



B1 Executive Director's Report

October 2023

Action Memo

Election of Officers

At the start of the Council meeting, the Council will nominate and elect a Chair and Vice-chair for the coming year.

New Council Members

Mr. **Rudy Tsukada** was appointed to his first term as a Council member in August, filling the vacancy left by Simon Kinneen. Mr. Tsukada is the Chief Operating Officer of Coastal Villages Region Fund (CVRF), one of the six CDQ groups. He is also a well-known Alaska sport fisherman, targeting halibut and salmon from a kayak in southcentral Alaska.

Mr. **Dimitri Varmazis** has replaced Mr. Dave Moore as the State Department representative on the Council. Dimitri works in the Office of Marine Conservation at the Department of State, and his new role is managing the State Department's engagement on North Pacific fisheries agreements.

Additionally, Mr. **Kenny Down** was reappointed for another 3-year term.

Welcome aboard Rudy and Dimitri, and congratulations to Kenny on his reappointment!

Congratulations to Dr. Watson

NPFMC staff Nicole Watson recently completed her dissertation defense and successfully met all the requirements for Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife at Michigan State University. Her dissertation defense was titled "Answering key uncertainties to successful reintroduction of Arctic Grayling to Michigan streams." Congratulations on your achievement Dr. Watson!

ANPR Comments

In June, the Council received a report from Dr. Mike Ruccio on the agency's Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for revising the Guidelines for National Standards 4 (allocation of fishing privileges), 8 (fishing communities), and 9 (bycatch). The ANPR can be found here: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/05/15/2023-10294/fisheries-of-the-united-states-magnuson-stevens-fishery-conservation-and-management-act-national>. While comments are due by September 12, the CCC and the Council formally requested that NMFS extend the comment period to include the October CCC and Council meetings. The request for extension was denied, so the Council submitted a comment [letter](#) with initial comments. Given the limited opportunity for input, the Council may consider providing additional comments to the agency at this time (and outside of the formal comment period), or just wait to provide comments after a proposed rule (if there is one) is published.

Future Meeting Dates and Locations

Based on direction to staff in June, we have contracted with hotels for meeting dates and locations in 2024 and 2025. Note that in 2025 (and presumably thereafter), there will not be an in-person meeting in February. Additionally, we will be meeting in a new location (Newport, Oregon) in June 2025. The schedule we have posted on our website is as follows:

2024

February 5-12, 2024 / Renaissance Hotel – Seattle, WA

April 1-9, 2024 / Hilton Hotel – Anchorage, AK

June 3-11, 2024 / Convention Center – Kodiak, AK

September 30-October 8, 2024 / Hilton Hotel – Anchorage, AK (T)

December 2-10, 2024 / Hilton Hotel – Anchorage, AK

2025

February 3-10, 2025 / Virtual Only SSC/Council (T)

March 31-April 8, 2025 / Hilton Hotel – Anchorage, AK

June 2-10, 2025 / Agate Beach BW, Newport, Oregon

September 29-October 7, 2025 / Hilton Hotel – Anchorage, AK

December 1-9, 2025 (T) / Hilton Hotel – Anchorage, AK

For meetings beyond 2025, the Executive Committee has directed us to evaluate Vancouver, WA, as a potential new location for a Council meeting. Future meetings in coastal Alaska are still being explored for Juneau, Sitka, and Homer, but hotel and meeting room availability are limited, and cost is an important factor to consider. In December, the Executive Committee will discuss and evaluate potential meeting dates and locations for meetings beyond 2025, and provide direction to staff.

IRA Funds

Background: In July, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo's announced that NOAA received \$3.3 billion in funding under the Inflation Reduction Act. Through IRA, NOAA Fisheries has received \$1.2 billion of that amount to provide science-based management and conservation of the nation's marine resources as it confronts climate change. A presentation on how NMFS is planning to spend the money was provided to the Council Coordination Committee, and is available [here](#). Of the \$1.2 billion, \$349 million was allocated in support of climate ready fisheries, and \$20 million of that funding was further sub-allocated for use by the regional fishery management councils.

