



## B1 Executive Director's Report

October 2022

### Action Memo

#### General Announcements

I have a couple of announcements to start off the meeting:

- Covid precautions for in-person attendees are consistent with CDC guidelines. The CDC Covid-19 community level for Anchorage is currently rated as LOW. As such, attendees may wish to wear a mask during the meeting, but none are required. We do ask that participants attend remotely and take a COVID test if feeling sick. Testing is available. A handout on Covid meeting protocols is attached under agenda item A.
- All Council lunches will be catered.

#### New Council Members

Ms. **Angel Drobnica** was appointed to her first term as a Council member in August, filling the vacancy left by Cora Campbell. Ms. Drobnica is the Director of Fisheries and Government Affairs for Aleutian-Pribilof Island Community Development Association, or APICDA. The group represents six communities: Akutan, Atka, False Pass, Nelson Lagoon, Nikolski and St. George Island. Prior to being appointed as a Council member, Angel has served on the Council's AP for 7 years, with the last two and a half years as AP Chair.

The Director of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Curt Melcher, has named two designees to replace Steve Marx, who recently resigned his Council membership. An appointment letter is attached. Mr. **Steve Williams** will serve as the primary designee. Steve retired from ODFW after a long career in the fish division, including sitting in the PFMC seat for years. Steve most recently worked at PSMFC before retiring a second time. Mr. **John Seabourne**, who currently works for ODFW, has been named as the second Oregon designee to the Council. John has worked for ODFW in a variety of roles over the last 26 years including commercial groundfish management and currently is the Operations Manager for the ODFW Fish Division.

Additionally, Nicole Kimball was reappointed for her second 3-year term.

Welcome aboard Angel and Steve (and John)!

#### New Council Staff

I am pleased to introduce our newest fishery analyst **Nicole Watson** who just started with us last week. Ms. Watson was a fish biologist with the Bureau of Land Management, where she conducted surveys to monitor aquatic habitat and prepared biological assessments for environmental impact assessments and management plans in Alaska. Ms. Watson holds a M.S. in fish biology from Central Michigan University and is currently finishing up her Ph.D. in fisheries with Michigan State. Her Ph.D. dissertation is entitled "Clarifying key uncertainties to successful reintroduction of Arctic grayling in Michigan streams." Nicole has a wealth of knowledge and experience with aquatic ecosystems, anadromous fish biology, fish habitat, and effective public communication. Welcome aboard Nicole!

I am also pleased to introduce our 2022/23 Alaska Sea Grant Fellow, **Clay McKean**. Mr. McKean recently received his master's degree from the University of Washington School of Marine and Environmental Affairs. His capstone project examined the conservation of marine biodiversity through the use of "other effective area-based conservation measures" (OECMs). He has worked for FAO, and spent 4 years as a North Pacific groundfish fisheries observer. Clay will be working on a number of Council projects during his 12-month stint as a Fishery Analyst under the guidance of Sara Cleaver and other staff. Welcome aboard Clay!

## Plan Team Nominations

The Alaska Fisheries Science Center has nominated two scientists to serve on the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Plan Team. Nomination letters and resumes are attached. The SSC will review these nominations and report back to the Council on their qualifications.

Dr. **Ben Williams** has stock assessment experience and is currently leading development of MSE methodologies on fishery stock assessment modeling approaches, survey designs, and management objectives. His research focuses on sablefish, rockfish, and non-target stock assessment in support of ecosystem-based fishery management. He is the lead author of Gulf of Alaska northern rockfish and dusky rockfish stock assessments, and has previously been a member of the Plan Team when he worked with ADF&G.

Dr. **Cecilia O'Leary** has a range of experience from hands-on data collection to stock assessment work. She is currently a Research Fish Biologist in the GOA/Aleutian Islands survey group of the Groundfish Assessment Program (GAP) at Alaska Fisheries Science Center. She has been developing indices of abundance from bottom trawl surveys and quantifying total uncertainty around those estimates. Her recent work has focused on fish population dynamics, developing abundance indices for untrawlable fish habitat in the Gulf of Alaska, and using spatiotemporal modeling tools and fisheries independent survey data to estimate of groundfish distribution and abundance.

