



## B1 Executive Director's Report

February 2023 Council Meeting

### Action Memo

#### General Announcements

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

- There are Covid precautions for in-person attendees, consistent with CDC guidelines. The CDC Covid-19 community level for Seattle 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 lunches for Council members will be catered (in the meeting room).

#### NMFS Alaska Regional Administrator's Alternates

On January 31, AKRO Regional Administrator Jon Kurland designated Ms. Gretchen Harrington (Assistant Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries) and Alicia Miller (Catch Share Branch Chief for SF) as his official designated alternates for the February 2023 meeting and for subsequent Council meetings until changed.

#### AP Appointment

The Council will review nominations for newly created Alaska Native Tribal representative seat on the Advisory Panel during executive session on Friday and will announce the appointment prior to the end of the meeting. The call for nominations remained open through February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. Information about the seat, and all nominations, can be found on the [eAgenda portal](#).

#### AP/SSC Election of Officers

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 and will be reported during the Council meeting.

#### Call for Nominations to MFAC

[NOAA Fisheries seeks nominations to fill vacancies on the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee](#), an advisory group that researches, evaluates, and provides advice and recommendations to the Secretary and NOAA on agency policies, activities, science, conservation, and regulatory programs critical to the mission and goals of NOAA Fisheries.

Committee members are highly qualified, diverse individuals with experience in commercial, recreational, aquaculture, and non-commercial fisheries and businesses; seafood industry, including processing, marketing, restaurants, and related industries; marine, ecosystems, or protected resources management and conservation; and human dimensions or social sciences associated with living marine resources and working waterfronts.

A letter of interest and resume are due by **March 13, 2023**; full details on the opportunity, including instructions for submitting nominations, can be found [here](#).

## **MREP Application Deadline February 14**

The Marine Resources Education Program (MREP) is launching a program in the North Pacific fishery region, with plans to offer annual workshops. The first workshop is scheduled for April 17-21, 2023. Please submit your application by February 14 in order to be considered for the April workshop. The **attached flyer** provides more information. Seats are limited, and the travel to the workshop is free to participants.

## **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 February meeting comment period was open for 22 days, from January 13 to noon on February 3. No submitted comments were removed.

## **Recent Staff and Council Member Activities**

- Ms. Evans and I attended the St. Paul Sanctuary Roundtable discussion on January 30, along with several Council members including Mr. Tweit, Ms. Kimball, Ms. Baker, Mr. Down, and Ms. Vanderhoeven. The National Marine Sanctuaries staff is also looking to host a roundtable on the sanctuary nomination during the April Council meeting (on the evening of April 6).
- Dr. Happala and Dr. Stram gave a presentation to the DOI Federal Subsistence Board on February 2 in Anchorage.
- Several staff attended and volunteered at the Alaska Marine Science Symposium, held in Anchorage January 23-27.

## **Committee Meetings**

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

- The LKTKS Taskforce met remotely on January 5 to discuss an LKTKS Policy Statement, tasking, and scheduling.
- The Crab Plan Team met in Anchorage January 17-20 to review the assessment for NSRKC and discuss the list of issues identified by the Council in December. You will receive the report under Agenda Item C-2.
- The Ecosystem Committee met January 18-19 in Anchorage to discuss GOA FEP planning considerations, Groundfish PSEIS Planning, and receive updates on EFH, Climate Change Taskforce, LKTK Taskforce, and other topics. You will receive the report under Agenda Items C-4, D-2 and E-1.
- The Trawl EM Committee met January 20 in Anchorage to receive updates on 2022 NFWF funding decisions, the Trawl EM program, and the status of current and potential future EM projects. You will receive the report under Agenda Item D-4.
- The Salmon Bycatch Committee met January 25 in Anchorage to review the State of Alaska Bycatch Task Force report, review the amendment analysis process, and begin discussion of regulatory and non-regulatory management measures.

- The PCFMAC met on January 31 to receive an update on partial coverage cost efficiencies integrated analysis.
- The Joint Groundfish Plan Team met February 2 to review AFSC stock prioritization recommendations.

## Other Upcoming Events

The seafood industry is hosting a **reception** for the Council on Wednesday, February 8. A **flyer** is attached.

The Council will have an **Executive Session** on Friday from 4:30-5:30 pm to review nominations for the AK Tribal representative seat on the AP, and discuss other administrative matters.

## SSC Workshop at This Meeting

The SSC is hosting an SSC workshop, “Rapid change in the northern Bering and southern Chukchi Seas: Identifying ecosystem responses and effects on the management of Federal fisheries,” on February 7-8, 2022, as part of the Council meeting. The workshop objectives and schedule are posted on the eAgenda. Council Vice-Chair Mr. Tweit will provide some opening remarks for the workshop, to provide a management context for the SSC's discussion and recommendations.

The SSC will provide a short briefing on the workshop during their report to the Council at this meeting and intends to prepare a more detailed report for Council review in April. In April, the Council will have an opportunity to review SSC recommendations and develop and communicate its strategic needs for fishery management in this region.

## Report on Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program Grant Results

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 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 cod and halibut pot gear modifications. These projects tested pot gear modifications by working with fishermen in the halibut and Pacific cod 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 was to work with the industry to find gear designs effective in reducing bycatch while still catching target species, then encouraging the voluntary use of those designs. The final report is attached, and Mr. Scott Goodman, Mr. Kyle Antonelis, and Ms. Jamie Goen will provide a short presentation on their results.