



RFM

Procedure 1:

Certification Body Approval for  
RFM Fishery Management  
Standard

*Alaska Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM)  
Certification Program  
17065*

# Procedure 1: Procedure for Certification Body Approval for the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard

## 1. Purpose

The Alaska Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) Program consists of an RFM Fishery Standard applicable to Alaska-based fisheries assessment and a standard for Chain of Custody certification for seafood through the supply chain.

This document describes the requirements for Certification Bodies to become approved to audit and certify applicants to the Fishery Management component of the RFM Program.

The Alaska RFM Fishery Management Standard is a third party, independent and accredited certification Program owned and operated by the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI). The Program certifies that seafood is sourced from fisheries that have been certified to the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard.

## 2. Scope

The Certification Body approval requirements cover the auditing and certification of Fisheries and their associated management systems and structures.

## 3. Process

### 3.1 Registration

Certification Bodies wishing to apply to assess against the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard must first, as a prerequisite, be accredited to ISO 17065 “General requirements for bodies operating certification systems” or have a recognized credibility as a certification body operating in fishery management certification. Certification Bodies without formal ISO 17065 accreditation must confirm that they have applied to become accredited by a recognized Accreditation Board and that they are committed to attaining the accreditation within the agreed timelines.

Certification Bodies seeking recognition must formally write or email the ASMI Sustainability Director confirming their intention to submit an application and registration form.

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Upon receipt of an application and registration for Approval to Conduct Assessments, ASMI will provide the Certification Body with a copy of this Approval Requirement and other relevant documents.

Certification Body applicants must meet all requirements of this document; including but not limited to, the competency and training requirements of Certification Body staff and individual assessors related to the specific seafood categories covered under the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard.

Only Certification Bodies that are registered and formally recognized by ASMI are authorized to quote for, and to conduct assessments against, the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard.

Recognition of a Certification Body by ASMI will only take place if the Certification Body's Accreditation Board is recognized by ASMI. To this extent, the Accreditation Board must be a member of the International Accreditation Forum (refer to [www.IAF.NU](http://www.IAF.NU)).

### 3.2 The Alaska RFM Fishery

#### ISO17065 Scope Extension

To achieve an extension to their current ISO 17065 scope of accreditation, a Certification Body must demonstrate that it can carry out evaluations against the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard.

Certification Bodies in application for extension of their accreditation shall identify their certification activity by the issuing of Alaska RFM Fishery Standard certificates by using the terminology '**Accreditation in Application**' to all those applicants they certify.

The applying Certification Body must be able to provide documentation that confirms that they have a current and active application in progress, as demonstrated by: An active application to the Accreditation Board for full accreditation, or an extension of current scope of ISO 17065 accreditation, to include the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard.

Full accreditation must be received within the time frame specified by ASMI: Full Accreditation or scope extension must be complete within 12-18 months of the date of application to the Certification Body's Accreditation Board.

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## 3.3 Named Certification Body Representative

On the registration form the Certification Body will name a representative responsible for dealing with all aspects of the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard accreditation. This person shall have thorough knowledge of the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard and the entire RFM Program. In the event that this named representative leaves the employment of the Certification Body, ASMI shall be informed accordingly and provided with the name and details of his or her replacement within five working days.

## 3.4 Quality Management System

As part of the approval process the Certification Body shall provide evidence to ASMI to show that it has a fully documented and implemented Quality Management System, under the responsibility of a designated individual within a defined management structure. The Quality Management System must be in accordance with accreditation requirements and, as such, subject to regular system reviews to ensure continuous improvement in the quality of services provided by the Certification Body.

The Certification Body's Quality Management System must be documented in a Quality Manual, along with the associated quality procedures. The manual must be made available to all Certification Body staff to implement, maintain and continually improve.

The Certification Body's Quality Manual, must include a Quality Policy Statement that outlines management's commitment to ensuring its certification quality objectives.

As part of the Quality Manual, the Certification Body must identify and document ownership, have a clear organizational structure, and unambiguously define key procedural documents, job functions, responsibilities, and reporting relationships of all staff engaged in delivering their certification services.

The Certification Body must clearly identify the staff members accountable for the maintenance of its quality system.