## Magnuson-Stevens Act Reauthorization Legislation

On Wednesday, September 21, the House Natural Resources Committee marked up H.R. 4690, the "Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act of 2021", that would reauthorize and amend the MSA. The bill was offered as an Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute (ANS). H.R. 4690, as amended, was adopted and favorably reported the House of Representatives by a roll call vote of 21 yeas and 18 nays. Amendments to the ANS that passed included 1) adding "to the extent practicable" to NS8 regarding sustained participation of fishery dependent communities, 2) clarification of the qualifications for new Tribal seats on the NPFMC, and 3) a suite of amendments offered en bloc, including an audit by the Inspector General regarding federally-managed Limited Access Privilege Programs and a requirement that the Secretary conduct a study (and report to Congress) on the effects of inshore and shallow water mobile gear on habitat and nontarget species and the effects between interstate boundaries and state and federal fisheries. The ANS bill text, and the 31 amendments considered can be found here:

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/4690/text>

The ANS bill removed some of the prior H.R. 4690 language regarding Council accountability and membership (e.g., Council staff would meet all requirements for federal employees, emails and texts from members and staff to NOAA Fisheries not involving routine fishery management would be posted on website, and a whole new conflict and interest and recusal process), but retained most of the remaining language from the original bill, including language that the Council highlighted as potentially having adverse effects on the Council's ability to carry out the provisions of our grant and balance the Council's responsibilities under MSA.

For reference, the Council comment letter on an earlier draft of this bill can be found here:

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56c65ea3f2b77e3a78d3441e/t/615627e7b474422b6ade6ee9/1633036263758/093021\\_NPFMCcomments\\_HR4690.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56c65ea3f2b77e3a78d3441e/t/615627e7b474422b6ade6ee9/1633036263758/093021_NPFMCcomments_HR4690.pdf)

## **Norton Sound Visit**

Several Council members (Kinneen, Kimball, Down, Vincent-Lang, and Kurland) attended listening sessions in Nome and Unalakleet on July 20 and 21. Kawerak, Inc., on behalf of the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Tribal Consortium, invited the Council to these listening sessions to engage communities and learn more about ongoing ecosystem changes in the Norton Sound region. Council members appreciated the opportunity to talk directly with community residents and understand the importance of salmon, crab, and other subsistence resources to communities throughout the region.

Related to the Norton Sound trip, Council staff recently posted a flyer on Salmon Bycatch Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on the Council website, and can be found here: <https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/bycatch/SalmonBycatchFAQ2022.pdf>

## **Joint Protocol Committee**

The Council and AK Board of Fisheries Joint Protocol Committee (JPC) is scheduled to meet on October 13 at the Egan Center, and will be hosted by the Board. Members of the JPC include Council members Kenny Down, Andy Mezirow, and Angel Drobnic, and members of the Board of Fisheries John Jensen, Märit Carlson-Van Dort, and Mike Heimbuch. Mr. Art Nelson is the new Executive Director for the Board.

The agenda includes information sharing on the status of BSAI crab resources and management updates, and updates on Pacific cod issues (small boat access, BOF proposals). The meeting agenda and portal for submitting written comments are posted here:

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fisheriesboard.meetinginfo&date=10-13-2022&meeting=anchorage>

Proposals to the BOF on management of Pacific cod are posted here:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fisheriesboard.proposalbook>

## **National SSC meeting (SCS7)**

The North Pacific Council hosted the 7<sup>th</sup> national meeting of the Scientific Coordination Subcommittee in Sitka on August 15-17, 2022. The meeting, “Adapting Fisheries Management to a Changing Ecosystem,” was focused upon various aspects of addressing Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management (EBFM), including ecosystem indicators, multi-species modeling and addressing distributional shifts in managed stocks. Meeting materials are posted at <https://www.fisherycouncils.org/scientific-coordination-subcommittee>. The proceedings from the SCS7 will be available in the Spring of 2023 and presented at the May CCC meeting; an initial description of the **findings of the workshop** is posted to the eAgenda.

Dr. Anne Hollowed (retired AFSC Senior Scientist and long-time SSC Chair for NPFMC) chaired the meeting. Council Vice-chair Bill Tweit provided opening and closing remarks that identified critical Council management needs to focus the scientific dialogue and advice. His remarks can be found here: [Bill Tweit’s SCS7 Opening Remarks](#).

## SSC Workshop in February

The Council's SSC is planning a workshop to take place during the February 2023 meeting, regarding "Rapid change in the northern Bering and southern Chukchi Seas: Identifying ecosystem responses and effects on the management of Federal fisheries." An **announcement** is posted to the eAgenda. The purpose of the workshop is to identify the science and monitoring requirements for supporting future Council decision-making under increased uncertainty, and a subgroup of the SSC has been working to develop the workshop in response to a Council motion in April 2021.

In December 2022, the SSC intends to distribute questions for the workshop, along with a more detailed agenda and list of speakers, in order to welcome written public comment ahead of the workshop convening. There will also be public comment opportunities during the workshop. The SSC proposes to provide a report to the Council at a following meeting, tentatively June 2023, for the Council to consider the SSC's recommendations and identify strategic needs for the region.

## Update on Reflections on the Council Process

In April, the Council identified five priority issues stemming from the February 2022 staff paper on "Reflections on the Council Process" (see: <https://tinyurl.com/councilreflection>). Staff provided an update on three of the issues in [June 2022](#) (AP/SSC nominations, B reports, tradeoffs between accommodating remote testimony and meeting in remote communities). A further **staff paper update** at this meeting (posted on the eAgenda) addresses the remaining two issues (timing of crab and groundfish harvest specifications, reducing the number of annual Council meetings from 5 to 4).

