

**California Sustainable Seafood Initiative (CSSI)**  
Ocean Protection Council

**CSSI Advisory Panel Meeting**

May 13, 2010

10 AM – 4 PM

Elihu M. Harris 1515 Clay Street, Room 15, Oakland, CA

---

## **Meeting Summary**

---

### **Introduction**

The first meeting of the California Sustainable Seafood Initiative (CSSI) Advisory Panel took place on May 13, 2010 in Oakland, California. The objectives of the meeting were to:

- Describe Advisory Panel goals and charge
- Present an overview of existing standards/protocols and begin discussing criteria for a California certification program
- Lay out a schedule for future Advisory Panel meetings

This meeting summary summarizes key issues discussed and key outcomes that resulted from the meeting. This meeting summary is not intended to serve as a transcript of everything said at the meeting.

The meeting summary is organized into the following sections:

- A. Overview of CSSI legislation and the Advisory Panel's Charge
- B. Stakeholder assessment overview
- C. Overview of existing standards and protocols
- D. Discussion of existing standards and protocols
- E. Presentation of California marine protected areas (MPAs) and implications for certification
- F. Comments from the public
- G. Action items and next steps
- H. Attendees

Each section below provides a brief overview of the topics discussed and then highlights key comments made by Advisory Panel members or OPC staff. The meeting agenda is attached as Appendix 1. A list of meeting attendees may be found in section H. below.

### **A. Overview of the CSSI and the Advisory Panel's Charge**

Eric Poncelet, Kearns & West (K&W) facilitator, reviewed the objectives of the meeting, the agenda, the charge of the advisory panel, and led the group in roundtable introductions. Sam Schuchat, California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) staff, reviewed the components of the California Sustainable Seafood Initiative (AB 1217), roles and responsibilities of OPC staff and the advisory panel, core tasks of the advisory panel, and a definition for sustainable seafood to be used for the purposes of this group's discussions. Eric then reviewed the composition of the advisory panel, the ground rules, and the schedule for the advisory panel. The presentation can be found on the OPC website at the following link: <http://www.opc.ca.gov/2010/03/california-sustainable-seafood-initiative/>.

A discussion ensued around this presentation. The following points and clarifications were made:

*Staff clarifications of the Advisory Panel's Charge*

- The objective of the Initiative is not to create a new certification scheme, but rather to help California fisheries to become California State certified in a way that at least meets United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) standards.
- The role of the Advisory Panel is to provide advice to OPC staff. OPC staff will use the advice to prepare recommendations for the Council. The Advisory Panel will have opportunities to review the recommendations before they are presented to the Council toward the end of the year.
- The advisory panel will not consider aquaculture in this process. Aquaculture is not to be considered until there are internationally accepted standards.
- When the CSSI was established, the intent was to get California fisheries certified to a standard that is at least as robust as the Marine Stewardship Council's (MSC) certification program. At the time, MSC had the highest certification standards.
- The Advisory Panel will further discuss whether a third party certifier is necessary for certification.
- A unique logo will be created for California Sustainable Seafood certification. The logo could be region specific, supplemental to the certifier logo, and used by processors/restaurants/retailers, among many other options that the Advisory Panel will further discuss.

*Other comments and clarifications*

- One Advisory Panel member commented that fishery practices are not entirely responsible for the depletion of an exploited population. Often it is the mismanagement of habitat that limits fisheries (e.g. the salmon fishery). OPC staff further clarified that the intent of this certification program is to address fishing practices, but not to address environmental/habitat management issues.
- Several Advisory Panel members noted that the MSC standards certify globally and that MSC conditions for certification will need to be tweaked to meet California Fisheries' specific needs.
- Some Advisory Panel members believe the MSC certification is an overly time consuming and cost prohibitive process.
- OPC staff shared that there is interest at the OPC to potentially support California fishing entities going through certification.