The Certification Body must list all employees and, for all staff and assessors, maintain personnel records that cover their qualifications, training, experience, affiliations, professional status, and any relevant consultancy to identify any possible conflicts of interest or risks to impartiality.

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## 3.4 Quality Management System (continued)

The Certification Body must provide a description of how it will manage the certification process, including the technical review and control of certification decision processes. For example, this would include the certification committee structure, its membership criteria, the terms of reference, and operating procedures.

The Certification Body must describe its management review processes, including review policies and procedures. These should include frequency and documented results. Reviews shall be conducted every 12 months.

The Certification Body's document control procedures shall specify how it will accomplish the following processes:

- a) Approve documents for adequacy prior to issue;
- b) Review and update as necessary and re-approve documents;
- c) Ensure that changes and the current revision status of documents are identified;
- d) Ensure that relevant versions of applicable documents are available at points of use;
- e) Ensure that documents remain legible and readily identifiable;
- f) Ensure those documents of external origin determined by the organization to be necessary for the planning and operation of the Certification Body's quality management system are identified and their distribution is controlled; and
- g) Prevent the unintended use of obsolete documents, and apply suitable identification to these documents if they are retained for any purpose.

The Certification Body will document a recruitment procedure that covers selection, initial training, on-going training, and performance assessment for all relevant staff and assessors.

The Certification Body will maintain a list of all approved subcontractors and develop a detailed procedure for their appointment, assessment, and documentation of their on-going management.

The Certification Body will develop procedures for actions taken in response to any non-conformities raised in a certification audit, to evaluate the effectiveness of agreed objective evidence presented, or corrective or preventative actions taken by the applicant.

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## 3.4 Quality Management System (continued)

The Certification Body will also develop procedures in relation to the use of the Alaska RFM Fishery certificate, rules for granting, suspending or withdrawing the certificate, and the actions taken by the Certification Body should a suspension or withdrawal need to take place.

Policies and procedures in response to appeals, complaints, and disputes shall be documented.

The Certification Body shall document procedures for conducting and documenting all internal assessments and any resulting corrective actions that may arise.

## 4.0 Contractual Arrangements

### 4.1 Certification Body Contract Arrangements with ASMI

On approval, the Certification Body will be required to enter into a Contractual Arrangement with ASMI. The contract will provide the basis by which the Certification Body can undertake assessments against the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard for potential applicants, but does not constitute a guarantee of certification business. The contract will identify the terms and responsibilities of each party with respect to conducting third party accredited audits and the certification of applicants to the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard.

### 4.2 Certification Body Contract Arrangements with Applicants

The Certification Body must ensure that a contractual agreement with the applicant is in place for the authorization and provision of any assessment activity and certification reporting.

The Certification Body shall inform ASMI of identity of each applicant within a period of three working days.

The contractual arrangement shall include the notification to the applicant of the requirements of the Certification Body to provide the applicant's information associated with the assessment and certification status, to ASMI.

### 4.2 Certification Body Contract Arrangements with Applicants (continued)

The Certification Body shall have procedures in place to ensure that the resources to undertake any Alaska RFM Fishery assessment and certification activity will be in place

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upon entering into a contract with a potential applicant or existing member of the Alaska RFM Program.

### 4.3 Certification Body Contractual Arrangements with Its Own Staff and Sub-Contracted Assessors

The Certification Body shall have in place agreements with all staff involved in the certification process which obligates them, at a minimum, to the requirements listed below. The Certification Body shall further have agreements in place with all its assessors, including its sub-contracted assessors.

The Certification Body must carry out Assessments:

- a) With all due skill and care;
- b) In accordance with the relevant Standard;
- c) In accordance with any conditions attached to their Accreditation and only in respect of the Alaska RFM Standard categories for which they are registered;
- d) Using only assessors who are trained and meet the competencies of the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard for undertaking such assessments; and
- e) In accordance with international best practice in third party assessment and auditing, which includes auditor code of conduct for impartial and ethical behavior.

### 4.4 Provision of Certification Information to ASMI

The Certification Body shall inform ASMI of all certification decisions within a period of three working days.

### 5.0 Certification Body Registration with Accreditation Body

Any Certification Body wishing to carry out assessments against the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard must be accredited or in application to ISO 17065 by a recognized Accreditation Board that is a member of IAF (International Accreditation Forum) and a signatory to the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement.

