

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Technical Working Group – Aquaculture in Protected Areas

Contents

- 1. Introduction2
- 2. Terms of Reference2
 - 2.1 Statement of purpose2
 - 2.2 Scope and aims.....3
- 3. Membership..... 4
 - 3.1 Technical competencies required 4
 - 3.2 Registered interests.....5
- 4. Reporting requirements.....5
- 5. Duration and review times.....5

Document Name:	TWG TOR – Aquaculture in Protected Areas	Document ID:	ASC-PAS-002	Date issued:	11/03/2026
Document Owner:	Environmental Standards Coordinator	Version:	1.0	Last reviewed:	11/03/2026
Classification:	EXTERNAL (RESTRICTED)	Page 1 of 6			

1. Introduction

The [TAG Terms of Reference](#) make provision for the formation of Technical Working Groups (TWGs) and Ad-hoc Advisory Groups (AAG) to support the technical and scientific work of the TAG. Typically, both a TWG and an AAG will be comprised of technical experts external to ASC’s governance bodies with a member of the TAG acting as sponsor to facilitate communication and understanding between the TAG and the TWG or AAG and support the ASC technical lead. ASC’s Secretariat will provide logistical support to the group(s) and a technical coordinator from ASC will be appointed to provide the group(s) with the technical resources. This may include a white paper to initiate discussion and a draft Standard following TWG deliberations. An external facilitator may be appointed for complex topics. The difference between a TWG and AAG is that the AAG has a narrower focus and often operates in a shorter timeframe.

References

[ASC Programme Development and Revision Procedure](#)

[ASC Metrics Methodology](#)

[ASC Complaints Procedure](#)

[TAG Terms of Reference](#)

[TAG Conflict of Interest Policy](#)

2. Terms of Reference

This document describes the terms of reference of a Technical Working Group (TWG) tasked with reviewing the topic of Aquaculture in Protected Areas and supporting the revision of Protected Area requirements in the ASC standards.

2.1 Statement of purpose

The purpose of this **Technical Working Group (TWG)** is to provide expert guidance and technical input to develop a practical, globally relevant framework for interpreting and applying Protected Area requirements across ASC standards. This framework will ensure that ASC requirements are scientifically robust, auditable, and aligned with international conservation standards, including IUCN Protected Area categories and the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF, “Target 3”). The TWG will act as the primary forum for technical deliberation, supporting ASC in producing outputs that balance biodiversity conservation with responsible aquaculture development.

Document Name:	TWG TOR – Aquaculture in Protected Areas	Document ID:	ASC-PAS-002	Date issued:	11/03/2026
Document Owner:	Environmental Standards Coordinator	Version:	1.0	Last reviewed:	11/03/2026
Classification:	EXTERNAL (RESTRICTED)	Page 2 of 6			

The project will be supported by a member of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) which provides technical recommendations and advice to the ASC Board of Trustees. The group focuses on technical matters related to the ASC programme including farm and feed standards, chain of custody and certification and accreditation requirements. Members are selected for their technical expertise and with representatives from the aquaculture industry, NGOs, academia, and the assurance sector. The oversight and responsibility of Ad-hoc Advisory Groups and TWG are part of TAG’s formal function and take place in close coordination with the Executive.

2.2 Scope and aims

The TWG will propose key outputs to ASC (i.e. they will develop them as a proposal to ASC of, at the end of the day, revised requirements), as well as supporting the technical development of the Aquaculture in Protected Areas project from inception through to finalisation. This includes reviewing existing ASC requirements and interpretation guidance, identifying gaps or inconsistencies, and contributing to the design of a compatibility assessment framework. This framework will provide clear, practical criteria that help clarify how aquaculture operations can operate within protected areas and how responsible production can coexist with conservation objectives.

The TWG will also guide the drafting of revised requirements and interpretation guidance, ensuring clarity for all users. To achieve this, the TWG will operate in two tiers:

1. A core group of ASC representatives, the TAG sponsor, and subject-matter experts will lead technical development and prepare proposals.
2. A wider consultative group will review these proposals at key stages and provide feedback to ensure broader perspectives are considered.

This structure aims to ensure technical depth while maintaining transparency and consistency.

The TWG will be assigned the following tasks:

- Review and validate the interpretation of Protected Area provisions within ASC standards against IUCN guidelines and other global frameworks.
- Contribute to the development of a risk-based compatibility assessment framework, including practical criteria and decision tools for auditors.
- Provide technical input to a joint ASC–IUCN White Paper and supporting annexes.

Document Name:	TWG TOR – Aquaculture in Protected Areas	Document ID:	ASC-PAS-002	Date issued:	11/03/2026
Document Owner:	Environmental Standards Coordinator	Version:	1.0	Last reviewed:	11/03/2026
Classification:	EXTERNAL (RESTRICTED)	Page 3 of 6			

- Advise on pilot testing of the framework and review lessons learned for scalability.
- Ensure stakeholder feedback is considered and incorporated before public consultation.

