

Paper submitted by the Secretariat

NPFC SECRETARIAT WORKLOAD AND STAFFING LEVELS

Abstract

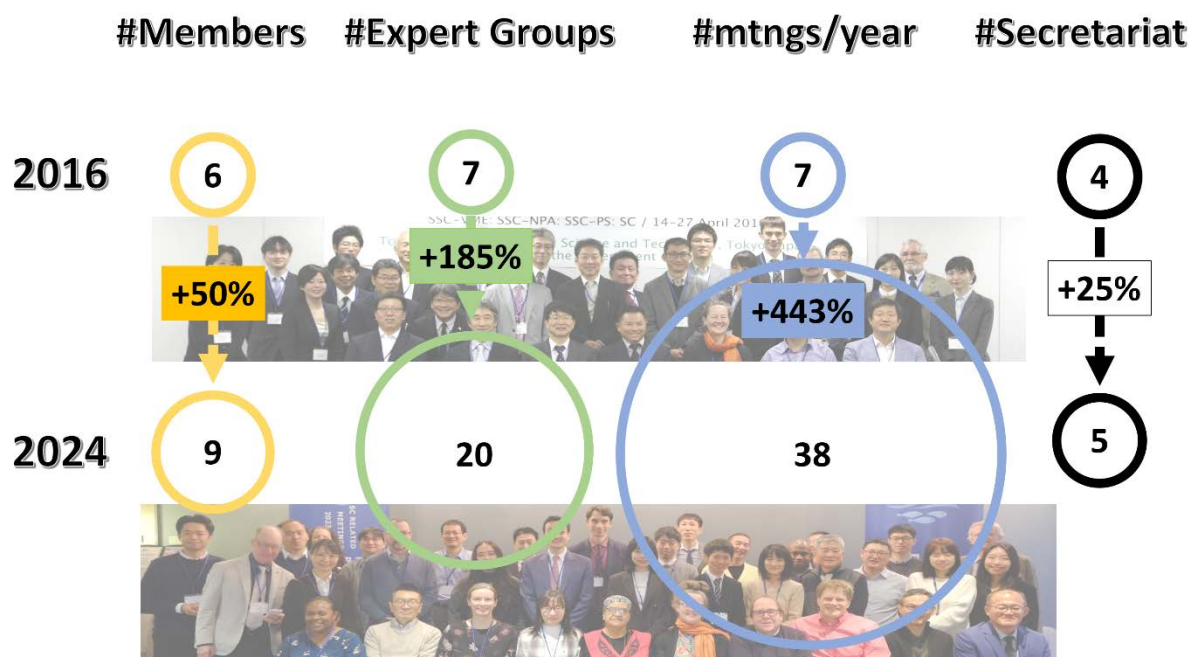
This Working Paper provides an update from the review that was presented at FAC06 (NPFC-2024-FAC06-WP04) and the approach that is currently being adopted in the Secretariat to meet the Member's needs. It responds as well to the direction at FAC06 to provide an update to FAC07 (as noted in Paragraph 18 of the FAC06 Final Report). It also considers earlier deliberations related to the staffing levels in the Secretariat at FAC02 (NPFC-2018-FAC02-Final Report and NPFC-2018-FAC02-WP03 and its Supplementary paper). The recommendation in paragraph 11 of the FAC02 Final Report is still pertinent in a general sense. (4th recommendation).

Context

The workload of the Secretariat has changed with time, as new approaches are introduced such as a regional Vessel Monitoring Scheme (VMS), Transshipment reporting, and increased focus on stock assessment methodologies as examples. This is exemplified by Figure 1 that shows the increased activities of Members requiring support from the Secretariat. This has meant that the Secretariat has had to find a way to support delivery of services and systems as well as analyze and report on these activities. In some cases, much of the work is in the hands of the Members with the Secretariat managing the organization and support of the work through contracts with experts and supporting the coordination of activities.

The report prepared for FAC06 (NPFC-2024-FAC06-WP04) was prepared in order to provide Members and the Executive Secretary, a more objective view of the functions of the Secretariat and how to approach service delivery. It is recognized that the single most significant direct cost to Members assessed contributions is related to personnel costs and thus any recommendation on staffing levels needs to be carefully considered.

Figure 1: Changes in Activity and staffing level with time



With the deployment of a regional VMS scheme and the requirement to report transshipment activity (notification and declaration from fishing and receiving vessels), the volume of data managed by the Secretariat has increased. While assessing compliance is a role for Members through the Compliance Monitoring Scheme (CMM 2024-13), the data needs to be provided to Members in a manageable way with any anomalies identified so that they can effectively consider the issue. An early consideration was whether the Secretariat needed to expand its capabilities by proposing a new staff position in this area or accommodating this increased need through contract and technological means.

During this period the Secretariat benefited from an internship from Dr. Jihwan Kim, working with the Data Coordinator and compliance team. At the conclusion of his internship, Dr. Kim was retained on contract. Dr. Kim worked with the datasets and accessed and analyzed the related data. Dr. Kim's work was important to the assessment and understanding of the NPFC regional VMS and transshipment data. This included the development of a range of algorithms to assess entry and exit, and the responsiveness of vessels and the CLS Themis system to the hourly reporting requirement. His data analysis identified a number of anomalies, and at the same time, once the nature and style of reports was known, the approach should be replicated more routinely in subsequent years.

The conclusion here and in other instances is that the contracting of technical expertise benefits Members by providing focused support, with the Secretariat providing overall coordination and direction without committing to increased staffing levels. Other RFMOs do provide a broader range of services directly, but with a larger staff complement.

Other areas of the report related to the effectiveness and efficiency of processes that are currently in place. Many Secretariat processes are still manual. These take time to apply and have the potential for introducing errors. The goal is to streamline processes where possible to manage increasing workload and maintain or improve performance.

In these cases, investments are underway to automate processes (e.g., member account management) or include internal verification (QuickBooks accounting software) to replace current manual processes.

As noted in Figure 1, our level of activity has increased significantly since the inception of the NPFC. We are managing this with essentially the original complement of 3 Professional and 2 General Service staff. Investments in contract and technological solutions allow this to occur.

Another element, identified in the Performance Review, and integral in the development of the transshipment CMM (originally as CMM 2023-03 to start the reporting requirements), was to consider the cost impact (technology development and staff costs). However, this did not occur as seamlessly as envisioned with a web application being developed (paid with a voluntary contribution) that was not used for most transshipment events. The CMM did not make use of the web application mandatory, and most data was submitted as PDF and had to be input manually. The Secretariat benefited from additional voluntary contributions to pay for two full-time data entry clerks. These costs and approach were not envisioned but perhaps was natural without the requirement to use the technology that was developed.

As the Commission considers the development of new measures and approaches such as a regional transshipment observer program or scientific database, it is important to continue to consider the range of incremental costs including development, implementation and operations/analysis/reporting by the Secretariat. Ideally the approach of blended payment from existing Commission reserves (e.g., Panama VCF or Special Projects Fund) with a “user pay/cost-recovery” approach will ensure that the impact on the overall Member costs is manageable. The ability to access dedicated and focused voluntary contribution funds is also extremely beneficial as we have seen.

With an increased level of activity, it would be simple to suggest that we hire additional staff to work directly in the Secretariat. With the approach currently deployed, and with the commitment of Members to manage new incremental costs, the current complement is able to manage the workload, with the ongoing support from Members. Members may want to consider developing a formal requirement to assess the cost of new or amended CMM as they are being developed.