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2026

NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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B1 Executive Director's Report

October 2026 Council Meeting

Action Memo

<i>New Council members.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Plan Team nominations.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>EO 14276 - Status of Council workplan, NMFS letter on regional priorities.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Recreational data collection / EO 14430.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Framework for Council Prioritization.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Recent Legislative Activity.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>MREP accepting applications for 2027 Workshop.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Website updates.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Recent Staff and Council member activities.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Committee and Plan Team meetings.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Other Activities this week.....</i>	<i>7</i>

New Council members

Two new Council members (Mr. Chad See and Mr. Forrest Bowers) were appointed by the Secretary of Commerce, and will serve from August 11, 2026, through August 10, 2029.

Mr. Chad See is the Executive Director of the Freezer Longline Coalition (FLC), a non-profit trade association representing Washington and Alaska-based participants in the freezer longline sector of the federal Pacific cod fisheries off Alaska. Since joining FLC in 2012, Mr. See has been an active participant in the Council process, including serving as a member of the Council's Fisheries Monitoring Advisory Committee and the Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee. He also represents FLC members on the IPhC Conference Board. Prior to FLC, Mr. See spent over a decade in Washington, DC as a policy professional in the public and private sectors, including as a staffer in the U.S. Senate. Mr. See currently serves on the board for the United Fishermen of Alaska and the Washington Maritime Federation. A graduate of St. Olaf College in Minnesota, Mr. See was born and raised in Ballard and still resides in the Seattle-area. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his family, travelling, crawling on old boats and cheering on the Mariners.



Mr. Forrest Bowers has served with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game since 1992 and is currently Acting Director of the Division of Commercial Fisheries. Mr. Bowers spent nearly a decade on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Crab Plan Team, including a stint as Plan Team Chair, and has extensive experience with state and federal fishery management programs in Alaska. In addition to his other duties, Mr. Bowers represents Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang on the North Pacific Research Board. Mr. Bowers was raised in Kodiak, Alaska, where he gained an appreciation for the importance of sustainable fishery management, and holds a BS in Fisheries Science from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He resides in Juneau, Alaska and is an avid fly fisherman and fly tyer and enjoys harvesting wild game and fish throughout Alaska.



Additionally, **Mr. Joseph Freeman**, Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. Department of State, will be the new Council representative for that department, replacing Dr. Dimitri Varmazis. Before joining the State Department, Mr. Freeman worked in export development and supply chain relations between retailers and manufacturers in the United States, Europe, and Asia. Mr. Freeman is unable to attend this meeting in person, but we look forward to seeing him in the future.

Finally, this is the first Council meeting where PSMFC will be represented by **Dr. Scott Rumsey**. As noted in June, Dr. Rumsey is an [alternate for PSMFC Executive Director](#) Barry Thom, and he is currently a Senior Program Manager with PSMFC who previously worked for 25 years with NMFS West Coast Region in various positions including Deputy Regional Administrator.

Welcome on board all!

Plan Team nominations

We have received **four nominations** from ADFG and NMFS for replacing vacancies or departing members on our Council Plan Teams. The letters of nomination and CVs for the candidates are attached under B1. The SSC will evaluate these candidates and provide a recommendation to the Council, for your consideration in Executive Session. Any appointments will be announced at the end of the meeting.

For the [BSAI Groundfish](#) Plan Team:

Mr. Andrew Olson has been nominated by NMFS to replace Mr. Steve Whitney on the Team. Mr. Olson has relevant expertise in the groundfish fisheries, inseason management, and is the lead author on the BSAI harvest specifications. Additionally, he was a member of the Groundfish Plan Team from 2021 to 2023 while a Fisheries Biologist for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Dr. Andrew Whetten has been nominated by ADFG. Dr. Whetten is a Biometrician in the Commercial Fisheries Division, and brings a background in statistics and quantitative ecology. He recently joined the Department, but in prior work at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Dr. Whetten led development of population trend models using structured and opportunistic survey data and advanced causal machine-learning approaches for population survey data.

