

# Navigating North Pacific Fishery Management Council Meetings



## A Guide for the Young Fishermen's Summit *December 2017*

North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
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Whether you are familiar with fisheries management, or just starting to get involved, it may be confusing to follow management issues in the formal Council environment. This paper is meant to answer questions surrounding the process. Fishermen who want more control over the decisions affecting their livelihood; for students, managers, fishing family members, and recreational anglers may all benefit from knowing how the regulations and management process happens, and how they can take part in the process.

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### *Frequently Asked Questions surrounding a Council meeting*

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#### **It looks like there is more than one meeting going on. How do I know which one to go to?**

There are three major meetings that make up a typical North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (the SSC) and the Advisory Panel (AP) take up the same agenda the Council does—they just begin a day or two in advance so they can provide their recommendations to the Council. The SSC is made up of scientists and economists and the AP's membership covers a variety of fishing industry sectors as well as conservation groups. Representatives on the SSC, Council, and AP are from Oregon, Washington, and Alaska. The public can comment in each meeting, but usually a person will choose to comment in the AP and repeat his or her comment in the Council meeting.

#### **They keep referring to documents on the Agenda. Where are they, and can I get a copy?**



*Agendas, and all the documents are accessible electronically.*

The NPFMC process has gone mostly paperless! The Council members, SSC, AP and staff now refer to the meeting materials in electronic format on an app called iLegislate. Anyone (including YOU!) can download that application on their iPad, log into [npfmc.granicus.com](http://npfmc.granicus.com), username GUEST and password NPFMC. You can also get copies of every document on [npfmc.legistar.com](http://npfmc.legistar.com), or through the [Agenda link \(www.npfmc.org/council-meeting-archive/\)](http://www.npfmc.org/council-meeting-archive/) that is posted electronically on our website.

We currently provide reference binders at the back of each meeting room (i.e., Council Briefing Book) containing the above items in printed format. However, due to so many items being presented electronically and handed out during the meeting, it's impossible to keep these binders current, which is why we refer you to the Agenda links as the official meeting material repository. Because of the size of these books and the time required to put them together, they are not available to the general public, but everything in them is available on the table out in the hallway. If you sent a written comment before the deadline, it will also be in the books, and in the copies in the hallway.

#### **I don't know what all these acronyms stand for. Where can I find a list?**

Here is a list of our commonly used [acronyms and abbreviations](http://npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/FAQ/ACRONYMS.pdf) ([npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/FAQ/ACRONYMS.pdf](http://npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/FAQ/ACRONYMS.pdf)) and their definitions. We will continually keep this list updated; however, if you find one not on the list, don't hesitate to contact our admin staff.

#### **How do I know when the item I am interested in will be discussed?**

The [AGENDA \(www.npfmc.org/council-meeting-archive/\)](http://www.npfmc.org/council-meeting-archive/) provides brief information on the items to be discussed. The [SCHEDULE](#) gives the order and a general time of when the items will be discussed in each of the three meetings. Sometimes the Chairperson of each meeting will announce that an issue will be taken at a specific time; usually called "time certain."

Otherwise, discussion on an item can run over a specified amount of time, or on occasion, finish early. It is good to view the schedule as a guideline. If you have questions, or have to catch a flight later in the day, you may want to check with a staff member. Usually they have a general idea as to how long an agenda item may continue. You can also listen in during the Council's meeting at [npfmc.adobeconnect.com](http://npfmc.adobeconnect.com).

### **I want to tell them what I think, I have it written down, and I want to pass it out. What should I do?**

Great! It sounds like you are prepared. If you have something you'd like to hand out to any of the members, BRING YOUR COPIES WITH YOU and have your name and date on it. Better yet, email the Council secretary. She can upload it so it appears on everyone's device. The AP, SSC and Council will always have sign-up sheets in the back of the room for each agenda item. (The SSC takes public testimony only on scientific issues). The Chair of each meeting will pull this list right before the start of public comment on that agenda item, and will begin calling names. When your name is called, go to the table. If you have something to hand out, you can give your copies to the secretary seated at the front of the room. Remember to introduce yourself. Because of time constraints, public comment is limited to 3 minutes for individuals and 6 minutes for groups/organizations.