*Applicability of California's Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act*

Eric Poncelet, facilitator shared that these advisory panel meetings are subject to the Bagley-Keene act. The following clarifications were made:

- All meetings will be publicly noticed at least 10 days in advance.
- There will be an opportunity for public comment scheduled at each meeting.
- Panel members are not allowed to have a meeting or gather with 50% or more of the members without publicly noticing the meeting.
- Serial meetings are not allowed.
- Ex parte rules do not apply
- The Bagley-Keene act will be sent to the advisory panel members

## **B. Stakeholder Assessment Overview**

Briana Moseley, Kearns & West, gave a brief overview of key findings from the stakeholder interviews conducted with a cross section of Advisory Panel members. The complete stakeholder assessment can be found on the OPC website at the following link: <http://www.opc.ca.gov/2010/03/california-sustainable-seafood-initiative/>. There were no clarifying questions.

## **C. Overview of Existing Standards and Protocols**

Valerie Termini, OPC staff, gave an overview of the existing sustainable seafood certification programs. The complete presentation can be found on the OPC website at the following link: <http://www.opc.ca.gov/2010/03/california-sustainable-seafood-initiative/>. The following clarifying points were made by panel members:

### *Comments on marketing of sustainable seafood certification program*

- The incentive to use FishWise is access to green markets, which will bring a higher price for seafood products.
- It is difficult to identify target markets for sustainable seafood. Communication to the correct audience is key to the success of a California sustainable seafood certification program.
- Fishermen generally feel like they are not getting a direct financial benefit from the marketing of sustainable seafood practices.
- There may be some valuable lessons learned from the marketing campaign promoting fresh and local food from 1991-2001 that can be applied to this initiative. There was also a Santa Barbara wide program that promoted local sustainable seafood through placing stickers on restaurant windows. Some lessons learned may be gleaned from this as well.
- Sustainability of seafood should be the primary goal of this process, and marketing should be a secondary goal.

### *Comments on existing certification programs that could inform a California sustainable seafood certification program*

- The lessons learned from previous fishery marketing and certification groups should be used to inform the CSSI process. There was interest in the Lodi Rules created by wineries for California sustainable vineyard operations. The Lodi Rules can be found on the website [Sustainablewinegrowing.org](http://Sustainablewinegrowing.org). Some did not like the Lodi Rules because they are self regulated by the wine industry, making for a less robust certification program. Certain environmental impacts of operation are not considered in the rules, including over use of water and sedimentation issues.
- Land-based organics have a higher standard, especially because they pushed the Federal Government for a higher standard.
- Alaska's sustainable seafood certification has been very effective because people see Alaska as a brand for sustainability.
- Some expressed interest in having different levels of certification, similar to the LEED certification models. For example, data poor fisheries could fall into the data poor certification framework.
- Land-based sustainable practices should be linked to sustainable fishery practices. The strongest land-based organic certification program is Oregon Tilth.

*Comments on desired attributes of a CA sustainable seafood certification program*

- The Advisory Panel should push for a much higher standard of certification than MSC.
- In order to have a successful certification, it will be important to answer the questions: “What increases the connectedness of product to people?”, and “How do we bring the fisherman back to the consumer?”
- There should be a separate but equivalent certification for local/small/artisinal fisheries, for which it doesn’t make sense to go through the larger, more expensive certification process.
- The certification program should be traceable and verifiable.
- Some expressed that the distributor should be responsible for communicating the source of its seafood.

*Other comments and clarifications*

- “Got Mercury” is not a logo, but rather an online calculator and campaign. Some Advisory Panel members expressed interest in addressing mercury and seafood contamination issues in the advisory panel discussions.

**D. Discussion of Existing Standards and Protocols**

OPC staff requested targeted feedback on the following three questions regarding existing standards and protocols:

- 1) What fisheries could be certified in California? What can we do to get fisheries moving in this direction now?
- 2) What is it that restaurateurs/retailers need from a ‘sustainable’ fisheries system?
- 3) Which of the existing standards is most appropriate to meet the legislation? Which criteria are most important for a California certification system?