For the [GOA Groundfish](#) Plan Team:

ADFG has nominated **Mr. Aaron Lambert** for appointment to the Team. Mr. Lambert is also a Biometrician in the Commercial Fisheries Division, and is the lead author on the Northern Southeast Inside Chatham Sablefish and Gulf of Alaska Demersal Shelf Rockfish stock assessments. He previously worked for NMFS on developing stock assessment models and SAFE reports for Cook Inlet salmon.

For the [BSAI Crab](#) Plan Team:

NMFS has nominated **Dr. Lee Cronin-Fine** for appointment to the BSAI Crab Plan Team (which is in the process of being restructured as the Crab and Scallop Plan Team). Dr. Cronin-Fine is a Research Fishery Biologist with the AFSC Status of Stocks and Multispecies Assessments Program. He has led several stock assessments, including BSAI Alaska Plaice, BSAI Flathead Sole-Bering Flounder stock complex, GOA Flathead Sole, GOA Skates stock complex, and BSAI Octopus, and his dissertation research focused heavily on improving size-structured population dynamics models used in crab fishery stock assessments.

EO 14276 - Status of Council workplan, NMFS letter on regional priorities

The Council's workplan for implementing [Executive Order 14276](#), *Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness*, has been updated on the eAgenda. The workplan was approved in October 2025, and the posted status table provides the list of items along with a current update for each item. Note that the agency also actively tracks the Council's EO workplan items for implementation priorities.

The agency continues to identify actions to support the EO, and on July 2, 2026, sent [Regional Priorities Guidance](#) to all eight regional fishery management Councils. The letter to the NPFMC included several actions for the Council to consider, as well as highlighting priorities for Regional Office rulemaking and other agency actions. NMFS also announced national [prioritized agency actions](#) in September for advancing agency-level reforms to restore American seafood competitiveness, compatible with the intent of the Executive Order. The suite of actions include those related to protected resources; transforming fisheries science through cooperative partnerships, innovative technologies, and data pipelines; monuments and spatial access; updating National Standards and regulatory reform; enhancing competitiveness and financial relief; and Seafood Import Monitoring Program reform. Mr. Kurland will provide a more detailed overview of both the NPFMC regional priorities letter and its actions for the Council and the Regional Office, and the national-level agency actions at the beginning of the B2 NMFS management report.

Specific to the Council, however, the letter from NMFS requests the following actions of the Council (comments on workplan status added in *italics*):

- Maintain momentum on items listed on the [October 2025 Council workplan](#)
- Focus on the following priorities:
 - **Review Steller Sea Lion (SSL) Closure Boundaries** and consider drafting a proposed framework utilizing the best available science to modify and shrink closures where appropriate to safely improve access to fishing grounds and increase domestic production. *NEW; description of current measures and SSL status posted under B2*
 - **Eliminate 2% IFQ deduction for blue sablefish**, to incentivize best practices and allow fishermen to increase the market value and profitability of this fishery. *ON COUNCIL'S EO WORKPLAN LIST but not yet scheduled for review*
- **Systematically assess current FMPs and consider removing species** that no longer require conservation and management, or redesignating them as Ecosystem Component species if helpful to achieve ecosystem management objectives. *NEW*
- **Collaborate with NMFS on the expanded and continued use of Exempted Fishing Permits** as agile management tools to test gear innovations, enhance value-added quality, and safely increase domestic production. *ON COUNCIL'S EO WORKPLAN LIST; in June 2026 Council supported NMFS updating Alaska-specific EFP regulations under Section 305(d) authority*

As the Council is also undertaking a prioritization discussion at this October meeting (see section below), it will be helpful to consider a response to the agency's requests within that context. Some additional considerations for each of the potential actions:

- **SSL Closure Boundaries:** The Council has developed and adjusted [SSL protection measures](#) several times over the years, with the most recent measures in place since 2014. SSL adjustments at the Council in the past have been major agenda items. Unless the Council is able to be very surgical in scope, it is likely that new tasking on this issue may require substantial Council agenda and staff capacity. Several documents are posted under B2 that may be helpful to understand the current regulations and status of the species, and the agency also recently

completed Biological Opinions for current [GOA](#) and [BSAI](#) groundfish fishery interactions with protected species.

