acts as Executive Secretary of the PAC and coordinates PAC communications and committee meetings, which are convened by the PAC chair. Should a vacancy occur in Center representation, the Science Center Director will select another representative.

3.1.2 PAC Duties

The PAC reviews scientific and technical publishing policies and makes recommendations to the AA through the PAC Chair. The PAC also reviews and makes recommendations for the establishment or termination of NMFS publication series; SPO and FB Scientific Editor budget, staffing, space, and operational needs; and performs limited editorial oversight as specified in item 5.1.

3.2 Scientific Editing

The position of FB Scientific Editor is filled by a senior scientist affiliated and co-located within a Fishery Science Center. That editor, chosen by the Center Director, serves for a 3-year term. The position rotates from Center to Center in a fiscal three-year cycle: NEFSC (1996-98), SEFSC (1999-2001), SWFSC (2002-2004), and AFSC (2005-2007), NWFSC (2008-2010), and PIFSC (2011-2013). Should a vacancy occur during a Scientific Editor's tenure, the Science Center Director names a replacement to complete the tenure cycle. The outgoing Scientific Editor will provide assistance to the incoming Scientific Editor to achieve a smooth editorial transition.

3.2.1 Editorial Autonomy

NMFS Scientific Editors have the autonomy expected and required by an editor of any formal scientific publication. The editor's decisions are final and are not subject to being overruled by the agency or any Federal entity, except as may be required by law. Issues or allegations of professional misconduct, however, are reviewed and adjudicated by the PAC as described in section 5.1.

3.2.2 Editorial Committee

The Scientific Editor is responsible for appointing an Editorial Committee to advise in the peer review process and on other editorial matters for the FB and TR series. Membership on the

Editorial Committee is not restricted to Federal employees and its size and composition are at the discretion of the Scientific Editor.

3.2.3 Peer Reviews

The NMFS Scientific Editor is responsible for conducting peer reviews of and for accepting or rejecting manuscripts for the *Fishery Bulletin* and Technical Reports.

3.2.4 Scientific Editor Staffing

The Scientific Editor is assisted by an editorial assistant, chosen either by that editor or via other arrangements worked out between the Scientific Editor and the SPO Chief. Necessary secretarial support is also arranged through the Science Center.

3.2.5 Scientific Editor Office Funding

Funding for the Scientific Editor's Office is shared with NMFS Headquarters through the Office of Science and Technology, Science Information Division (ST6). The Scientific Editor's salary, office and supplies are provided by his/her Science Center. NMFS Headquarters provides additional funds to support a GS-9 full-time salary equivalent scientific editorial assistant. This support position is located with the SPO in Seattle and reports to the SPO Chief.

3.3 Scientific Publications Office

The Scientific Publications Office is responsible for arranging all aspects of publishing the FB, TR, and MFR. (This does not preclude later electronic posting or dissemination of already published papers by others.) The SPO establishes publication specifications, coordinates and reviews publishing contracts (which by law are handled by GPO), and edits, publishes, and distributes the manuscripts approved by the respective scientific editors, including the MFR editor who is an SPO staff member. The SPO also monitors compliance with NMFS, NOAA, and DOC publishing regulations.

The SPO reports to the Chief, Science Information Division (ST6) in the Office of Science and Technology. In addition, the SPO provides technical and administrative editorial support to NMFS headquarters offices, which includes coordinating publication of several series of the NOAA Technical Memoranda NMFS and other special publications. SPO also carries out the mandates of the PAC after concurrence by the AA.

3.4 Headquarters, Regional Offices and Science Centers

NMFS Offices and Science Centers also provide informal presentations of administrative, contract, laboratory, and processed reports on research or information of a less permanent nature. Material with more formal editing or reviews is published in their Technical Memorandum (TM) series.

3.5 Scientific Publications Distribution

The SPO, under GPO, DOC, NOAA, and U.S. Postal Service (USPS) regulations, coordinates the distribution of the NMFS journals and technical reports that it publishes. Actual distribution is made by GPO and by private firms, under GPO contract.

Other NMFS Offices and Science Centers are responsible for the proper distribution of their publications according to DOC, NOAA, and USPS regulations.

3.6 Scientific Publications Exchanges

The SPO is responsible for maintaining and supporting formal publications exchange agreements with foreign and domestic organizations that publish related scientific and technical publications and information of interest and use to NMFS.

4.0 PUBLISHING PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Publication is the final act of research, and the agency is responsible for publishing and disseminating the results of its scientific studies. The process of documenting scientific findings begins with the scientific investigator and ends with publication and distribution.