**1. Advisory Panel input on sustainability of existing California fisheries**

Advisory Panel members offered the following responses:

- The lobster fishery could be considered sustainable. Recreational catch data is unknown for this fishery.
- The sardine and squid fisheries have gone through MSC pre-assessment and may be considered sustainable.
- The cost of MSC certification was discussed. It was shared that it costs approximately \$1 million to get the data necessary for MSC certification of a data poor fishery. \$180,000 is the lower limit for cost of MSC certification.
- Oregon is certifying Dungeness crab, pink shrimp, and west coast trawl ground fish.
- The sea urchin fishery could be considered sustainable. There is a proposal for data collection through the Resources Legacy Fund Foundation (RLFF) for urchin under consideration right now.
- The Dungeness crab fishery has potential to be considered sustainable, but more baseline data is needed.
- Albacore landed in Morro Bay could be considered sustainable, but there haven’t been albacore landings in Morro Bay in a long time. No harbor in California can manage a large landing of albacore because the infrastructure no longer exists.
- Fishing infrastructure projects that retain California landed seafood in California for processing may be of interest as well for the OPC.

- Certified seafood should be based on where a fisherman is permitted and registered.
- When deciding which fisheries could be certified as sustainable it is important to consider resiliency and the ability of animals to respond to change in the coastal environment.

## **2. Advisory Panel input on restaurant/retailer needs from a sustainable fisheries system**

Advisory Panel members offered the following responses:

- It is difficult for restaurant owners to trace the source of fish to the fisherman who caught it. Advisory Panel members suggested that there be one place for restaurant owners to go to identify which fishers are participating in the program.
  - Institute for Fishery Resources (IFR) has a small list available at:  
<http://www.ifrfish.org/where>
- Some expressed that the distributor must be responsible for communicating the source of its seafood.
- There was a discussion around the direct sale of fish from fishermen to restaurants. In order for a fisher to sell cleaned fish to a restaurant they must have a license to clean the fish. It is illegal for fishers to sell cleaned fish to restaurants without this license. Fishers can get licensed, but there are regulations to comply with, and this often is too burdensome for a fisher. Fishers can obtain a specific license to be able to sell whole fish directly to restaurants as well.
- A few key things that the market wants are consistency of supply, fresh, local, seasonal (slow-food movement). Many restaurants want the same model for sustainable seafood as is used for sustainable agriculture.

## **3. Advisory Panel input on appropriateness of existing standards**

Advisory Panel members offered the following responses:

- A way to avoid costly MSC certification is to have the source of fish be traceable. Through traceability a California Sustainable Seafood brand can be established, and eventually could eliminate the need for MSC certification. Some expressed that traceability is difficult once a fish is filleted.
- A goal of the certification program should be to limit the cost of certification on small entities.
- Each transfer in the chain of custody needs to be certified. Coupled with this, the cost of certification should be flexible.
- There was interest in preparing a matrix of California fisheries and associated markets. This could be a useful tool for identifying key markets and strategically planning which ones should be targeted for certification now and in the future.
- It is important to make every entity in the chain of custody accountable for claiming their product to be sustainable. There are currently no consequences for lying about the source of product. There needs to be a reward/incentive for honesty.
- Some Advisory Panel members expressed concern that certification will not improve sustainability. Others expressed that certification is important to educate the public to make sustainable decisions.
- Zero bycatch should be a criterion for certification.
- There should be a mechanism for de-certification.
- Many expressed interest in having someone from MSC come to the next meeting to present their certification program and answer questions.

- It is important to distance California certification from MSC because MSC has different goals.
- The discussion should be focused on specific species for potential certification. This could be a way to make the discussion of certification more concrete.
- Clarity on whether the purpose of certification is for economic or environmental sustainability was desired.