### **How do I find out the results of the meeting? Are the minutes available?**

The AP and the SSC finish their meetings before the Council does, and their draft minutes are always available once their meetings are completed. A representative from the SSC and the AP use them to give a report to the Council, and copies will be handed out to the public. They are also posted to the Agenda under "In Meeting Minutes" (Item A3). Since the AP and the SSC are only advisory bodies, their minutes are much more "informal." The Council does not have "minutes" but rather each agenda item that has a motion is available through links on that agenda item. A Council Meeting Summary containing all motions considered and voted on is prepared between meetings and posted to the Agenda as soon as it is available. The Newsletter provides a comprehensive summary of a majority of the actions the Council took, and can provide you with contact information for a specific issue, and in some cases, direct you to a specific website for detailed information or a motion. Newsletters are generally available a week following the meeting.

### **Are the meetings recorded?**

The Council meeting is recorded and the audio files are available through downloads on [BOX.NET](#).

### **How do I get notified of Meetings and Newsletters?**

You can subscribe to receive an electronic Agenda and Newsletter as soon as they're available by adding your email to our [mailing list](#) located at the top of our homepage.

### **So the meeting is over, now what?**

If you want to remain involved, make sure we have your email address. You can subscribe to our [mailing list](#) through the link on the top of our homepage. The agenda and newsletter are quickly distributed that way, and occasionally updates are e-mailed out to the public. Check the Council website for current information—most items are posted there before the meetings. Above all, if you have questions, ask. A staff member can give you a place to start. If you are a member of the commercial fishing community or if your business serves recreational fishers, you may want to get involved. You may not have control over the weather, ocean conditions, or market prices, but if you get involved in the Council process you can have some input into the decisions that affect your business and the conservation and management of the North Pacific resources.

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## The Council Process

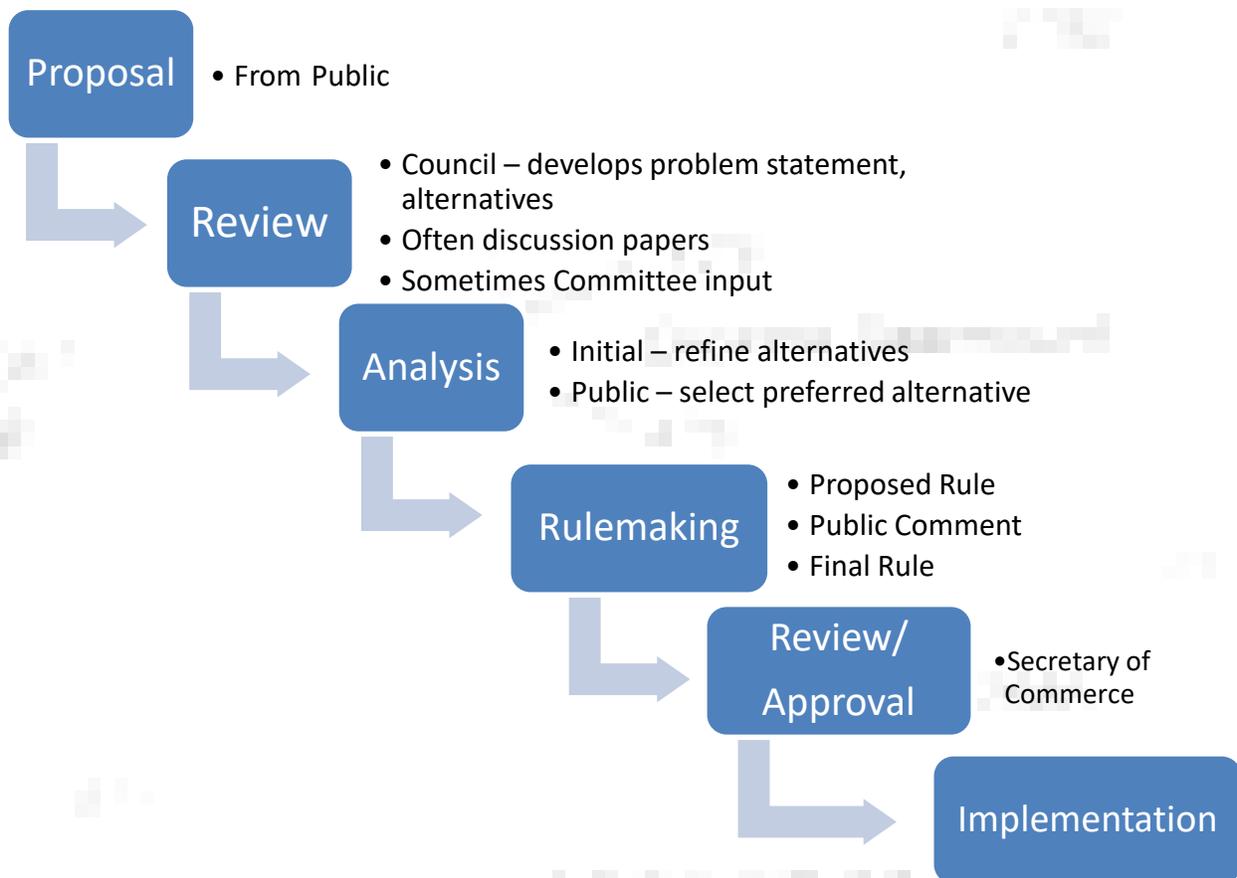
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The North Pacific Council has a very important role in the management of marine resources off Alaska. The Council prepares and amends fishery management plans and regulations for the fisheries occurring in federal waters (3-200 nm from shore).