On August 22, NMFS informed the Council Executive Directors how the Council monies would be distributed. Initially, a total of \$3 million will be divided equally by the Councils (so \$375K for NPFMC) and issued in October (as a separate grant from the base Council grant). The remaining \$17 million would be distributed through a competitive proposal process among the Councils. NMFS intends to manage all distributions of IRA funding in a single grant to each Council, and we will apply for the initial \$375k in late 2023, and in early 2024 for subsequent project proposals. All monies will be added to the single grant. The grant will either be for 3 years with a 1-year cost extension option, or perhaps will just be set up for 4 years (2024-2027) to avoid the extra paperwork step.

NMFS will put together a template for what to include in a project proposal for the remainder of the funds. The initial direction we have received is that NMFS is looking for 3-5 page comprehensive proposals rather than 20 page proposals (so less detail than more), with a \$300k minimum, and with the focus to achieve implemented outcomes. Proposals must be focused on fishery management and governance topics (i.e., not used to address data and science needs), and actions funded under IRA will contribute to specified overarching goals.

Proposals will be reviewed by NMFS regional and science center staff (ours and others); criteria for NMFS technical review includes consideration of whether they are able to implement what we might propose within the duration of available funding, and also to ensure that work does not require ongoing funding from NMFS past the duration of IRA funds.

Proposals for projects are due in early 2024 (multi-year or single year, and implication is Councils can submit one or more project proposals). The intent is to allow time for at least one Council meeting to discuss, between the October CCC and when proposals are due. If all the money is not used up in the 2024 submission, NMFS will run another proposal process in 2025 and 2026.

Dr. Bob Foy (NMFS) will be giving a presentation to the Council on NOAA's IRA funds.

Next Steps: We will need to develop a process and a strategy on how to prepare a proposal and use this money wisely. Towards that end, Ms. Diana Evans and Ms. Katie Latanich (contractor) have prepared a discussion paper to assist the Council in thinking about topics we might address in any competitive proposal, and a process for the Council providing input into the proposal. The staff paper provides an overview of the agency's priorities for this Council IRA funding, and highlights current Council initiatives and the climate readiness themes that have emerged in recent Council discussions. The paper also highlights some potential projects that could be considered for NPFMC IRA funding, collated by staff from current initiatives and discussion threads. The staff list is not exhaustive, but is intended to spark Council discussion and interest. At this meeting, staff are looking for guidance from the Council on initial objectives, issue areas, or projects that the Council is interested to pursue under the goal of developing and advancing climate ready Federal fisheries in the North Pacific. Feedback at this October meeting will help direct staff work on a more detailed proposal.

Ms. Diana Evans (NPFMC staff) will provide a presentation to the Council on a proposed timeline, process, and potential topics for IRA proposals. The Council may wish to take action on this issue under the E-1 Staff Tasking agenda item, after receiving input from the SSC.

MREP accepting applications for 2024 Workshop

The Marine Resources Education Program (MREP) is hosting a second workshop in the North Pacific, from February 26 - March 1, in Kodiak, AK. MREP North Pacific is a 5-day educational workshop for fishery users to learn about how the North Pacific Fishery Management Council process works, and how to engage effectively and get their voice heard. Applications to participate can be found at: <https://mrep.gmri.org/apply>. Seats are limited, and the workshop is free to participants, with travel, meals, and accommodation paid for. Preference will be given to applications received by **November 1**. The attached flyer provides more information.

Research Priorities Portal

The triennial review of Council research priorities is underway, with the public submission period open until Tuesday, October 31st. Plan Teams and a subgroup of the SSC will review the submissions in November through January to develop a list of top priorities. The SSC's initial review of the top 8-12 research priorities will occur at the February Council meeting. The final review of the top research priorities by the SSC and Council will occur at the April 2024 Council meeting.

Research priorities are topics that address key questions or knowledge gaps and are selected based on how well they align with or inform management for the Federal fisheries the Council manages. Priorities are developed for fisheries, habitats, and other areas necessary for Federal management purposes. Updates to this review cycle include an inclusive, more transparent process for receiving research priority ideas

from the public using an online submission form and an extended time period for submissions. We have also included better notifications for Plan Team reviews.

To be involved, the public is encouraged to submit new research ideas using the online form by the **October 31st deadline** through the link included on the Research Priorities eAgenda page; public can also attend the virtual research priority meetings where there will be opportunities to provide public input. Information on the research priorities submission and review process can be found on the Research Priorities eAgenda page (see <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/2998>). There is an informational flyer attached.

