SEFSC Tasking Protocol
June 2015

SCOPE:

This protocol focuses on:

- Taskings **from** SERO to the SEFSC, and does not cover or address tasking protocols **within** SEFSC or **within** SERO.

- Verbal and written requests made by SERO to SEFSC for data, data analyses and resulting reports, and scientific input, including scientific reviews, determinations and certifications.

The protocol does not address taskings between SEFSC and Councils/Commissions except for requiring that SEFSC copy SERO on responses to these requests.

PURPOSE:

- Identify communications and information requests between SERO and SEFSC that will and will not be subject to the procedures outlined in this protocol.

- Ensure that SERO requests made to SEFSC are jointly and effectively managed (i.e., requests are: clear, appropriately routed, given the required level of attention and priority, and monitored for timeliness), and issues affecting the delivery date and extent of SEFSC's responses are raised and communicated to SERO in a timely manner.

- Ensure that SEFSC's responses to SERO: (1) adhere to Information Quality Act standards and pertinent SEFSC science quality assurance guidelines, (2) meet procedural requirements for sharing confidential data (when applicable), and (3) have been reviewed and endorsed by appropriate management levels within SEFSC.

- Establish guidelines that facilitate the efficient exchange of information pertinent to requests made by SERO of SEFSC. These guidelines are not intended to restrict communication between SERO and SEFSC colleagues.

COVERED COMMUNICATIONS:

- **What is Covered**: SERO requests for which SEFSC's response (1) will be viewed or assumed to be an official SEFSC response (i.e., a response agreed to and approved by the SEFSC Director), (2) will be used by SERO in the execution of their official duties (e.g., development of regulations and policies), (3) will be subject to the Information Quality Act, and(4) include reports or data (draft or otherwise) that are not generally available to NMFS personnel outside of SEFSC, or the public.

- **What is not Covered:** General and unofficial inquiries between SERO and SEFSC staff are expected to continue. Examples of such inquiries include SERO staff contacting SEFSC counterparts to let them know a request is forthcoming, or to seek input regarding the technical feasibility of a request or feasibility of a response deadline being contemplated by SERO.

REQUEST CONTENT, FORMAT AND TRANSMITTAL PROCEDURES:

a) Regional Fishery Management Council (Council)-related data and analytical requests handled by SERO should be transmitted as a memo (or email, when appropriate) from the SERO RA to the SEFSC Director, with copies to the SEFSC Deputy, SEFSC OMI Director, SEFSC SPCO Chief, SEFSC-SERO Liaison, SERO Deputy, SERO SA (Protocol Principals [Table 1]), appropriate SERO Division filing and recordkeeping contact (Table 2), and respective staff biologist, Branch Chief and Assistant Regional Administrator.

   Examples include requests for additional sensitivity runs and rebuilding projections.

   Exception: In situations where the SEFSC Director has identified SEFSC representative(s) on an established Team or Working Group (e.g., Interdisciplinary Plan Teams [IPTs]), analytical requests vetted through the Team/Working Group may be emailed from the Team/Working Group lead to the SEFSC representative(s), with copies to the Protocol Principals (Table 1) and respective staff biologist, Branch Chief and Assistant Regional Administrator. Input provided by SEFSC Team or Working Group representatives is not to be construed as "official" SEFSC certification of "Best Available Science". Documents requiring SEFSC certification need to be officially submitted to the SEFSC Director for certification.

b) Non-Council related analytical requests should be transmitted as a memo (or email, when appropriate) from the SERO RA to the SEFSC Director, with copies to the Protocol Principals (Table 1), appropriate SERO filing and recordkeeping contact (Table 2), and respective staff biologist, Branch Chief and Assistant Regional Administrator.

   Examples include requests for protected species bycatch estimates or fishery-related analyses requested by the SERO RA.

c) Routine data requests should be transmitted via email from SERO staff to the appropriate SEFSC contact with copies to the SESFC Director, SEFSC Deputy, SEFSC OMI Director, SEFSC SPCO Chief (Table 1) and respective staff biologist, Branch Chief and Assistant Regional Administrator.

Examples include requests for quota monitoring data, observer data, strandings data, commercial and recreational landings and effort data, economic add-on data, shrimp cost and return data, or other general database queries.

d) SEFSC comments should be requested on ***all* draft** Council fishery management plans, amendments and associated NEPA documents, as well as SERO data analyses and other analytical documents supporting rulemaking, via a memo from the SERO RA to the SEFSC Director, with copies to the Protocol Principals (Table 1), appropriate SERO filing and recordkeeping contact (Table 2), and respective staff biologist, Branch Chief and Assistant Regional Administrator, *prior* to requesting SEFSC certification of the action. The comment opportunity should be highlighted in each certification request memo (e.g., the draft amendment/NEPA document was sent to you on (insert date) for review and comment). The certification request memo should highlight any changes made to the document after review comments were provided by the SEFSC, and identify in the documents where SEFSC comments were incorporated or addressed (both of these actions will greatly reduce the time required for SEFSC certification).

e) SERO tasking memos or emails should not be sent to, or copied to specific SEFSC scientists, with the exceptions provided above for Team or Working Groups such as IPTs and for routine data requests.

f) Specific scientists/reviewers are not to be identified in SERO memos as potential reviewers, nor should they be identified in SEFSC memos as reviewers.

g) All data requests should clearly explain how the data will be used to ensure that the SEFSC response includes the appropriate explanatory text, caveats, etc.

Request deadlines:

h) SERO will provide SEFSC with at least three weeks (21 days) in which to respond to non-emergency requests (e.g., document reviews, data requests and analyses).

i) SEFSC will give priority to emergency requests (e.g., review/certification of emergency or interim rules, or regulatory actions driven by statutory deadline). SERO must inform SEFSC of the nature of the emergency when the request is submitted. Response deadlines will be negotiated via consultations between the appropriate SERO and SEFSC officials.

j) SEFSC will reply to all SERO request memos/emails via email within three working days to confirm whether the requested deadline can be met. In the latter case, revised deadlines will be negotiated *via* consultations between the appropriate SERO and SEFSC officials.

SERO-SEFSC TRANSMITTAL

- The respective staff biologist should scan the signed- and date-stamped SEFSC request memo and associated documents to the SERO Directorate's Administrative Assistants (Table 3), who will in turn email them to the SEFSC Director with a copy to all people included in the original SERO request.

- If the attachments are too large to email, the appropriate SERO division will mail a duplicate hard copy of the signed memo to the SEFSC Director along with any necessary attachments or enclosures.

Table 1: Protocol Principals

SERO	SEFSC
SERO RA: Roy Crabtree SERO Deputy: Andy Strelcheck SERO Special Assistant (SA): Heather Blough	SEFSC Director: Bonnie Ponwith SEFSC Deputy: Theo Brainerd SEFSC OMI Director: Peter Thompson SEFSC Science Planning and Coordination Office (SPCO) Chief: Stacy Hargrove SEFSC–SERO Liaison: Tom Jamir/Larry Massey

Table 2: Filing and Recordkeeping Contacts

Division	Filing Email Address
Sustainable Fisheries	Barbara.Niswander@noaa.gov
Protected Resources	nmfs.ser.prd.mailbox@noaa.gov
Habitat Conservation	Sharon.Rolfes@noaa.gov

Table 3: Administrative Assistants

SERO RA Administrative Assistant	Linda.Atwell@noaa.gov
SERO DRA Administrative Assistant	Shelley.Sotir@noaa.gov

**The effectiveness of this protocol will be assessed within 6 months of implementation and adjustments made, as needed.*