#### **E. Presentation on how California Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) could be incorporated into criteria for certification**

Dr. Steve Gains and Dr. Chris Costello gave a presentation on their current research on how MPAs might be incorporated into the criteria for existing certification schemes. As part of their preliminary findings, they suggested that it may make sense for fisheries participating in a sustainable seafood certification program to receive some level of extra credit for the recently established MPAs in state waters. The full presentation can be found on the OPC website at <http://www.opc.ca.gov/2010/03/california-sustainable-seafood-initiative/>. The following items were discussed and clarified:

##### *Clarifications provided by Dr. Costello*

- It was clarified that the amount of credit that could be given to fisheries through the presented scenario would have to be defined specifically for each fishery.
- It was clarified that this research is based on the science that informed the MLPA process and can be presented to this group, if desired.
- It was clarified that MPAs could be useful in the MSC scoring system for certification.

##### *Initial feedback from Advisory Panel members*

- Many Advisory Panel members expressed interest in giving fisheries credit for MPAs in a California certification program.
- Some expressed skepticism in this approach due to lack of monitoring data that shows the benefit of MPAs on the California coast. It was asked that the monitoring data be collected first before this approach is considered.
- Quota management should be taken into consideration when establishing credits to fisheries for MPAs.
- This concept of credit may work better for less mobile species, like lobster, than highly mobile/migratory species.
- MPAs should be considered as one aspect contributing to sustainability among many others. There are a lot of other biological factors that affect sustainability of a fishery in addition to MPAs.
- If MPAs are addressed in the certification program, then the collapse of the Delta needs to be addressed in the certification program as well.
- It was asked that more information be provided on confidence levels of uncertainties for this research.
- Some asked for clarity around the specific components/attributes of MPAs that are being used in this research as indicators for sustainability.
- It was expressed that there is a limit to this theory because MPAs are only in state waters, and this certification program considers the full range of California fisheries which extend beyond state waters.

- It is possible that good stock assessments are due to the fact that fishermen have been displaced by MPAs and are no longer able to fish for the same species because their gear is inadequate and/or inappropriate for the locations where they are allowed to fish.
- Recreational fishing should be considered in the fish stock assessment data used for this research.

## **F. Comments from the Public**

The following members of the public shared their thoughts once the panel discussions were complete:

- Natasha Benjamin shared that she has been working on fishery issues for over ten years. She reiterated that this is a unique opportunity for California to go above and beyond established sustainable seafood certification programs. MSC is a good start, but we should do more. Monitoring of success is important. She asked if OPC grant programs can be used for marketing and outreach for the certification program. This panel's goal is to sustain ecosystems and local fisheries. She expressed a desire for certification options for different types of fisheries. She expressed an interest in seeing a matrix created of current seafood markets and for this panel to focus on developing local markets.
- Zeke Grader shared a history of how the legislation was created and the intent behind it. The intent was to establish a California sustainable seafood certification program with MSC as the minimum level of requirements. This group should feel free to go beyond the requirements of MSC. There are a small number of fisheries that produce enough product to warrant MSC certification, so a California certification could be useful for the smaller fisheries. The intent is for local and/or small fisheries to get funding to seek certification. California has the most restricted fisheries and much more data is needed for some fisheries. The prospects of this process are pretty exciting.
- Sarah Sikich, representing Heal the Bay, expressed that she is encouraged by the discussion today. She shared that the group needs to be careful about putting the cart before the horse. Traceability and enforcement are important elements for certification. Also important are the environmental, economic, and human dimensions. She thought it would be interesting to bring up the human health component of sustainable seafood because there are fisheries that are highly polluted.

## **G. Action Items and Next Steps**

OPC staff thanked the group for a productive first meeting and encouraged everyone to contact staff with thoughts and suggestions at any time. OPC staff will follow up on the list of action items below.

