

# Marine Stewardship Council - Variation Request

<b>Date submitted to MSC</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> July 2016
<b>Name of CAB</b>	Acoura Marine Ltd.
<b>Fishery Name/CoC Certificate Number</b>	Northern Ireland Pelagic Sustainability Group (NIPSG) Irish Sea - Atlantic mackerel, WOS herring & NS herring (West of Scotland Herring component)
<b>Lead Auditor/Programme Manager</b>	Billy Hynes
<b>Scheme requirement(s) for which variation requested</b>	24.2.2 Assessment Timelines
<b>Is this variation sought in order to fulfil IPI requirements (FCR 7.4.14)?</b>	N/A

## 1. Proposed variation

This request is to keep the assessment process on hold beyond the 18 months since last site visit. Publication of the PCDR would be by the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2017.

## 2. Rationale/Justification

The West of Scotland herring (WoSH) component of NIPSG has undergone significant changes since the beginning of its assessment process in November 2014.

The assessment initially suffered delays due to the Mackerel component and the requirement to harmonise with the MINSA North East Atlantic mackerel re-assessment and the Faroese Pelagic Organisation (FPO) North East Atlantic mackerel assessment. This added months to the process and incurred a review of new information as per the MSC process in January 2016.

Concurrently, an expedited audit/3<sup>rd</sup> Surveillance was undertaken in of the SPSG West of Scotland Herring fishery in January 2016 after ICES began using a combined assessment of V1aN and V1aS/V11bc (the West of Scotland and West of Ireland Herring fisheries). This approach is currently unfavourable to the West of Scotland Herring fishery. This audit resulted in the suspension of the SPSG WoSH fishery.

Aside from the impact of the change in the assessment approach used by ICES, the fishery is on course for a condition free certification.

The SPSG client action plan is currently underway with a Genetic Stock Identification project to demonstrate that the areas should revert to being subject to individual stock assessment. (The Client Action Plan can be found [here](#)).

Based on the possible success of the SPSG Client Action Plan, we request this variation to allow NIPSG WoSH the opportunity to continue through certification at a later date. The fishery and assessment team have invested a lot in getting the NIPSG WoSH component to PCDR stage.

In addition, NIPSG will have several pelagic fisheries certified under CR1.3 with the SPSG WoSH

fishery also certified under CR1.3 so we seek to avoid assessment and complexities as well as additional costs for the client in the future.

Acoura will take the necessary steps to ensure rigour in the assessment when the situation with the WoSH fishery is resolved. If this issue cannot be resolved by the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2017, the fishery would be withdrawn to re-enter under CR2.0 at a later day.

This delay does not alter the conformity of the applicant as the suspension will hold.

**3. Implications for assessment (required for fisheries assessment variations only)**

N/A

**4. Have the stakeholders of this fishery assessment been informed of this request? (required for fisheries assessment variations only)**

No