

Public Affairs Conference Call Update

On April 19, Fisheries public affairs and constituent services staff hosted a one-hour conference call with all the Council public affairs staff and the executive directors. Representatives from all councils attended, and almost every executive director.

The purpose of the call was to begin establishing a plan for collaborative Council and NOAA Fisheries public affairs programs, as requested in February at the Council Chairman's meeting in Silver Spring. The need for this collaboration comes from a recognition that united public awareness campaigns between NOAA Fisheries and the Councils will strengthen and direct key messages about fishery management issues in a timely, proactive manner.

In February, Fisheries public affairs and constituent services were tasked with coming up with a workgroup and a draft strategy for public affairs discussion in Sitka.

On the conference call, we outlined a discussion paper containing the primary eight issues/needs the Councils have brought up based on informal surveys of each of them. Then we went over some of the "positive image" changes NOAA Fisheries is working toward internally, which includes items regarding restructuring the agency's outreach program.

Each Council was then given the opportunity to comment on the discussion paper. They were overwhelmingly in favor of every item in the paper.

This was a very positive first step public affairs and constituent services have taken to a more positive and mutually rewarding relationship with the Councils and we look forward to further developing and carrying out these goals.

Accomplishments since 4/19

1. Status of Stocks - Worked with Council staff to refine Executive Summary; press release contained numerous Council successes; Council public affairs staff was sent the press release in advance of public distribution in order to craft regional messages. Process was a first start and needs to be refined for better coordination, but we were pleased with this first attempt.
2. Chilean Sea Bass - We put out a public fact sheet and press release in answer to an environmental boycott of the species on the U.S. market.
3. Shark Conference - We co-sponsored a press conference to talk about the importance of shark conservation and educate the public about reducing risks of encountering a shark in the ocean.
4. Continued conversations with Council public affairs staff in preparation for the Sitka meeting.

Next Steps

- Continue discovery phase of identifying issues, needs, and opportunities for collaboration. Compile a list of short-term and long-term goals and strategies for meeting those goals.
- Hold first-ever annual conference of Council Public Affairs staff and Fisheries Constituent Services and Public Affairs - in October 2002 in Silver Spring? Part of the conference will focus on developing a public affairs strategy, based on the eight key issues already identified by the Councils and others that are put on the table in Sitka. The conference also will include media training and training on how to deal with contentious issues and crisis management. What is the best time to hold this conference?
- Begin holding bi-weekly conference calls with the Council public affairs staff to keep lines of communication open and provide forum for new ideas and information.

High Priorities

All centered around the themes of Timeliness, Collaboration, Education, and Proactive Messaging

| Issue | New England | Mid-Atlantic | South Atlantic | Caribbean | Gulf of Mexico | Pacific | North Pacific | Western Pacific |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Councils need advance copies of Fisheries' reports to develop messages | | X | | | | | | |
| Hold an annual meeting of Council/Fisheries public affairs people | X | X | X | | | | | X |
| Release 25-year M-S Act Report to highlight Council successes and strengths | X | X | X | | | | X | |
| Create a "corporate" business plan | | | | | | | | |
| Create series of press releases, educational materials, stories to pitch to high profile, national media | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Use Media during litigation to tell Fisheries side of story | | X | | | | | | |
| Collaborate to clear up misinformation, hasty messages, and attacks in a timely and orderly fashion | | X | | X | | X | X | X |
| Bridge the disconnect between the public's expectation and reality so there doesn't appear to be a breakdown in the process | | | | | X | | | |

Agenda

Public Affairs/Outreach Conference Call Friday, April 19, 2002, 3 p.m. – 4 p.m. ET

Participants, Councils

New England Council

Pat Fiorelli
Paul Howard

Mid-Atlantic Council

Marla Trollan
Dan Furlong

South Atlantic Council

Kim Iverson
Bob Mahood

Caribbean Council

Carlos Ramos

Gulf of Mexico Council

Peter Hood
Wayne Swingle

Pacific Council

Jennifer Gilden
Don McIsaac

North Pacific Council

Chris Oliver

Western Pacific

Cindy Knapman
Kitty Simonds

Participants, NOAA Fisheries

Constituent Relations

Laurel Bryant
Glenda Tyson

Public Affairs

Gordon Helm
Susan Buchanan

Format

The conference call will be moderated by Susan Buchanan. Please try to keep comments short since there will be numerous people on the call. Each Council should call-in on one phone line, using a speakerphone, as we've only arranged for 15 lines.

1. **5 minutes:** We will go over the discussion paper (below), which includes all the input received from the Councils to date.
2. **40 minutes:** Each Council public affairs staff and executive director will be given about 5 minutes to go over any of the items in the discussion paper and add new items. Please indicate if this initial attempt is heading in the direction to meet your Council's concerns and needs.
3. **5 minutes:** NOAA Fisheries will brief Councils on planned changes in our public relations/image strategy.
4. There will be about 10 minutes left for questions and follow-up issues.

