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## NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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# B1 Executive Director’s Report

June 2026

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### Changes in Council membership

This will be **Mr. Rudy Tsukada’s** last Council meeting as a sitting member. Rudy was appointed to the Council in August 2023, and also serves as the Chief Operating Officer of Coastal Villages Region Fund (CVRF), one of the six CDQ groups. Rudy, we wish you all the best with your extra free time, and hope that you will have more opportunity to sport fish.

**Mr. Bruce McIntosh** has been appointed as the primary designee for Dr. Debbie Colbert, Director of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, replacing Steve Williams whose last meeting was in February. Bruce served with ODFW for many years in a variety of roles, leading programs, developing policy, and managing ESA-listed salmon and steelhead. At the June meeting, **Mr. John Seabourne**, the secondary designee for Dr. Colbert since October 2022, will be representing ODFW as Bruce comes up to speed on Council issues. Welcome to John and Bruce! Steve, we wish you all the best on your next journeys.

Finally, we also have a change in membership for the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. **Mr. Barry Thom**, Executive Director of the Commission is here in person for the June Council meeting, replacing Chris Oliver who has been his designee since June 2023. Barry has been the Executive Director for the Commission since 2022, and prior to that worked for many years at the NMFS West Coast Regional Office, including five years as Regional Administrator. He has also identified two alternate designees, Dr. Scott Rumsey and Dr. Caren Braby, so we may also see them representing PSMFC on the Council at future meetings. We wish Chris all the best, and we are pleased to welcome Barry, Scott, and Caren to the Council in his stead.

Additionally, **Mr. Kelly Susewind**, Director of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will be attending the Council meeting Thursday after lunch and would like a few minutes to address the Council.

## Recent passing of Council and AP members

### ***AP member Gretar Gudmundsson***

We are saddened by the loss of Gretar Gudmundsson, a long-time crab fisherman who passed away unexpectedly in May. Gretar was in his third term serving as an Advisory Panel member. Gretar was a passionate advocate who worked with many fisheries organizations. He was also a caring person with a mischievous sense of humor, and he will be missed by family, friends, and colleagues alike.

A testimonial to Gretar, his years of experience, and his influence in Alaska fisheries can be found [at this link](#). More information regarding memorial arrangements will be shared when the family is ready.



### ***Former Council member Steve Marx***

Steve Marx passed away in November 2025, in a tragic car accident along with his wife, Lisa. Steve represented the Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife for the State of Oregon on the Council for 5 years, from 2017 to 2022. Steve served in a variety of positions at ODFW during his 34 year career, including many years as a District Fish Biologist, Watershed Manager, and completing his career as ODFW's West Region Manager. On the Council, Steve served as co-Chair of the Enforcement Committee during his tenure. A funeral service is being held on June 5, 2026, in Bend, OR ([link](#)).



## MSA 50th anniversary

April 13th marked the 50th anniversary of the signing of what is now known as the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), creating the 200 mile Federal EEZ, a framework for sustainable, science-based fishery management and rebuilding of depleted stocks, and the regional fishery management council system that brings together scientists, managers, and the public. Despite profound world transformations since that time from technology and the digital transition, environmental and climate change, the MSA continues to function successfully for addressing challenges and allowing for adaptive management. Over the last 50 years, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council has partnered with the National Marine Fisheries Service and other agencies, fishing industry participants, Tribal, subsistence, recreational, and conservation interests, to manage the fisheries off Alaska to meet the needs of fishermen and communities as well as stewardship responsibilities for fish and shellfish, marine mammals, seabirds, and the ecosystem.

NMFS commemorated the 50th anniversary on the April anniversary with a leadership [message](#), and the eight regional Councils have created a [MSA 50th website](#) with a timeline, photo gallery, and other commemorative materials. Our Council is also working on expanding the North Pacific timeline of our last 50 years on our website, and in addition we will hold a small reception during the December Council meeting, on December 3rd. The event will take place at the Anchorage Museum, allowing Council attendees to also visit the [Arctic Marine Science: Sikuliaq to Shore](#) exhibit supported by the North Pacific Research Board (NPRB), which opened on May 15th and will be at the museum for a year.

## Council Coordination Committee meeting

The North Pacific Council hosted the annual Council Coordination Committee (CCC) meeting this year, which took place in Homer, AK on May 19th to 21st. The CCC meeting convenes the Chair, Vice Chair, and Executive Director from each of the eight Regional Fishery Management Councils with NMFS national leadership and the NMFS Regional Administrators, to discuss issues of mutual relevance to all Councils, including those related to the implementation of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Ms. Drobnica, Ms. Baker, Mr. Kurland, and I participated in the meeting, which was also attended by some other Council staff and Council members. The [agenda](#) included updates from NMFS on a suite of items including progress with the Executive Order 14276 on Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness, the application of a risk/value matrix framework to narrow the scope of NMFS management and science to better match available capacity, NEPA updates, and other management, science, and international affairs priorities.

