



B1 Executive Director's Report

February 2021

Action Memo

Jon Gerken's Last Meeting

Mr. Jon Gerken has served as the US Fish & Wildlife Service Council member representative since June 2019 as the alternate for USFWS Regional Director Greg Siekaniec. Jon has informed me that this will be his last meeting as a Council member, as he has taken on additional and expanded duties with the USFWS. Ms. Holly Carroll has been named as his replacement and will attend the April Council meeting as the USFWS representative. Jon has spent many years conducting fisheries management, population assessment, and habitat restoration efforts throughout much of the state. Thank you Jon, for your service on the Council, and welcome aboard Holly!

NMFS Administration Changes

With the transition to the new administration, Chris Oliver has stepped down from his position as NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries. Mr. Oliver was recognized with a resolution and a plaque from the Council Coordination Committee for his work as Assistant Administrator and his support for the regional fishery management councils. On behalf of the entire Council, staff, and advisors: Thank you Chris!

On January 20, Paul Doremus was named Acting Assisting Administrator for Fisheries, and Brian Pawlak has stepped into the role of Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for Operations during Paul's tenure as AA. Sam Rauch, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, will be attending the Council meeting on Monday, February 8.

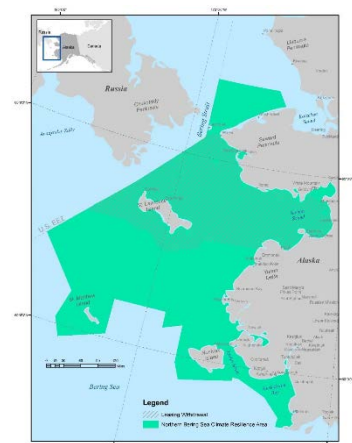
Election of officers at SSC and AP

Each year, the AP and SSC elect new Chair(s) and Vice Chair(s) for their respective bodies, from among their members. These elections will take place at the start of their meetings on February 1st, and will be reported during the meeting. Additionally, both the SSC and AP are reviewing minor revisions to their administrative procedures (the SSC and AP Handbooks, posted on the eAgenda). For the most part, the revisions identified by staff bring the handbooks into accordance with revisions to the Council's SOPP that were authorized in October 2019. The Council, or if preferred its Executive Committee, could review and, if appropriate, approve the revised handbooks at their meeting in April 2021.

New Executive Orders

President Biden has issued several new Executive Orders that intersect with fisheries management in the North Pacific.

[E.O. for Protecting Public Health and Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle Climate Crisis](#). On January 20, President Biden signed this E.O., which included a reinstatement of E.O. 13754 in its original form. This



E.O. establishes the Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience Area, establishes a Bering Sea Task Force and a Bering Intergovernmental Tribal Advisory Council to provide effective consultation with Alaska Native tribes, and incorporates traditional knowledge into decision-making. The E.O. can be found here: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-protecting-public-health-and-environment-and-restoring-science-to-tackle-climate-crisis/>

E.O. for Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad. On January 27, President Biden signed a new Executive Order that, among many other things, requires the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce, the Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality, and the heads of other relevant agencies, submit a report to the Task Force within 90 days of the date of this order recommending steps that the United States should take, working with State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments, agricultural and forest landowners, fishermen, and other key stakeholders, to achieve the goal of conserving at least 30 percent of our lands and waters by 2030. Within 60 days of the E.O. signing, a stakeholder process will be initiated by the NOAA Administrator to collect input from fishermen, regional ocean councils, *fishery management councils*, scientists, and other stakeholders on how to make fisheries and protected resources more resilient to climate change, including changes in management and conservation measures, and improvements in science, monitoring, and cooperative research. The E.O. can be found here: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/27/executive-order-on-tackling-the-climate-crisis-at-home-and-abroad/>

E.O. for Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships. On January 26, President Biden issued an Executive Order that reaffirms E.O. 13175 and the Presidential Memorandum of November 5, 2009 on Tribal Consultation. E.O. 13175 requires all agencies to engage in regular, meaningful, and robust consultation with Tribal officials in the development of Federal policies that have Tribal implications. The Presidential Memorandum requires agencies to prepare and periodically update a detail plan of action to implement these policies and directives. There appears to be no obvious implications for the Council because it is not changing the definition of an agency as specified in E.O. 13175. See: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/26/memorandum-on-tribal-consultation-and-strengthening-nation-to-nation-relationships/>