The Council also works very closely with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the Alaska Board of Fisheries to coordinate management programs in federal and state waters (0-3 nm from shore). Many fishery resources are harvested in waters under both state and federal jurisdiction. As such, the Council and State work together to address habitat concerns, catch limits, allocation issues, and other management details through coordination meetings and delegation of management oversight to one agency or the other.

### The Council process from proposal to implementation.

Many times people get involved in order to change one small part of their business. This may involve changes in regulation and usually requires six months or longer to analyze, deliberate, and implement. Oftentimes the first step to influencing decisions is talking to people at a Council meeting. Public testimony to the Advisory Panel may lead to a proposal to the Council, which may then lead to a discussion paper and Council development of alternatives to address the problem or situation identified. The flowchart shows the many stages a proposal must go through before it becomes a regulation change. There are opportunities for public input into the process at each step. Being involved throughout the process is an important part of ensuring that your ideas are taken into account when changes are being made.



## Council Staff

The Council staff consists of an Executive Director, Deputy Director, technical staff and support staff.



12017 NPFMC Council staff

Technical staff prepare regulatory and fishery management plan amendment analyses for decision-making, with a focus on economics, social science, biology, ecosystems, and habitat. The Council is a nonprofit governmental organization. The Council staff are not federal government employees. The Executive Director carries out tasks assigned by the Council and, with the Deputy Director, directs and oversees staff. A full list of current staff is available at <https://www.npfmc.org/staff/meet-the-staff/>.

## Advisory Bodies

When reviewing potential rule changes, the Council draws upon the services of knowledgeable people from state and federal agencies, universities, and the public, who serve on panels and committees. Advisory bodies include an Advisory Panel (AP), the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), Plan Teams, and other committees. Advisory bodies provide comments, both written and oral, on relevant issues being considered by the Council.

Advisory Panel (AP) -The Council receives advice at each meeting from a 22-member Advisory Panel representing user groups, environmentalists, recreational fishermen, and consumer groups.

Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) -The Council also receives reviews and recommendations from highly respected resource economists and biologists who are knowledgeable about the technical aspects of fisheries of Alaska.

Plan Teams -The Council has teams of scientists and managers that review annually the status of the Fishery Management Plans. BSAI Groundfish, GOA Groundfish, Scallop and Crab plan team members are appointed by the Council.

There are also ad hoc Committees, which focus on specific timely topics and are appointed to advise the Council on a single issue. Meetings of the various advisory bodies are open to the public. Anyone may attend and provide comments. A listing of our current committees and staff are posted on our website: <https://www.npfmc.org/committees>.

## Council Meetings

The Council meets five times each year, usually in February, April, June, October and December, with three of the meetings held in Anchorage, one in a fishing community in Alaska and one either in Portland or Seattle. Most Council meetings take seven days, with the AP and SSC usually following the same agenda and meeting two days earlier. All meetings are open to the public, except for an occasional short, closed session in which the Council deals with personnel, administrative, or litigation issues. Minutes are taken for each Council meeting and are available to the public.

## Council Members

The Council is the decision-making body. The Council has eleven voting members and four non-voting members. Council members must balance competing interests while trying to make decisions for the overall benefit of the nation. Council members are advised by the Council's advisory panels and committees, Council staff, the public, states, academia, and NMFS. The eleven voting members include:

- The director of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game or a designee.
- The director of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, or a designee

- The director of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, or a designee
  - The Regional Administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Alaska Regional Office or a designee.
  - 7 private citizens who are familiar with the fishing industry, marine conservation, or both.
- These citizens (5 members from Alaska and 2 from Washington) are appointed by the Secretary of Commerce from lists submitted by the Governors of Alaska and Washington.