Should accreditation to the scope of the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard not be granted within the time frame specified, the Certification Body's approval with ASMI may be invalidated and re-registration will not be an option until further evidence of the

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commitment to achieve accreditation status is provided to ASMI by the Certification Body.

### 5.1 Accreditation Status

The Certification Body shall make ASMI immediately aware of any change in accreditation status, ownership, management structure, or staff involved in the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard certification process, within 24 hours of that change.

### 5.2 Extensions to scope for registered Certification Bodies

When a registered Certification Body wishes to extend their scope to include another Alaska RFM standard, the request for scope extension will need to be submitted to the Technical Director of ASMI. The process for extending the scope of the Certification Body assessment is the same as for the initial registration.

### 5.3 Scope of Expertise

Certification Bodies must demonstrate that their staff and contractors have the knowledge and expertise to work within the specified fields of knowledge relevant to the seafood sector being assessed. Each assessor undertaking certification assessments must have the appropriate qualifications, training, experience, and skills to perform an evaluation against the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard. Certification Bodies must demonstrate that each assessor and sub-contracted assessor has been given appropriate training to understand the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard. The importance of demonstrable competency for all staff and assessors under the scope of evaluation is tantamount.

### 5.4 Assessor Registration and Training

The Certification Body will hold detailed and complete skills matrices or files for each assessor undertaking Alaska RFM Fishery Standard assessments.

The Certification Body shall maintain up-to-date records demonstrating how each assessor complies with the requirements for qualifications, training and experience required under the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard.

These records shall be made available to ASMI on request.



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## 5.5 Specific Assessor Qualification Requirements

All assessors must be able to report in the English language. Assessors must have formal education to a minimum agreed by Certification Body Management and Accreditation Board. Assessors must have formal auditor training in relevant assessment techniques. Assessors must have at least two years of auditing experience in similar assessment programs.

Assessors must have successfully completed a recognized training course for the Alaska RFM Fishery assessment techniques which includes:

- a) General knowledge of the entire Alaska RFM Program;
- b) Knowledge of relevant legislative requirements and regulations; and
- c) Knowledge and understanding of the specific fishery management processes.

A Certification Body training program for each new assessor to the Program shall incorporate, at a minimum:

- a) An assessment of knowledge and skills for each field of evaluation; and Documentation of satisfactory completion of the training program.

## 5.6 Certification Body Assessor Practical Evaluations

Each newly trained assessor will need to be supported by an experienced RFM lead assessor.

## 5.7 Maintenance of Assessment Experiences

The Certification Body must have in place an annual review program to maintain assessor competence to the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard.

## 5.8 Continued Training and Competency Monitoring

The Assessor must be kept up-to-date with fishery sector best practices and have access to and be able to apply relevant laws and regulations.

An assessor shall undergo additional training by the Certification Body whenever the ASMI RFM Team issues new versions of the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard, checklists,

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policies, guidance documents, etc. The Certification Body shall maintain written records of all relevant training undertaken.

Training and monitoring shall also include calibration across assessors to the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard, which will include assessment report reviews and comparisons.

Training is to be provided to each assessor wishing to maintain their active status approximately every two years.

### 5.9 Assessor Attributes and Competencies

The Certification Body must have a system in place to ensure that assessors conduct themselves in a professional manner. The following provide examples of required behavior:

- a) Ethical, i.e., fair, truthful, sincere, honest and discreet;
- b) Open minded, i.e., willing to consider alternative ideas or points of view;
- c) Diplomatic, i.e., tactful in dealing with people;
- d) Observant, i.e., aware of physical surroundings and activities;
- e) Perceptive, i.e., instinctive, aware of and able to understand situations;
- f) Versatile, i.e., able to adjust to different situations;
- g) Tenacious, i.e., persistent, focused on achieving objectives;
- h) Decisive, i.e., able to make timely conclusions based on logical reasoning;
- i) Self-reliant, i.e., able to act independently while interacting effectively with others; and
- j) Possessing integrity, i.e., aware of the need for confidentiality and observing professional codes of conduct.