Recent Council and Staff activities

- Mr. Mezirow will be awarded with the highly prestigious Tommy Gifford “Legendary Captains” Award in late October in Ft. Lauderdale at the International Game Fish Association headquarters. This award is considered to be the world’s highest honor for a charter captain. Congratulations Andy!
- Ms. Marrinan recently published a paper as a co-author with Dr. Marysia Szymkowiak and Dr. Steve Kasperski on the halibut and sablefish IFQ program, titled “The Pacific Halibut, Hippoglossus stenolepis, and Sablefish, Anoplopoma fimbria, Individual Fishing Quota Program: A Twenty-year Retrospective”. The paper is available here: <https://spo.nmfs.noaa.gov/content/mfr/pacific-halibut-hippoglossus-stenolepis-and-sablefish-anoplopoma-fimbria-individual>
- Ms. Kaylah Hillery is working for us temporarily through June 2021, primarily assisting with the technical and administrative aspects of managing our virtual meetings. Kaylah is replacing Arin Underwood, who left to take a job with ADF&G. Kayla joins us with a telecommunications background from GCI, and supervisory experience from Northrim Bank. Welcome aboard Kaylah!

Committee Meetings

The Climate Change Taskforce met on December 16 to develop a workplan. The report will be provided under Agenda Item D-3.

The Community Engagement Committee met on January 12 to develop recommendations on cultural awareness training and community engagement. That report will be provided as Agenda Item D-1.

The Ecosystem Committee met January 26 to begin planning for the State of the Ecosystem Workshop, and to receive reports from the Climate Change Task Force, the deep-sea coral research program, EBFM, and marine invasive species. The Committee will report during the D-2 Agenda Item.

The Enforcement Committee will meet January 28 to review enforcement aspects of the small sablefish release analysis. The Committee will report during the C-3 Agenda Item.

The Finance Committee will meet in Executive Session on January 29 to review Council finances. I intend to post a report from the Finance Committee under the B-1 Agenda Item prior to the start of the Council meeting.

The Legislative Committee will meet on January 29, to review draft legislation H.R. 8632 “Ocean Climate Action: Solutions to the Climate Crisis”, a discussion draft recently released by Congressman Huffman to reauthorize the MSA, as well as other draft legislation, and a request from Senator Sullivan’s office for comments on an MSA revision to address federal management of Cook Inlet Salmon. All background and presentation materials for the meeting are posted to the eAgenda: <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/1850> I intend to post a report from the Legislative Committee under the B-1 Agenda Item prior to the start of the Council meeting.

Northern Edge 2021 Exercise

The U.S. military is currently planning exercise Northern Edge 2021 for May 2021 to occur in the air, land and maritime areas of the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex. John Mosher, Northwest Environmental Program Manager from the U.S. Pacific Fleet is scheduled to present an overview of the Northern Edge 2021 joint training exercise during the April Council meeting. Although planning is still ongoing, Northern Edge 2021 is expected to be similar in size to Northern Edge 2019, which consisted of approximately 10,000 military personnel and 200 aircraft from all services, as well as three U.S. Navy vessels. Maritime operations will be conducted in similarly designated training areas in the Gulf of Alaska. Navy activities are conducted with an extensive set of mitigation measures developed and authorized by permit from the National Marine Fisheries Service.

On a related note, the Navy is in the process of completing a supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) of these training activities. The Draft Supplemental EIS released on December 11 for public review and request for comments is located online at <https://goaeis.com/Public-Involvement/Virtual-Public-Meeting>. The comment period runs through February 16. A stakeholder notification letter was mailed out in December. The Supplemental EIS will cover training exercises in 2022 and beyond. In general, nothing has changed in the proposed action for the future, but the Navy needs to renew authorization from the NMFS that will expire in 2022 (under the Marine Mammal Protection Act specifically). Mr. Mosher will discuss this in more detail during his presentation in April.

Update on Crab Bycatch Reduction Research

The Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers (ABSC), Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation (BSFRF), and Natural Resources Consultants (NRC), with the support of several partners, were granted two awards from the NOAA Fisheries Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program (BREP) to conduct lab and field experiments to develop and test the effectiveness of crab bycatch reduction in a variety of pot gear modifications. These projects test pot gear modifications by working with fishermen from the halibut, cod, and crab fisheries, as well as gear manufacturers, to utilize their knowledge and experience when coming up with the design and then applying a scientific protocol to rigorously test its effectiveness. The goal of these projects is to work with the industry to find gear designs effective in reducing bycatch while still catching target species, then encourage the voluntary use of those designs. A written update is attached, and ABSC Executive Director Jamie Goen will be available to answer questions.