There are also four non-voting members who assist the Council in decision making. They represent:

- The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (data and research)
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (seabirds, ecosystems, otters and walrus)
- The U.S. Department of State (decisions that have international implications)
- The U.S. Coast Guard (enforcement and safety issues)

## Council Membership

<p>Trent Hartill</p> 	<p>Sam Cotten, ADF&amp;G</p>  <p style="color: yellow; font-size: small;">voting</p>	<p>Dan Hull, Anchorage, AK</p>  <p style="color: yellow; font-size: small;">voting</p>	<p>Bill Tweit, WDFW</p>  <p style="color: yellow; font-size: small;">voting</p>	<p>Dave Hanson, PSMFC</p> 	<p>Steve Marx, ODFW</p>  <p style="color: yellow; font-size: small;">voting</p>
 <p style="color: yellow; font-size: small;">voting</p> <p>Simon Kinneen, Nome, AK</p>	 <p style="color: yellow; font-size: small;">voting</p> <p>Craig Cross, Seattle, WA</p>	 <p style="color: yellow; font-size: small;">voting</p> <p>Theresa Peterson, Kodiak, AK</p>	 <p style="color: yellow; font-size: small;">voting</p> <p>Andy Mezirow, Seward, AK</p>	<p>Buck Laukitis, Homer, AK</p>  <p style="color: yellow; font-size: small;">voting</p>	<p>Kenny Down, Seattle, WA</p>  <p style="color: yellow; font-size: small;">voting</p>
<p>RADM Michael McAllister, US Coast Guard</p> 				<p>CAPT Stephan White</p> 	<p>Jim Balsiger, NMFS AK Region</p>  <p style="color: yellow; font-size: small;">voting</p>
<p>Karen Clark, Aaron Martin USFW Service</p>  		<p>Glenn Merrill</p>  <p>US Dept. State</p>			

### Agendas and Agenda Items

The Council works from an agenda. The agenda is posted on the Council’s web site. The contents of the agenda are set by the Executive Director, in consultation with the Council Chair. To have an item placed on the agenda, talk to the Executive Director, Chairman, or an individual Council member. To propose changes to regulations, testify to the Advisory Panel when they get to the Staff Tasking agenda item, or make the suggestion during the public comment period to the Council.

Each agenda item has several parts. First, a staff person usually gives an overview of what to expect during the agenda item, based on the written summary provided in the briefing book. This may be followed by more detailed staff presentations and AP and SSC reports. Before the Council begins deliberations on the agenda item, they will take public testimony from those who signed up on the sheet. Finally, the Council discusses the topic and may vote on it.

## Motions during the Council meeting

The Council operates using Robert's Rules of Order. During discussion, Council members may move to take action. The motion must receive a second by another Council member before it is voted on. Sometimes Council members will move to amend a motion. An amendment is a suggestion for a change to the main motion. Other times, a Council member may make a substitute motion, which is used to propose action significantly different than the motion on the floor. Amendments may be made to any action on the floor and must be voted on. The main motion, as amended, must receive at least a majority (one over half) to pass. A roll call vote is taken on all "final action" votes. Motions are posted to the Council's agenda shortly after passage.

## Why get involved?

Different people have different reasons for becoming involved in the fisheries management process.

Many groups are concerned about fisheries, including commercial fishermen, fishing families,



*Gear on F/V Golden Fleece*

recreational fishers, environmentalists, consumers, scientists, the tourism industry, and local communities. Whatever background or motivations, these groups share a common desire to ensure the health of fish populations and the marine ecosystems on which they depend. If you are a member of the commercial fishing community or if your business serves recreational fishers, the best reason to get involved is because the process affects your livelihood. And while you have no control over the weather, ocean conditions, or market prices, becoming involved in the Council process gives you a voice in the decisions that affect your business. Getting involved means

commitment and hard work. It may mean reading documents, talking to people you don't know, attending meetings, speaking in public, writing letters or e-mails, joining or forming an association, or becoming a member of an advisory committee.

## How to get involved: LEARN

The first step to getting involved in the Council process is to learn about it. Learn how the Council system operates. Learn the background of the problem in which you are interested. Learn the views of Council members and why they hold those views. Learn the meaning of terms and acronyms like "CPUE" and "optimum yield". Remember, knowledge is power. The more you know, the greater your level of confidence and the more valuable your input. Some ways to learn include:

- Visiting other websites related to fisheries management.
- Getting on a mailing list. The Council maintains extensive mailing lists of organizations and individuals who wish to receive meeting notices, agendas, newsletters, statistical documents, FMPs, and proposed regulations. If you would like to be on our regular mail, or e-mailing list, call our office or e-mail a staff member.
- Calling the Council office and talking to Council staff.
- Reading the Council newsletter to learn about recent issues and decisions. Reading other resources about how fisheries management works.
- Attending Council, committee, or advisory panel meetings.

