



B1 Executive Director's Report

February 2024 Council Meeting

Action Memo

New Council Staff

Ms. Katie Latanich started working remotely in January as a Fishery Analyst for the Council, and will serve as the Climate Project Manager. Her position is being supported by Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding, which is being provided by NOAA Fisheries to the Councils to develop and implement measures to make our fisheries more climate resilient. Ms. Latanich earned a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science & Policy and a Master's degree in Environmental Management from Duke University. Many of you already know her from her many years as Director of the Fisheries Leadership & Sustainability Forum and her work in organizing the Council Member Ongoing Development (CMOD) workshop in 2022. Her initial tasking is to coordinate IRA climate projects, including developing tracking and reporting mechanisms, planning for the Council's 2-day Climate Scenario Planning workshop in June, and assisting with the programmatic evaluation of fishery management approaches with respect to climate resilience. Welcome aboard Katie!

IRA Funding Proposals Submitted

We have formally submitted our two proposals to NOAA Grants for a portion of the \$20 million Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funds that are available to the eight Regional Fishery Management Councils. First, we provided an application to NOAA Grants for an overall amount of \$3.5 million, which included a broad description of the entire proposal and details of how an initial \$375K funding for each Council will be spent. This overall grant proposal was submitted on December 26, and we anticipate receiving these funds in the coming months.

We also submitted a project specific-proposal for \$2.125 million in January, based on your guidance and input in December. The proposal outlines three linked streams of work to support climate resilience North Pacific fisheries. These include developing and implementing three components:

- 1) a climate-resilient management policy,
- 2) local knowledge and traditional knowledge onramps, and
- 3) harvest specifications tools that are adaptive to environmental risk.

The Council intends to implement the first stream of work by developing a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for all fisheries under the Council's jurisdiction (a staff discussion paper will be presented at this meeting under agenda item D3). Through the PEIS the Council will implement a new, adaptive ecosystem-based management policy and objectives in all of the NPFMC fishery management plans (FMPs), to provide for climate resilient fisheries. The June 2024 Climate Scenarios Workshop will serve as an idea-generating step to help launch the Council's IRA funded work and PEIS development process.

A summary of the proposal is [attached](#).

Climate Scenarios Workshop – Save the Date!

Following the discussion of workshop timing at the December 2023 meeting, staff are proceeding with planning the Climate Scenarios Workshop for **June 5-6, 2024 in Kodiak, AK**. The workshop will be held in conjunction with the June Council meeting but will not overlap with Council, SSC, or AP sessions and all members will be able to attend. The purpose of the workshop is to generate ideas for management approaches and tools to improve climate resiliency of federally managed fisheries in the North Pacific, including strategies that could be considered to implement a new climate-resilient management policy the Council may adopt through the programmatic evaluation.

Public participation is an important part of the workshop and we encourage anyone who is interested to participate in person in Kodiak or virtually using Zoom. We will ask members of the public to register so we can plan ahead.

A flyer on the workshop is attached. There is also a new section on the Council website (<https://www.npfmc.org/issues/climate-readiness/>) where we'll provide up to date information on the Council's climate readiness work, including the June workshop and registration.

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.

North Pacific Research Board vacancies

The North Pacific Research Board is seeking to fill two seats on its Advisory Panel and three seats on its Science Panel. **The deadline for receipt of all application materials is Friday, March 1, 2024.**

- **Advisory Panel:** Both designated seats will represent the **North Pacific at-large**. These seats are intended to provide balanced representation with insights relevant to the regions of the Gulf of Alaska, Bering Sea, and Arctic.
- **Science Panel:** Desired qualifications for the open seats on the Science Panel include expertise in one or more of the following categories: (1) marine fish and/or marine invertebrate ecology; (2) stock assessment and fisheries management; (3) quantitative ecology; (4) marine mammal ecology; and (5) veterinary science and marine wildlife health.

See full details here: <https://nprb.org/funding-opportunities/>.

In addition, the **State of Alaska is seeking to fill three seats on the North Pacific Research Board**. Three seats represent the State of Alaska on fishing interests, environmental interests and oil and gas interests. Apply to Boards and Commissions here: <https://gov.alaska.gov/services/boards-and-commissions/apply-for-a-board-appointment/>. Contact [Forrest Bowers](#) at Alaska Department of Fish and Game for additional information or questions.

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 comment period was open for 22 days, from January 12 to February 2. No submitted comments were removed.

Recent Staff and Council member activities

- Ms. Rheinsmith participated in the CCC Habitat Workgroup meeting and workshop in La Jolla January 16-20.
- Several staff attended portions of the 100th session of the IPHC annual meeting in Anchorage, January 22-26.
- Several staff attended various talks at the Alaska Marine Science Symposium in Anchorage on January 29-February 2.

Committee and Plan Team Meetings

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

- The Crab Plan Team met January 8-12 in Anchorage to hold a modelling workshop, review the stock assessment for Norton Sound red king crab, identify research priorities, and review research updates. Their report is included under agenda item C1.
- The Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan Team, SSC Research Priorities Subgroup, and Joint Groundfish Plan Teams all met virtually on January 9th, 11th, and 17th, respectively, to discuss research priorities and next steps. Their reports are provided on the SSC eAgenda under D7. Additionally, the BS FEP team discussed next steps which will be reported under agenda item E Staff Tasking.
- The Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee (PNCIAC) met on January 30th to discuss the BBRKC analysis, as well as discussion on other issues. Their report will be posted under agenda item C2.

Events this Week

The Seattle Fishing Industry is hosting a community reception on Thursday evening, February 8, from 6-9 pm. A flyer for the event is [attached](#).

We have scheduled a [joint Council/AP lunch](#) on Thursday the 8th in the Vista Room, on the 28th floor.

Fishing Gear Research and Fishing Effects Modelling

I have invited Dr. Craig Rose (FishNext Research LLC) and Dr. Brad Harris (FAST Lab - Alaska Pacific University) to provide the NPFMC with an overview of North Pacific fishing gear research and the Fishing Effects Model (FEM). The purpose of their presentation is to review available information and tools to assess the degree to which fishing gears are contacting the bottom, and studies on impacts, which could be used to evaluate whether additional management actions are needed to mitigate the impacts of fishing gear on benthic habitat and stocks that rely on such habitat. The presentation will include: 1) a summary of research conducted in the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, and Gulf of Alaska to estimate and reduce the impacts of fishing gear on benthic habitat including examples of Council fishery management actions informed by this research; 2) a review of the FEM including current uses of the model and potential future applications to inform management actions; and 3) an update on the ongoing research to catalog pelagic trawl gear configurations and methods to measure pelagic trawl gear ground clearance and contact with the seafloor.