

## National Standard 2: Guidance on scientific information for fishery management

**What is National Standard 2?** The **Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA)** is the principal law governing marine fisheries in the U.S. and includes **ten National Standards** to guide fishery conservation and management. One of these standards, referred to as **National Standard 2 (NS2)**, guides scientific integrity and states that “(fishery) conservation and management measures shall be based upon the best scientific information available.”

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) recently revised the NS2 guidelines to strengthen the quality and integrity of scientific information used to support fishery conservation and management measures. The revised NS2 guidelines are consistent with the MSA, **the Information Quality Act** and the **OMB Peer Review Bulletin**, and provide clarification on:

- What constitutes best scientific information available (BSIA) for fishery conservation and management measures;
- Standards for scientific peer review;
- Role of the regional fishery management councils’ Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSCs) in the review of scientific information;
- Content and purpose of the Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report and related documents.

**Benefits of the NS2 revision:** **Consistent with the President’s Memo on Scientific Integrity (March 9, 2009)** and NOAA Administrative Order 202-735D, the revised NS2 guidelines are intended to ensure the highest level of integrity and strengthen public confidence in the quality, validity and reliability of scientific information disseminated by NMFS in support of fishery management actions. The revised NS2 guidelines make modest adjustments to current operating practices. They are intended to ensure that scientific information, including its collection and analysis, has been validated through peer review, as appropriate; is transparent to the public; and is used appropriately by SSCs, regional fishery management councils, and NMFS in the conservation and management of marine fisheries.

### **NS2 revisions will:**

- Strengthen the reliability and credibility of NMFS’s scientific information;
- Emphasize the importance of transparency in the scientific review process;
- Improve public trust and benefit stakeholders through more effective policy decisions.

### **Revising the NS2 Guidelines**

When the MSA was reauthorized in 2007, provisions were included to improve the use of science in decision-making. Specifically, Congress called for the SSC for each regional fishery management council to have a stronger role in reviewing scientific information and providing input on fishing level recommendations. In addition, the Secretary of Commerce and each regional fishery management council may establish a peer-review process for scientific information used to advise councils on the conservation and management of fisheries. To address these changes, NMFS recently led a rule-making process to revise the NS2 guidelines. The NS2 rule-making process included:

- A September 2008 advanced notice of **public rule-making (ANPR)** to inform stakeholders and general public of NMFS’ intent to revise the 1998 National Standard 2 guidelines and to solicit their recommendations for the revision;
- The **proposed revised National Standard 2** guidelines were published to solicit public comments in December 2009;
- The final revised **National Standard 2** guidelines were recently published in the Federal Register (July 2013).

The above mentioned rulemaking documents for the National Standard 2 revision can be found at the Federal e-Rulemaking portal: <http://www.regulations.gov> by searching for RIN 0648-AW62.