- Bled sablefish: the Council passed a [motion](#) to task this for initial review in October 2025. The action has not yet been scheduled for review as the expert staff who would work on this analysis have been prioritizing their capacity implementing the small sablefish release action before shifting gears to work on this analysis.
- Review of FMP species: some staff work on this topic was undertaken in the past year in response to the NMFS request to develop a risk-value matrix. An initial evaluation indicates that because of the Council's prior work curating FMP species and moving species to the ecosystem component, there is little additional efficiency to be gained in our region. The Council may wish to consider recommending a staff report to formalize a Council response.
- Use of EFPs: the Council has already endorsed NMFS' intent to remove the Alaska-specific EFP regulations in favor of the national criteria, which should make the process for applying for EFPs in Alaska more efficient. EFPs submitted from the public will continue to be brought to the Council for consultation under the B2 report.

Recreational data collection / EO 14430

NMFS is in the process of transitioning to a new recreational data collection framework nationwide, and as part of the [Recreational Angler Partnership Improvement Directive](#) (RAPID) process, is setting up a series of regional workshops this fall and winter. RAPID aims to remodel recreational fisheries data collection through a nationally cohesive yet regionally flexible partnership framework. As context, the North Pacific has established recreational data improvement goals in a collaborative state-federal Alaska [regional implementation plan](#), and NMFS and the Council periodically host Recreational Fisheries Roundtables that gather stakeholder input (the most recent was in [December 2024](#)). Council staff Sarah Marrinan, ADF&G Sport Fish Division, and NMFS staff are involved in planning.

The agency is anticipating RAPID will help to achieve the recreational fishing data improvement goals outlined in the new Executive Order 14430 on [Restoring American Saltwater Angling And Recreation](#), issued September 17, 2026. While the implementing actions for EO 14430 are not yet clear, it does include a directive to the agency to consider revising the guidelines for National Standard 1 (Optimum Yield) and National Standard 2 (Best Scientific Information Available), "to ensure they appropriately account for the unique biological, economic, and social characteristics of the recreational fishery, and to facilitate the rapid integration of State-level data into Federal management decisions, where appropriate."

Framework for Council Prioritization

At the June 2026 meeting, the Council discussed capacity constraints and other factors affecting the pace of implementation and development of Council recommendations. The Council requested that staff develop a framework to help the Council organize a constructive conversation about prioritization at the October 2026 meeting, which has been posted as a separate attachment under B1.

The paper provides an overview of Council actions categorized as required and discretionary, to distinguish the "must do" items from those that the Council "would like to do," and describes a series of factors for Council members to consider with respect to assigning priorities to individual actions. The paper also provides recommendations for restructuring staff tasking and public expectations for how and when the Council will consider initiating new actions, as part of this broader discussion. There are several other components of the B reports that are relevant to a prioritization discussion, especially

presentations on progress with the Executive Order 14276 *Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness* and other updates in the B2 NMFS management report. The Council may also receive public testimony during the B reports that will be relevant to Council member considerations. The agenda for the October meeting signals that Council members will receive these *inputs* during the B reports, but schedules the Council *discussion* of prioritization for later in the meeting, under E1.

The Council may wish to consider a discussion structured around the following potential actions:

1. Highlight 3-4 priorities among the Council's discretionary actions.
2. Review the "Items not yet started" list on the 3-meeting outlook to see whether any items should be removed.
3. Affirm and/or provide input on NMFS' implementation priorities.
4. Consider changing the Council's approach to staff tasking at future meetings, to constrain Council tasking of new actions to designated meetings once or twice a year.
5. Commit to an annual strategic planning discussion in October, to develop priorities for the upcoming year.

While it is useful for the Council to engage in prioritization to better communicate to staff and the public regarding how best to use available staff capacity, it is also important to set expectations that while the Council priorities will be our primary guidance for staff capacity and Council agenda capacity, the Council may see some actions scheduled for review sooner than the prioritized actions, as we try to optimize staff capacity to effectively achieve as much as possible across the range of Council tasking.