Follow-up: NOAA Fisheries will further develop plan and arrange another call in early May to discuss.

Agenda Cont.

Background

At the Council Chairman's meeting in Silver Spring in February 2002, there was a lengthy discussion about the need for more public relations collaboration between Councils and NOAA Fisheries. Two of the important challenges raised were the need for strong, positive public image/messaging and being proactive/timely in our public relations attempts.

At that meeting, we were tasked with establishing a working group that includes Council public relations staff and NOAA Fisheries public affairs and constituent relations staff, to come up with a strategy for meeting these two challenges. The Council Chairmen scheduled a two-hour discussion on this issue for the Council Chairmen's meeting on May 30, 2002, in Sitka, Alaska.

For Discussion – Beginning of a Public Relations Plan (Based on Council Input)

1. **Timeliness:** Councils need advanced copies of NOAA Fisheries reports so they can have regional press releases ready to go on the day of the announcement (e.g., upcoming Status of Stocks) and be prepared to take public calls. Environmental groups are often ahead of the game on this, resulting in their ability to set the public stage for the issue and putting us on the defensive.
2. **Collaboration:** NOAA Fisheries to sponsor annual or biannual public affairs conference for all Council, NOAA Fisheries regional, and NOAA Fisheries national public affairs/outreach staff. These conferences would include training sessions and sessions allowing Council staff and NOAA Fisheries regional staff to develop long-term public relations strategies for upcoming regional events and issues. In addition, these conferences would allow for the sharing of ideas and resources.
3. **Proactive/Messaging:** In the fall of '02, release a progress report on 25-year anniversary of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Report would highlight strengths of Council system, with regional focus on progress in fisheries. It would be designy, catchy, non-bureaucratic language. A "counter-attack."
4. **Collaboration:** NOAA Fisheries should work with Councils on a "corporate" Business Plan. Councils might prepare similar documents for their regions using a compatible format.
5. **Proactive/Messaging:** NOAA Fisheries and the Councils to begin putting out series of positive press releases with educational value, about the research we do at the labs and science centers (e.g., the exciting tagging data). These stories will be pitched to national, high-profile magazines.
6. **Proactive/Messaging:** Put our best foot forward in the "court of public opinion" during litigation. When the Secretary is sued, use the media to get information to the public that defines the deliberate considerations undertaken by the Council process that led to the Plan. Help the media develop more balanced stories in these cases. [Concern about NOAA General Counsel's reactions to litigation; resulting in second guessing Council decisions and development of new policy.]
7. **Problems exist with misinformation, hasty messages and attacks by conservation groups. How can we better collaborate with Councils to get their good news stories out and spin the story to highlight its positive aspects on a regular basis?**
8. **Public Image:** Bridge the disconnection between the public's expectation and the government's expectation. When a fisherman gives testimony on an issue but doesn't see the resulting regulations for two years, it damages credibility and public image. Gives the appearance there is a breakdown in the process.

Public Affairs/Constituent Relations Contacts

Councils

New England

Pat Fiorelli, (978) 465-0492

Mid-Atlantic

Marla Trollan, (302) 674-2331 x32

South Atlantic

Kim Iverson, (843) 571-4366

Caribbean

Miguel Rolón (ED), (787) 766-5927

Gulf of Mexico

Peter Hood, (813) 228-2815

Pacific

Jennifer Gilden, (503) 326-6352

North Pacific

Chris Oliver (ED), (907) 271-2809

Western Pacific

Cindy Knapman, (808) 522-5341

NOAA Fisheries Regional

Northeast

Teri Frady, (508) 495-2239

George Liles (508) 495-2378

Southeast

Chris Smith, (727) 570-5301

Northwest

Brian Gorman, (206) 526-6613

Janet Sears, (206) 526-6172

Tom Cashman, (206) 860-3216

Southwest

Jim Milbury, (562) 980-4006

Alaska

Sheela McLean, (907) 586-7654

NOAA Fisheries National

Public Affairs (301) 713-2370

Gordon Helm (media)

Connie Barclay (media)

Susan Buchanan (media)

Crystal Straughn (media)

Outreach

Jennifer Koss (Habitat), (301) 713-0174

Mark Oswell (Enforcement), (301) 427-2300

Constituent Services (301) 713-2379

Linda Chaves (acting director)

Laurel Bryant (outreach and education)

Glenda Tyson (outreach and education)

Tywanna Otts (outreach and education)

Greg Schneider (industry and trade)

Bob Nordstrom (industry and trade)

Jerry Erbacher (aquaculture, industry and trade)

Bill Price (recreational)