Crab/Groundfish Industry Measures to Reduce Crab Mortality (December 2023)

In October 2022, the Council received reports from Bering Sea crab and groundfish fishery participants on voluntary measures to reduce mortality of Bristol Bay red king crab and Eastern Bering Sea snow crab. At that time, the Council invited participants to voluntarily update the Council on the efficacy of those measures in December 2023 (see motion). The Council remains interested in measures to mitigate both bycatch mortality (non-directed/groundfish fisheries) and discard mortality (directed/crab fisheries). In December, the Council invites individuals or representatives of participants in these fisheries to provide a presentation or submit written material under the Executive Director's report (Agenda Item B1). We would appreciate it if those who plan to give an oral presentation notify staff ahead of time to gauge the total time expected (email to sam.cunningham@noaa.gov).

October D2 motion: The Council appreciates industry responses to requests for information on voluntary measures for implementation in 2023 and beyond to avoid BBRKC and EBS snow crab and reduce crab mortality in the non-directed fisheries and to reduce discard mortality in the directed fishery. The Council encourages all sectors to implement these voluntary measures in the 2023 season and provide a status report on the efficacy of these measures in December 2023.

Consistent public testimony timing

In June during staff tasking, the Council noticed the public of an intent to discuss changing public testimony times in the Council to standardize the testimony time limit across the SSC – AP – Council. The Council has heard from testifiers that it can be confusing to have one time limit in the Council (3 minutes as an individual, or 6 minutes as an organization) compared to a different time limit in the AP and SSC (5 minutes regardless of individual or organization). The Council is considering a change to implement a standard 5-minute testimony time limit in the Council, to apply to all testifiers regardless of affiliation. The Council may wish to further discuss this proposal under staff tasking after receiving additional public input.

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 21 days, from September 8 to noon on September 29. No submitted comments were removed.

Recent Staff and Council member activities

- Dr. Kate Haapala and Dr. Diana Stram participated in a series of RAC meetings regarding chum salmon bycatch.
- Dr. Haapala participated on the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association In-season call on July 18.
- Dr. Haapala and Ms. Marrinan participated in an outreach call with the National Academy of Sciences, Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits: Data and Information Availability on August 14-16.
- Dr. Haapala participated in a NMFS Tribal Engagement session on September 6, and listened into the Salmon Research Task Force Meeting on September 19.
- Ms. Evans, Dr. Haapala and I attended the NMFS Tribal Consultation on September 14.
- Dr. Stram (and SSC members Dr. Sherri Dressel and Dr. Mike Downs) participated in several monthly planning meetings of the Steering Committee for SCS8.
- Ms. Sarah Rheinsmith participated on the State of Alaska crab survey in Southeast Alaska in July.
- Dr. Nicole Watson attended the 153rd Annual AFS meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan from 20-24 August, and presented a poster of the Council process, EBFM, and highlighting the adaptive management strategies in a changing climate.
- Dr. Diana Stram participated on the NPRB Science Panel August 22-23.
- Dr. Diana Stram and Mr. Bill Tweit participated in a Workshop at UW on New Species Distributions Under Climate Change (sponsored by UW, San Diego State Univ and Environmental Defense Fund) September 6-8.
- Mr. Sam Cunningham attended the "Kodiak Trawl Gear Workshop" hosted by the Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association on 9/28 in Kodiak. The purpose of the workshop was to look at gear (nets) and discuss regulatory language issues where there is a gap between what's on the books and actual gear construction.
- Ms. Baker and Ms. Evans, along with AP members Mr. Ritchie and Ms. Zagorski, participated in MREP Steering Committee planning calls over the summer, in preparation for the upcoming 2024 North Pacific MREP.

Committee Meetings

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

- The BSAI Crab Plan Team met September 12-14 in Seattle. You will receive the report under Agenda Item C-1.
- The PCFMAC met September 14. You will receive the report under Agenda Item C-2.
- The Groundfish Plan Teams met September 19-23 in Seattle. You will receive the report under Agenda Item C-3.
- The Ecosystem Committee met on September 28. You will receive the report under Agenda Item E-1 Staff Tasking.
- IFQ Committee met on September 28. You will receive the report under Agenda Item D-3.

Other Events this Week

The Council will have an **Executive Session** on Friday, October 6 at 4:30 pm to discuss administrative issues relative to Inflation Reduction Act Funding.

Mr. Jon Warrenchuk (Oceana) will be giving a presentation on work relative to GOA habitat conservation in the AP meeting room (Denali Room) on Thursday, October 5 from 5:30-6:30.