Recent Legislative Activity

The Legislative Committee met on August 10, October 2, to review two recently introduced bills that could impact the Council's ability to meet its responsibilities under the MSA and the terms of its operating grant: S.4938, Bycatch Reduction Bill, introduced by Senator Sullivan (AK) on 6/24/2026, and S.5273, Fisheries Science Modernization Act, introduced by Senator Murkowski (AK) and Senator Whitehouse (RI) on 8/6/26. The draft legislation and the Council's initial comments resulting from Committee input can be found on the Legislative Committee's [eAgenda](#).

MREP accepting applications for 2027 Workshop

The Marine Resources Education Program (MREP) is hosting a third workshop in the North Pacific, from April 26-30, 2027, 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 [spotlight on the Council website](#) provides more information.

Website updates

The Council's **How We Work** section was recently updated to improve organization, accessibility, and navigation of key policy and process information. Katie Latanich revised and reorganized content for the new [Management Policies](#) and [Administrative Policies](#) sections, as well as the [Navigating the Council Process](#) page and [summary flyer](#). Serine Reeves completed the website development and page implementation needed to bring the updated content and resources online.

Allocation Review dashboards: AKFIN added Amendment 61 and Amendment 82 dashboards to its allocation review website, pertaining to the AFA and Aleutian Islands pollock allocations. The dashboards

provide information in the same format as previous dashboards presented to the Council in its Allocation Reviews. They can be found at [Reports Dashboard](#) and include GOA and BSAI Pacific Cod, and BSAI Amendment 80 species.

Recent Staff and Council member activities

- Several Council members and Sara Cleaver participated in Marine Resources Education Program Steering Committee meetings over the summer, planning for the 2027 workshop.
- Diana Evans, Anna Henry, and Nicole Schmidt attended a multi-day grants training in June focused on recent updates to 2 CFR Part 200 (Uniform Guidance).
- Anna Henry participated in the NPRB Science Panel meeting in Anchorage, AK August 18-19, Brian Ritchie participated on the NPRB Advisory Panel September 1-2, and Nicole Kimball chaired the NPRB fall meeting September 17-18, at which Forrest Bowers also participated for ADFG.

Committee and Plan Team meetings

The following Council committee and Plan Teams have met since June 2026:

- The **Legislative Committee** met on August 10th, to discuss newly introduced legislation. The Council Chair and Executive Director have since submitted Council comments on these bills. Comments can be found on the [Legislative Committee eAgenda](#).
- The **Groundfish Plan Teams** met September 8-11 to review new survey and ecosystem information, proposed assessment models, harvest projections, and final assessments for four stocks. The report and recommendations are included under agenda item C3.
- The **BSAI Crab Plan Team** met September 14-19 to review stock assessments and harvest specifications for crab stocks, compile the SAFE report, and other issues of interest. The Council will receive the report under agenda item C2.
- The **Partial Coverage Fisheries Monitoring Advisory Committee** met September 15th to review the 2027 Annual Deployment Plan, and provide recommendations. Their report is included under agenda item C1.
- **Charter Halibut Management Committee** met on September 30, to discuss the D1 Charter Halibut Permit use and angler effort discussion paper. The Committee's minutes and recommendations will be attached to the D1 agenda item and presented along with this agenda item to the AP and Council.
- The **Ecosystem Committee** met on October 5-6, to discuss recommendations for groundfish management policy revisions, and to review communications products around harvest control rules and the Council's harvest specifications process. The Committee's recommendations will be included among the briefing materials for the December 2026 Council meeting.

Additionally, the Council's **Joint Protocol Committee** will meet on October 16, 2026, at the Marriott Hotel in Anchorage. The Joint Protocol Committee is convening at the request of the Board of Fisheries in order to provide for information exchange and education about the impacts of bottom contact from trawl fisheries, the Council's current management requirements, and measures under consideration. This information is intended to inform any future consideration of proposals that may come before the Board. The Joint Protocol Committee does not generate proposals, and does not take action on proposals under consideration by the Board of Fisheries or the Council. Meeting materials are available on the [Joint Protocol Committee eAgenda](#). The meeting will be broadcast online, but participation and public testimony will be in-person only.

Other Activities this week

Introduction to Specifications Process: On Wednesday, October 7th, the Council staff will host a public evening session on the harvest specifications process.

The Council will meet in **Executive Session** on Saturday, October 10th, to review Plan Team nominations and other administrative matters.