



## FisheryProgress Three-Year Audit Guidelines

The FisheryProgress Review Guidelines state: “Every three years from the date the profile is posted on [FisheryProgress.org](https://fisheryprogress.org), **comprehensive FIPs** are required to have an independent in-person audit of action results and performance against the MSC standard by someone who is both experienced with the MSC standard (e.g., is a [registered MSC technical or associate technical consultant](#) or [accredited conformity assessment body](#) or has [other demonstrated qualifications approved by the reviewer](#)) and independent from the organization implementing the FIP.”

To ensure that this requirement is clear to all FIP leads, please review the below frequently asked questions:

### **What do you mean by “in-person”?**

The FIP audit is required to be conducted in-person, it is not a desk-based exercise. “In person” could mean the location of the fishery, the location of FIP stakeholders, or where workplan actions take place. The independent auditor should present a list of the individuals/organizations they would like to visit during the audit to the FIP implementer and then the auditor and FIP implementer will jointly determine the most appropriate site locations. For additional guidance on conducting stakeholder consultation, please see Annex GPX of the [MSC Fisheries Certification Requirements and Guidance Version 2.0](#).

### **What do you mean by “independent”?**

The audit must be completed by a [qualified consultant](#) that is not a FIP participant or FIP lead. It is acceptable for the consultant to have been previously engaged in the FIP (e.g., MSC consultants or CABs who developed pre-assessments, scoping documents, or workplans for the FIP), but must not have been previously employed by one of the FIP participants within the last three years.

### **What is required for the three-year audit?**

The three-year audit template must be completed in order to fulfill the audit requirements. The template includes:

- The scope of the FIP
- A summary of the auditor’s consultation with FIP stakeholders
- Updated scores for all 28 MSC Performance Indicators using current information
- A review of the FIP’s workplan and a summary of the results achieved.



### **When is my audit due?**

Independent, in-person audits must be completed at least every three years after the publication of the FIP profile on FisheryProgress. If an audit is completed before the three-year publication date, the next audit will be due three years following the date of the most recently completed audit.

### **What if our FIP completed an audit last year? Do we still have to complete an audit?**

If a FIP has completed an independent audit between the years 2017-2019, FisheryProgress will consider it as a possible substitute for our requirement. The substitute audit must fully meet the FisheryProgress audit criteria (please see the FisheryProgress three-year audit template) and the scope must encompass the entire unit of assessment of the FIP. The FIP implementer must clearly demonstrate the adequacy of the substitution, and FisheryProgress will review proposed substitutes on a case-by-case basis with input from the Technical Oversight Committee. After 2019, all three-year audits must use the FisheryProgress template.

### **Do I have to complete an annual progress update as well as the three-year audit?**

Yes, FIP leads will still need to update all 28 MSC Performance Indicators using current information and provide a full update on action progress on FisheryProgress. We encourage FIPs to use information from the audit for the FIP's annual progress update. FIPs should seek to align the three-year audit with the cycle of their annual progress updates for this purpose.

### **How will FisheryProgress review the three-year audit?**

Upon submission of the audit, FisheryProgress will check that the audit template is complete. FisheryProgress will not conduct a detailed review of the audit template for accuracy or credibility.

### **What happens if the audit is incomplete?**

If the reviewer finds the audit to be incomplete and/or the deadline (and one-month grace period) has passed, FisheryProgress will render the FIP inactive until the minimum requirements have been met.

### **How do I submit my audit?**

- Upload the audit document in the “documents” tab in FisheryProgress, under the Independent Audit section. The audit will be public and available for download, like other FIP documentation.
- Email Jeremy ([jeremy@fishchoice.com](mailto:jeremy@fishchoice.com)) or Albert ([albert@fishchoice.com](mailto:albert@fishchoice.com)) to let them know that the audit document is ready to review.

**What do I need to do next?**

- Identify a consultant that meets FisheryProgress requirements, and provide FisheryProgress with auditor qualifications at least 6 months before the due date.

**Tips for saving on audit costs**

We encourage FIPs to be creative in how the three-year audit is completed in order to minimize costs. Some tips include:

- FIPs can work together within a region to harmonize timelines and pool resources for a region-wide, multiple-FIP audit.
- FIPs can take advantage of existing regional consultant capacity – evaluate the FisheryProgress comprehensive FIP consultant criteria below, and see if local capacity can be developed to meet those criteria.
- Audits can be completed by a single individual; a team is not required.
- When evaluating consultant proposals, please note that the audit template was developed to be as short and concise as possible; it includes all the necessary information for a three-year audit requirement and therefore additional documentation should be minimal.



## Comprehensive FIP Consultant Criteria

FisheryProgress.org requires that comprehensive FIPs' pre-assessment and related scoping document (if applicable) and in-person audits (required every three years) are conducted by a party experienced with applying the MSC standard (e.g., a [registered MSC technical consultant](#) or [accredited conformity assessment body](#) or has other demonstrated qualifications approved by the reviewer).

The following clarifies the third category – those with other demonstrated qualifications. It establishes criteria that FisheryProgress.org will use to determine if a consultant has the demonstrated qualifications necessary to complete an MSC pre-assessment and related scoping document (if applicable) or conduct a comprehensive FIP's in-person audit of activity results and performance against the MSC standard.

### **1. General Eligibility Criteria**

a. University degree in fisheries, marine conservation biology, natural resources, environmental management, or relevant field (e.g., economics, mathematics, statistics).

**OR**

b. At least 5 years management or research experience in a marine conservation biology, fisheries, natural resources, or environmental management position.

### **2. Fishery Experience**

The applicant must qualify in at least one of the following areas of fishery expertise:

a. **Fish stock assessment:** at least 5 years of experience as a leader in the production of peer-reviewed stock assessments.

b. **Fish stock biology/ecology:** at least 5 years of experience working in fisheries biology and population dynamics.

c. **Fishing impacts on aquatic ecosystems:** at least 5 years of experience in research into, policy analysis for, or management of fisheries impacts on aquatic ecosystems.

d. **Fishery management and operations:** at least 5 years of experience as a practicing fishery manager and/or fishery policy analyst.

### **3. Understanding of the FIP Process**



- a. Has contributed to at least two FIP workplans that meet the Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions' Guidelines for Supporting Fishery Improvement Projects since 2015.

#### **4. Understanding of MSC Fisheries Standard**

- a. Have undertaken a minimum of 2 MSC fishery assessments or surveillance site visits as a team member in the past 10 years (evidence: announcement documentation and/or assessment report) and successfully completed the [online assessor training modules](#) for the latest version of the fisheries standard (evidence: certificate of completion).

**OR**

- b. Is currently listed on the MSC's Register as a technical consultant or associate technical consultant (<https://www.msc.org/get-certified/fisheries/technical-assistance/consultants/consultants>).

#### **5. Communication, Stakeholder Facilitation, and Project Management Skills (optional)**

- a. Experience applying various interviewing and facilitation techniques.
- b. Experience engaging with stakeholders in fisheries management, science, or fisheries policy development on a range of fisheries and resource sustainability issues.
- c. Record of consultancy work, project development, and management.