DRAFT - Rules of Procedure for Basic Structured Decision Making using the Best Available Science

9/26/2024 Big Tent Committee

The Commission is a policy setting body with statutory authorities and responsibilities to manage public trust fish and wildlife resources. The following additions to the rules of procedure are intended to promote the Commission's use of the best available science, and to generally ensure sound and productive decision-making processes.

1. The Commission will identify: (a) specific policy or management question(s); (b) pertinent Commission policy; (c) statutory or regulatory basis (e.g., RCW, WAC); (d) management objectives; and, (e) decision-critical information needed to make the decision. A worksheet to document this information will be completed (see Appendix A).
2. Commissioners should work through the Committee process or with the appropriate science and management staff *prior* to public presentations to ensure a common understanding of the presentation's issues, decision criteria, major scientific outcomes, conclusions and areas of remaining disagreement or uncertainty.
3. The Commission may require the use of decision support tools (e.g. Structured Decision Making) as a process for identifying issues, decision criteria, or options.
4. The Commission should weigh the need for greater scientific certainty against the costs (in time, money, and management outcome [e.g., wildlife population declines, extinction, etc.]) of reducing uncertainty.
5. The Commission shall seek to avoid bias in their interpretation of scientific studies by considering all relevant sources of reliable information (Appendix B), their relevance to the issue, and the likely effect on the outcomes of management options.
6. When the interpretation or application of science is contested, or scientific studies yield conflicting results, the Commission may require a third-party review by an independent qualified organization.
7. The Commission and Department may require an adaptive management approach to address risk to resources or opportunity.

Appendix A. Committee worksheet to document decision-making criteria for rule-making or other decisions.

Worksheet for making structured decisions for rule-making and other issues.

1. Policy or management question(s) (i.e., what is the goal of the rule or decision?):

2. Pertinent Commission Policy or Policy Position Statement:

3. Statutory or regulatory basis (e.g., RCW, WAC):

4. Management objectives to meet the goal or address the question:

5. Required decision-critical information, or metrics for evaluating management objectives/options:

Appendix B. Sources and characteristics of scientific information to describe Best Available Science

SOURCES OF SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION adapted from (WAC 365-195-905)	**CHARACTERISTICS OF SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION –** The sources of scientific information should include the following (adapted from WAC 365-195-905 and Charnley et al (2017))
Research Research data collected and analyzed as part of a controlled experiment (or other appropriate methodology based in the scientific method) to test a specific hypothesis.	• Clear statement of objectives, research purpose, and/or questions • Thorough review of literature, ensuring inclusion of recent literature, and other relevant information • A conceptual model or theoretical framework for characterizing system relationships, testing hypotheses, and making predictions • Data gathered are objective, value-free • Data and information limitations, sampling biases, scientific uncertainties, known or potential rates of error are disclosed • Sound logic and rigorous statistical quantitative, qualitative, or alternative methods used for analyzing and interpreting data and making inferences from samples • Conclusions are well supported by the data • Findings communicated in a manner that is accessible and understandable
Monitoring Monitoring data collected periodically over time to determine a resource trend or evaluate a management program.	
Inventory Inventory data collected from an entire population or population segment (e.g., individuals in a plant or animal species) or an entire ecosystem or ecosystem segment (e.g., the species in a particular wetland).	
Survey Survey data collected from a statistical sample from a population or ecosystem.	
Modeling Mathematical or symbolic simulation or representation of a natural system. Models generally are used to understand and explain occurrences, and may predict outcomes, that cannot be directly observed.	
Assessment Inspection and evaluation of site-specific information by a qualified scientific expert. An assessment may or may not involve collection of new data.	
Synthesis A comprehensive review and explanation of pertinent literature and other relevant existing knowledge by a qualified scientific expert.	
Expert Opinion Statement of a qualified scientific expert based on their best professional judgement and experience in the pertinent discipline. This is only used where we have no other type of specific science that speaks to the question.	