- Send out a doodle poll of dates for future meetings
- Identify location for the next meeting
- Send additional background literature to Advisory Panel members
- Work with Diane Pleschner-Steele and other interested Advisory Panel members to develop a matrix describing CA fisheries
- Send summary of California Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act to Advisory Panel members
- Identify presenters for next meeting

## **H. Attendees**

### Panel Members:

Cynthia Walter, Passionfish Restaurant  
David Anderson, Aquarium of the Pacific  
Diane Pleschner-Steele, CA Wetfish Producers  
Sarah Glaser, Scripps Institute of Oceanography  
Jonathan Hardy, Office of Denise Ducheny  
Kenny Belov, FISH restaurant  
Logan Kock, Santa Monica Seafoods  
Marcela Gutierrez, Wildcoast  
Mark Helvey, NOAA/NMFS  
Matthew Owens, Fishwise  
Michael De Alessi, Stanford University  
Paul Johnson, Monterey Fish Company  
Paul Siri, Consultant  
Pietro Parravano, Institute for Fisheries Resources  
Richard Parrish, National Marine Fisheries Service (retired)  
Rick Algert, Morro Bay Harbor Director  
Sean Anderson, CSU Channel Island  
Stephanie Mutz, Commercial Fisherman of Santa Barbara  
Teri Shore, Turtle Island Restoration Network  
Timothy O'Shea, Cleanfish  
Wayne Heikkila, Western Fishboat Owner's Association

### OPC Staff:

Sam Schuchat  
Amber Mace  
Valerie Termini  
Erinn McKell  
Neal Fishman  
Jeanette MacMillan

### Invited Presenters:

Chris Costello, University of California – Santa Barbara  
Steve Gains, University of California – Santa Barbara

### Members of the Public:

Liz Rogers  
Dianna Pietri  
Zeke Grader  
Sara Sikich  
Natasha Benjamin

### Facilitators:

Eric Poncelet, Kearns & West  
Briana Moseley, Kearns & West



**APPENDIX 1**

**AGENDA**

California Sustainable Seafood Initiative  
 May 13, 2010  
 10 AM – 4 PM  
 Elihu M. Harris 1515 Clay Street, Room 15  
 Oakland, CA. 94612

**MEETING OBJECTIVES**

1. Describe Advisory Panel goals and charge
2. Present overview of existing standards/protocols and begin discussing criteria for a California certification system
3. Lay out schedule for future Advisory Panel meetings

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Lead</b>
10:00 AM	Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Review	Sam Schuchat
10:15 AM	Goals and Charge of the Advisory Panel, and Timeline for the Next Year	Sam Schuchat Eric Poncelet
11:20 AM	Stakeholder Assessment Key Findings	Eric Poncelet Briana Moseley
11:35 AM	Presentation of Existing Standards/Protocols	Valerie Termini Steve Gaines Chris Costello
12:15 PM	Lunch (on site)	Bag lunches brought in
1:00 PM	Discussion of Existing Standards/Protocol <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What fisheries could be certified in California? What can we do to get fisheries moving in this direction now?</li> <li>b. What is it that restaurateurs/retailers need from a 'sustainable' fisheries system?</li> <li>c. Which of the existing standards is most appropriate to meet the legislation? Which criteria are most important for a California certification system?</li> </ol>	Eric Poncelet
2:30 PM	Break	
2:45 PM	Discussion of Existing Standards/Protocol (cont.)	Eric Poncelet
3:15 PM	Public Comment	Sam Schuchat
3:45 PM	Review Next Steps	Eric Poncelet
4:00 PM	Adjourn	Sam Schuchat Eric Poncelet

**Meeting materials:**

1. AB 1217
2. March 3, 2010 Memorandum to the OPC – containing recommended CSSI Advisory Panel Members
3. CSSI Advisory Panel Charter and Ground Rules
4. Stakeholder Assessment
5. Description of existing standards/protocols (WWF)
6. Summary of California Fisheries
7. CSSI Advisory Panel Roster