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**Revised Terms of Reference for the Small Scientific Committee on Bottom Fish and Marine Ecosystems (SSC BF-ME)**

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*Abstract*: Following up with discussions at SSC BF-ME04 meeting, the SSC BF-ME Chair in cooperation with Japan proposes a revision of the SSC BF-ME Terms of Reference to better clarify the responsibilities and expected output of the SSC BF-ME.

**Terms of Reference for the Small Scientific Committee on Bottom Fish and Marine Ecosystems (SSC BF-ME)**

The SSC BF-ME shall work to ensure the long-term sustainable use of the bottom fisheries resources in the Convention Area while conserving the associated marine ecosystems (including vulnerable marine ecosystems (VME)) of the North Pacific Ocean in which these resources occur. The SSC BF-ME shall also help the Scientific Committee fulfill its functions as specified in the Convention by providing scientific advice and by proposing revision of Conservation and Management Measures as required.

1. Review fishery and research data
   1. Annually compile and share target catch and bycatch data (including VME indicator taxa) as required by Conservation and Management Measures for Bottom Fisheries and Protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems in the Northwestern and Northeastern Pacific Ocean
      1. Define list and spatial resolution of catch data to be shared
      2. Define list and spatial resolution of multibeam bathymetry to be shared
      3. Define list and spatial resolution of visual observations or other relevant data to be shared
      4. Map the combined fishing footprint and annual effort for bottom fisheries
      5. Define data sharing protocols and develop a shared data repository
   2. Annually review members research activities regarding benthic ecosystems (including VME)
2. Develop shared ID guides for bottom fish and for VME indicator species in the western Pacific Ocean
   1. Review and update NPFC VME indicator taxa and bycatch lists on a routine basis
3. Review approaches applicable for stock assessment of target bottom species and investigate various management strategies
   1. Identification of data needs and establishment of activities to fill data gaps
   2. Further development of the Adaptive Management approach for North Pacific armorhead and splendid alfonsino and mechanism for its implementation
      1. Assess and monitor the status of the priority species stocks
      2. Develop harvest control rules to conserve priority species abundance
4. Assess significant and adverse impacts (SAI) on VMEs
   1. Explore a data or model-based approach for defining VME’s
   2. Undertake research to determine the gear-specific effects of bottom fishing on benthic ecosystems
   3. Define post-encounter measures for VME for both routine fishing activities (within the current fishery footprint) and exploratory fishing (outside the current fishery footprint)
   4. Explore a data or model-based approach for assessing SAI on VMEs
      1. Explore the design of model and data based approaches to spatial management strategies to maximize bottom fish harvest while minimizing impacts to VMEs (e.g. analyses of trade-off between potentially competing objectives)
      2. If appropriate define management objectives for recovering VME sites
5. Assess the ecology and ecosystem considerations of bottom fisheries resources and other benthic organisms including both hard-bottom and soft-bottom seafloor
   1. Examine relationships between environmental conditions and recruitment for bottom fisheries resources
   2. Conduct other research that may be useful to adaptive management or indicating future population status of bottom fisheries resources (e.g. alternative survey methodologies such as acoustic surveys)
   3. Conduct relevant research on benthic ecology as it pertains to bottom fisheries resources