## How to get involved: JOIN A GROUP

Groups are organized around different issues and interests (For example, environmental issues, fishing gear types, fisheries, communities, and other interests.) There are also groups that cut across interests and gear types. Join a group that represents your interests. If you can't find a group, create one. Joining

a group will give you a greater voice, more motivation, and a larger pool of knowledge from which to draw.

### **How to get involved: MAKE INFORMED COMMENTS**

During the meeting, your comments will be most effective if they show that you know about the issues being considered and how you or members of your group will be affected by the proposed actions. Is there an alternative that you prefer? And if so, why?

Whether writing or testifying, make sure that your comments are relevant to whatever the Council is discussing at the moment. Know what stage of the process the Council is in. For example, are there important deadlines approaching? What political pressures are influencing the decision?

### **How to get involved: GET TO KNOW SOMEONE**

Getting to know someone is one of the best ways to make sure your voice is heard. Get to know your Council representatives, committee members, and staff.

### **How to get involved: TALK INFORMALLY**

One of the best ways to interact with the Council is simply to call or meet personally with a Council member or staff person. This type of contact provides a more personal way to discuss issues that



*Informal evening events surrounding Council meetings gives an opportunity to share ideas and meet other people. Stakeholders talk fish during a summer BBQ at the June Council meeting.*

concern or interest you. When calling, explain who you are, what your question or problem is, and ask for help in understanding the issue.

Ask for a list of the committees and Council members most directly involved with the fishery in which you are interested. Ask to whom you should speak to get more background or advice. You can also speak at meetings and hearings, in the halls during meetings, at the Council offices and at informal events associated with Council meetings. You may also want to speak with state agency staff and your state and federal representatives.

### **How to get involved: ATTEND A MEETING**

All regular Council meetings, committee meetings and advisory panel meetings are open to the public. Council meetings include a section for public testimony on each issue on the agenda. Council and other public meetings are held throughout Alaska and occasionally in Portland and Seattle. Written public comments and summaries are provided to Council members in their briefing books.

### **How to get involved: TESTIFY**

Members of the commercial and recreational fishery, the environmental community, and the public at-large are encouraged to testify at Council meetings and hearings. This involves speaking in a formal public forum. You will have to speak into a microphone to make your comments. Due to time constraints, public comment is limited to 3 minutes for individuals and 6 minutes for group representatives.

It is best to be well prepared when providing testimony. Read up on Council decisions related to your topic of interest, and make sure that your comments are organized and relevant. Sign-up sheets are provided at the entrance of the meeting room for those who wish to address the Council. Sign up must be completed before public comment begins on that item.

### **How to get involved: WRITE**

The Council is very interested in hearing your opinions and comments on current management issues. Council members read and consider all letters that arrive prior to the deadline. You can also provide written to be distributed during your oral testimony. Generally, letters are addressed to the Council Chair or the Executive Director. However, depending on the situation and the stage of the decision-making process, you may write letters to specific Council members, the Regional Administrator of NMFS, or others. Following is a list of tips for writing the Council.

- Keep it short. A one-page letter is best. If your letter is too long you run the risk that key points may be overlooked.
- Stick to one subject. If you are writing concerning an FMP plan amendment that addresses a number of issues, it's okay to comment on all the issues in one letter. However, when writing about separate issues, it's best to write separate letters.
- State your credentials at the beginning. Are you a marine scientist, recreational fishermen, commercial fisherman, etc.? If you are representing a group, provide the name of the group and the size of its membership.
- State your opinion. State the reasons for that opinion. Be explicit. Don't leave the reader guessing your meaning.
- Make sure your letter is legible. If the reader has to decipher handwriting, it will detract from the message. A typed or printed letter is best.
- You may also write letters to trade magazines, such as the Pacific Fishing or National Fisherman, which many managers read. Since the National Marine Fisheries Service reviews all Council decisions, it is also effective to write the Alaska Regional office of NMFS during the comment period on the proposed rule.

### **How to get involved: SERVE**

Interested citizens may serve on workgroups or committees. If you are interested in serving, talk to the Executive Director or Council Chair.

### **Will I Make a Difference?**

Your influence on Council decisions is relative to the amount of energy you put into being involved. Involvement can range from writing a letter to serving on a committee or the advisory panel. No matter what your level of involvement, your views will have more weight and influence if you learn about the context of the decisions being made, the timeline for the decision-making process, and the best ways to communicate with Council members and advisory panel members.



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