The expected deliverables from this process are:

- A validated technical framework for aquaculture in Protected Areas, including compatibility assessment methodology and supporting tools.
- A joint ASC–IUCN White Paper and technical annex summarising the approach, findings, and recommendations.
- Draft revisions to ASC requirements and interpretation guidance for public consultation.
- Recommendations for pilot testing and refinement of the framework and requirements.

3. Membership

TWG membership shall focus on individuals with recognised expertise in aquaculture systems, biodiversity conservation, and Protected Area governance, ensuring a balanced representation of technical perspectives relevant to the project.

All members should support the aims of the ASC, its Vision and Mission, and commit to engage constructively.

3.1 Technical competencies required

The **core** TWG shall include members with one or more of the following core competencies:

- Aquaculture systems and environmental performance, including siting and operational impacts across marine, brackish, and freshwater contexts.
- Protected Area management and governance, including application of IUCN categories and global biodiversity frameworks.
- Biodiversity and ecosystem impact assessment, including cumulative effects and Natura 2000-style appropriate assessments.
- Legal and policy expertise related to Protected Areas, indigenous rights, and FPIC principles.
- Certification and auditing processes, including interpretation of standards and metrics development.

Document Name:	TWG TOR – Aquaculture in Protected Areas	Document ID:	ASC-PAS-002	Date issued:	11/03/2026
Document Owner:	Environmental Standards Coordinator	Version:	1.0	Last reviewed:	11/03/2026
Classification:	EXTERNAL (RESTRICTED)	Page 4 of 6			

3.2 Registered interests

ASC Technical Working Groups need to understand the interests of individual members to manage conflicts. Members are asked to declare these to ensure stakeholders and decision-makers have access to this information.

4. Reporting requirements

The TWG will report to the TAG on a periodic basis. Output documents will be made available for review along with meeting minutes of the TWG meetings.

Materials made available for review will include:

- Meeting minutes
- Recommendations

5. Duration and review times

The TWG will be active until the approval of the revised requirements and complementary materials by the TAG. The TWG will meet regularly (online) and at key moments in the process as suggested in Table 1. The timeline and scope of each meeting will be further refined in consultation with the TWG at the first meeting. There is a possibility of reconvening the group after a year to review implementation progress.

Table 1. Key project milestones

Activity	Outcome/Deliverable
TAG Meeting	Presentation and endorsement of Project Terms of Reference (ToR)
TWG ToR Approval	Approval of TWG ToR following public consultation
Public Consultation	30-day public consultation on Project ToR and TWG ToR
Evidence & Baseline Mapping	Delivery of evidence map, Protected Area typology, and standards crosswalk
Gap Analysis & Alignment Review	Identification of inconsistencies and assessment of the “25% rule”
TAG Meeting	Presentation of consultation feedback and proposal for TWG composition

Document Name:	TWG TOR – Aquaculture in Protected Areas	Document ID:	ASC-PAS-002	Date issued:	11/03/2026
Document Owner:	Environmental Standards Coordinator	Version:	1.0	Last reviewed:	11/03/2026
Classification:	EXTERNAL (RESTRICTED)	Page 5 of 6			

TWG Kick-off Meeting	Agreement on TWG scope, objectives, and timelines; discussion of technical approach and priority areas for inclusion
TWG Meeting	Review and advice on development of ASC–IUCN White Paper and technical annex
Draft White Paper	Completion of first draft of ASC–IUCN White Paper and technical annex
TWG Meeting	Technical input and advice on drafting revised ASC indicators and interpretation guidance
TAG Meeting	Presentation of draft revised ASC text for endorsement prior to public consultation
Public Consultation	60-day public consultation on draft revised ASC text
TWG Meeting	Review of public consultation results; advice on revisions and feasibility assessment
Pilot Testing	Review of pilot results from 2–3 Protected Area contexts; advice on lessons for scale-up
TWG Meeting	Advice on second drafting of revised ASC text based on feedback and pilot results
TAG Meeting	Presentation of revised ASC text for endorsement prior to final public consultation
Public Consultation	60-day public consultation on final revised ASC text
Final Package	Delivery of White Paper, revised ASC text, auditor decision tools, and communications brief
TAG Meeting	Presentation of final agreed text for endorsement for inclusion in ASC Farm Standard
Board meeting	Board approval of revised ASC text
Include content in ASC Farm Standard	New content incorporated into ASC Farm Standard

Document Name:	TWG TOR – Aquaculture in Protected Areas	Document ID:	ASC-PAS-002	Date issued:	11/03/2026
Document Owner:	Environmental Standards Coordinator	Version:	1.0	Last reviewed:	11/03/2026
Classification:	EXTERNAL (RESTRICTED)	Page 6 of 6			