4.1 Publication Privileges

Formal NMFS scientific and technical publications have the status of scientifically independent journals under control of the appointed editors. No one, within or outside the agency, receives special consideration for publication privileges in NMFS journals or the TR or TM series. Acceptance for publication is based on merit as evaluated through peer reviews and on the judgment of the respective editors.

4.2 Research Documentation

Each NMFS employee responsible for completing a scientific investigation is also responsible for documenting the results. The form of documentation may vary, but when significant new information of potential interest or value to the scientific community is developed, the individual has the added responsibility of making the findings available through formal publication.

NMFS managers and supervisors are responsible for encouraging formal publication of appropriate scientific findings. Formal NMFS publications may be considered as primary outlets for fishery-related articles written by employees. Following such consideration, employees, in concert with their supervisors and Science Center or Office Director, may elect to publish in another appropriate outlet of their choice.

4.3 Quality Assurance

4.3.1 Technical and Editorial Reviews

Technical and editorial reviews proceed through several steps, beginning with the author's immediate supervisor. Depending on the practices followed by particular elements of the agency,

the Laboratory, Center, or Office Directors may conduct technical reviews internally and/or externally. Regardless of the process, each Laboratory, Center, or Office Director is responsible for the technical accuracy, policy statements, and editorial quality of manuscripts or memoranda that he or she approves for release and/or publication. The standard NOAA Form 25-700 (or similar document) is used to indicate completion of appropriate Center or Office reviews and to signify final release for publication.

4.3.2 Peer Reviews

Articles submitted for formal NMFS publication above the level of TM must also be reviewed by the designated NMFS Scientific Editors who arrange for scientific or technical peer reviews and supervise full editorial review and oversight.

5.0 PUBLISHING ETHICS AND OVERSIGHT

5.1 PAC Editorial Oversight

PAC oversight of scientific writing, editing, and publishing is limited to issues of professional misconduct, and does not include issues of editorial discretion or judgment. Allegations of such professional misconduct must be presented to the PAC Chair in writing and with appropriate documentation. The PAC will investigate and, should a majority of its members find that any actions have been grossly inappropriate, will present documented findings and advice to NOAA's Assistant Administrator for Fisheries who has the sole authority for discipline.

5.2 Author/Editor Confidentiality

NMFS Editors are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of the manuscripts submitted to them, while in their possession.

Reviewers are likewise responsible for maintaining confidentiality of their reviews and of the information reviewed.

If requested by the author, reviews may be double-blind -- that is, neither the author nor the reviewer knows each other's identity -- at the editor's discretion. Generally, however, author names are not blacked out of the manuscript during the review process. If requested in writing by a reviewer, the editor may reveal the name of that reviewer, but only to the author involved.

5.3 Avoiding Dual Publication

Dual publication must be avoided. Authors are responsible for informing journal editors if substantial portions of the material submitted in a manuscript have previously appeared or are likely to appear in any other context (print or electronic), the number of copies produced, and where distribution has been made. Decisions of acceptance, revision, or rejection of the manuscript rest entirely with the publication editor.

6.0 BEST PAPER AWARDS

The Best Paper Awards for Fishery Bulletin and for Marine Fisheries Review are chosen from among those written or co-written by NMFS employees. Each Science Center may nominate 3 articles from the Fishery Bulletin list and 1 from the Marine Fisheries Review. The winners receive a \$5,000 awardⁱ (one for each journal paper). Judging criteria includes originality, clarity of prose and graphics, and contribution to the scientific literature and the mission of the agency.

The Best Paper Awards are important both to promote publishing by NMFS scientists and to promote use of these two journals. In addition to the cash award to be split equally among NMFS coauthorsⁱⁱ, each author receives an impressive wall plaque and an invitation to participateⁱⁱⁱ in the annual employee of the year awards ceremony in Silver Spring.

ⁱ *Two Best Paper Awards totaling \$10,000 annually are charged to ST6 budget.*

ⁱⁱ *Because the cash award is processed as a special act or service award and paid in lump sum in one pay period to salary, only agency employees may receive payment. Co-authors who are not employees, including contractors and students, are not eligible to receive a monetary award, but are presented with a wall plaque acknowledging their significant contribution.*

ⁱⁱⁱ *Federal rules prohibit travel support for contractors from appropriated government funds. Travel to Silver Spring for the winning author(s) and one guest is covered by their Science Center.*