After investigating the two issues, staff is not recommending a Council decision point at this meeting. For harvest specifications, the recommendation is to implement incremental improvements within the harvest specifications process this year, to see whether these can address concerns about author, Plan Team, and SSC workload. For the meeting cycle issue, based on needs from our hotel contracts, we have committed to holding the February meeting in Seattle in both February 2023 and February 2024. The earliest we could make a change is for 2025, which gives us a little more time to consider options as we move forward.

## Updated NPFMC Website

The Council launched a re-design of its website in July to allow for updated content management, easier user experience, and to be in compliance with updated security protocols. The re-design is focused around topics of interest to the public, using general description and updates, leaving the more detailed information like motions and analyses accessible from links to our eAgenda and other resources. You can find the other resources links at the bottom of the fisheries and issues pages. It is because of the completeness and the searchability of the eAgenda that we are able to structure the site this way.

When we refer to our website, we are talking about [www.npfmc.org](http://www.npfmc.org). When we refer to the [meetings.npfmc.org](http://meetings.npfmc.org), we say eAgenda, even though it technically is a website also. There are searches on each site, but they perform differently. Maria Davis will provide a short presentation on the website and walk you through how to find a document, a comment, a meeting or general information.

## Council Written Comment Policy

At every meeting, staff reports publicly to the Council on any comments removed from the commenting system, and the rationale for removal, so that we can monitor and revise the process as needed to address

unanticipated events. The June meeting comment period was open for 15 days, from September 16 to noon on September 30. No submitted comments were removed.

## Recent Staff and Council member activities

- On June 23, several staff (Witherell, Evans, Cunningham, Cleaver, and Henry) met with Global Trust assessors working on RFM certification reassessment of halibut/sablefish fisheries.
- I attended the memorial service for former Council member Ed Rasmuson on June 23.
- In July, Sarah Rheinsmith participated on in a week-long field research tagging project of Sleeper Sharks in PWS. Also in July, Sarah joined in with the NPRB to attend a cultural awareness training session.
- Diana Stram provided presentations at Alaska bycatch committee meetings: Western Alaska salmon committee July 8<sup>th</sup> and Bering Sea and GOA crab committee July 26<sup>th</sup>.
- I attended the PSMFC meeting in Anchorage August 22-23.
- Diana Stram participated on the NPRB Science Panel August 23-24
- Several staff (Evans, Rheinsmith, and Cleaver) attended the CCC ESA workgroup meetings in July and August.
- Kate Haapala participated in the KNOM Ocean Knowledge Radio Program on September 2nd.
- Nicole Schmidt attended the NOAA Equity In Action Symposium on September 6th (virtual meeting).
- Several Council members (Baker, Drobnica, Tweit), staff (Evans, Foy, Keaton), and Advisory Panel members (O'Donnell, Johnson) met on September 22-23 in Juneau as part of an Exploratory Committee for setting up a Marine Resource Educational Program (MREP) in the North Pacific. A flyer with more information about the **first North Pacific MREP meeting**, which will take place April 24-28, 2023 in Juneau, is attached; or see also <https://mrep.gmri.org/>.

## Committee Meetings

The following Committee and Plan Team meetings have occurred since the April meeting:

- The BSAI Crab Plan Team met September 12-15 in Seattle. You will receive the report under Agenda Item C-1.
- The Partial Coverage Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee (PCFMAC) met September 12 to receive an update on the partial coverage cost efficiencies integrated analysis. You will receive the report under Agenda Item D-5.
- The Bering Sea FEP Climate Change Taskforce met on September 15. You will receive the report under Agenda Item D-6.
- The Groundfish Plan Teams met September 19-23 in Seattle. You will receive the report under Agenda Item C-5.
- The Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee (PNCIAC) met on September 21 to review snow crab rebuilding projections and a review of red king crab measures. The report is **posted under B1**, and a representative of the Committee will provide comments under the crab agenda items (C-1 and D-2).
- The Ecosystem Committee met on October 3 to receive updates on EFH 5-year review, the Climate Resilience Synthesis Report, and other issues. You will receive the committee report under the D6 and D7 agenda items.

## **Other Events this Week**

The Council will have an Executive Session on Friday from 3-5 pm to review Plan Team nominations, discuss administrative issues regarding proposal to add a designated seat on the Advisory Panel for an Alaska Tribal representative, and other administrative matters.

The Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force will be meeting on October 12 at the Egan Center in Anchorage. See: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=bycatchtaskforce.meetinginfo>

The Joint Protocol Committee will be meeting on October 13 at the Egan Center: [Joint Protocol Agenda](#)