### 5.10 Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality, and Code of Conduct

The Certification Body and the assessors it employs must avoid any conflict of interest, or breach of confidentiality or ethics. The Certification Body is bound by contractual agreement with ASMI to abide by these requirements. The Certification Body shall also have signed agreements in place with all assessors registered to assess against the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard. These agreements shall include, at a minimum, the following types of topics:

- a) Prohibitions against conflicts of interest;

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- b) A requirement to divulge to the Certification Body any potential conflict of interest (such as prior consulting, prior employment, and the like) before undertaking an assessment, or that may arise during the assessment;
- c) A policy for the Certification Body to investigate notifications or incidences of potential conflicts of interest and to exclude the assessor for a specific period where appropriate;
- d) Prohibitions against consulting for or soliciting consultancy or other types of work with an Alaska RFM Fishery applicant prior to or during an assessment and during the certification process;
- e) Prohibitions against conduct or remarks that may, in the view of ASMI, disparage the program, program management or owner and related staff, certified facilities, or associated organizations, e.g., Certification Bodies or Accreditation Boards; and
- f) Prohibitions against using or sharing confidential information from the applicants assessed;
- g) The Certification Body shall include in the assessor agreements, at minimum, the above points, including specific codes of ethics and conduct obligations as outlined herein. Copies of these agreements shall be provided to ASMI upon request; and
- h) Any potential breaches of these requirements that come to the attention of ASMI by the Certification Body or its assessors will be brought to the Certification Body to formally discuss. Conversely, the Certification Body is required to notify ASMI of such matters that may come to their attention.

### 5.11 Subcontracted Assessor

Where the Certification Body's approved assessors are independent subcontractors to the Certification Body, all of the requirements detailed throughout this document relating to assessor, and the Certification Body's responsibilities concerning oversight, training, and competency of assessor, etc., shall apply.

The Certification Body shall not, at any time, use any subcontract assessors that have not been approved through the Certification Body assessor approval process.

### 5.12 Specific Qualification Requirements for Certification Body's Staff

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At least one member of the Certification Body's staff involved in the Alaska RFM Fishery certification process shall attend an approved assessor training course.

Information on the relevant qualifications, training, and experience of each member of the staff involved in the Alaska RFM Fishery certification process shall be maintained by the Certification Body. Records of training and experience shall be kept up-to-date. These records shall include, at a minimum:

- a) Name and address;
- b) Organization affiliation and position held;
- c) Educational qualifications;
- d) Experience and training related to fishery management, assessment processes, assessment reports and corrective action evidence, and the relevant Alaska RFM CC Standard; and
- e) Records, including dates, related to training and education.

Staff used by the Certification Body to conduct assessor training, calibration, and competency reviews shall also demonstrate proper experience, training, and competencies as described above.

Records of Certification Body personnel training, experience, and competency shall be provided to ASMI upon request. The certification review committee shall be adequately staffed to ensure timely reviews and decision-making.

### 6.0 Communication

ASMI welcomes communication and information exchange with the Certification Body. ASMI will, from time-to-time, seek a Certification Body's input into the Alaska RFM Fishery Standard, related documents, and the assessment process.

ASMI recognizes the importance of accreditation during the development of all the Alaska RFM Fishery and Certification Process. ASMI will continue to liaise with all approved Certification Bodies and Accreditation Boards, when appropriate in the further development of the program.

### 6.0 Communication (continued)

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The Certification Body must agree and communicate to ASMI the following:

- a) Any and all offices that offer to make certification decisions that issue certification to Alaska RFM Fishery Standard shall be duly registered with ASMI and with their Accreditation Board;
- b) Each assessor is qualified to perform the assessment services he/she performs on behalf of the Certification Body in accordance with the criteria set out herein and other related Alaska RFM Fishery Standard documents and has complied with all training and competency requirements;
- c) The Certification Body maintains an accurate record of the qualifications of each assessor and the training undertaken by such assessor;
- d) All factual information supplied to ASMI and/or the Accreditation Board by the Certification Body is, or was when given, true, accurate and not misleading;
- e) The Certification Body has the power and all necessary consents, licenses and registrations to conduct their business and to enter into and perform the contract; and
- f) The Certification Body has read and understood and shall comply with their obligations and requirements as established in this document and other Alaska RFM CC Standard and ASMI documents.

### 7.0 Use of the Alaska RFM Certification Seal

The Alaska RFM seal is the property of ASMI, and its authorization and rules for use are controlled via an agreement between ASMI and Certified Applicants and registered Certification Bodies.

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