The Councils collectively presented an assessment of [needs and priorities across all eight Councils](#), and our Council also provided a short update on our [North Pacific regional priorities](#). While concerns about stable and consistent funding were highlighted by all of the Councils as a priority, at least for this year we have now received our final distribution of funding for FY26. The final amount represents a slight increase from FY24 and FY25 levels, with the additional amount directed specifically to support implementing the Council's EO 14276 workplan.

NMFS reviewed progress towards meeting the goals of Executive Order (EO) 14276 *Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness*, especially those outside the Council purview addressing fair trade, reducing regulatory burdens, and ensuring integrity of the seafood supply chain. The recent USDA announcement of its creation of an Office of Seafood was discussed, which is intended to provide additional support for the industry and allow seafood harvesters access to USDA programs. NMFS is in the process of working with the Office of U.S. Trade Representative to develop a seafood trade strategy, and with other Federal agencies to update seafood import monitoring programs to evaluate whether imports are fraudulent or result from Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Regarding the risk/value matrix reported on most recently in February, the agency has paused this effort in favor of regional efforts to align priorities between the Council, the regional office, and the science center. Collective feedback from the Councils indicated that the R/V matrix as conceived was not necessarily well-tailored for the needs of all the regions. In the North Pacific, for example, we have already focused a lot of energy on curating our FMP target and ecosystem species and prioritizing the frequency of stock assessments, and the multi-species nature of our fisheries means that there is little room for further cost savings from this endeavor in our region. Instead, Council and NMFS leadership will meet over the summer to identify opportunities in our region to better match Council and NMFS priorities with available capacity, to discuss with the Council in October. For example, in the NPFMC priorities round robin, we highlighted concerns about staffing vulnerabilities at the regional office, due to the loss of staff with specific skillsets that have eliminated the depth of backup staff for critical functions. For example, the regional office has lost programming/ technical staff who support critical operations such as the catch accounting system and in the restricted access management division who issue quota to begin the fishing year.

In their science update, NMFS discussed progress with survey modernization, migration to the cloud and open science / open data practices, and focusing on data streams to guide priorities and work plans. The agency appreciated Council input to the Stock Assessment Tiger Team report ([NPFMC's letter](#) is posted on our website), and the Science Advisory Board response at their next meeting is anticipated to lead to improved survey capabilities. The presentation highlighted contingency plans for scheduled survey vessel maintenance, including for the NOAA ship *Oscar Dyson* which is scheduled to be offline from October

2026 through March 2028. Efforts continue to modernize surveys, using technology to maintain capability despite reduced resources and to reduce the time between collecting data and having them available for management decisions. They noted that modernization is intended to augment and add to existing core surveys, not replace them.

The NPFMC delegation specifically highlighted concerns in our region with the upcoming deadline for the new European Union digital CATCH certification requirements which are intended to address IUU and illicit products in the supply chain, but which are impractical for many North Pacific and Alaska fisheries. The CCC requested that NMFS work within the government to negotiate with the European Union on alternative import requirements on vessel-level traceability, noting that U.S. exports already control for IUU products and U.S. harvests are often consolidated before and at processing. Specifically, the CCC recommended NMFS urgently work to extend the July 10 deadline if alternatives are not in place before then.

Finally, the CCC also included updates on progress with developing NMFS NEPA procedures in response to recent legal, regulatory, and procedural developments affecting NEPA compliance, with revised guidance anticipated to be ready by summer of 2027. There was also a motion in support of more funding for a competitive Saltonstall-Kennedy grants program, and in support of the Marine Resource Education Program (MREP). The final [CCC outcomes and recommendations](#) are posted.

## **NPFMC EO 14276 Workplan Progress Update**

The Council continues to make progress on its workplan for implementing EO 14276 *Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness*. Posted to the eAgenda is the complete list of items on the Council's workplan, with the final column indicating a current status update for each item. The Council last modified its workplan in October 2025; the Council considered additional public comments in February 2026, but did not choose to make any changes.

Note that the Council will also receive a more detailed update under B2 NMFS Management Report on one specific project under the workplan regarding recommendations for reporting, recordkeeping and monitoring regulatory updates that the agency can accomplish directly under the authority of MSA Section 305(d), with consultation from the Council.

## **NPRB seeking new board member representing Alaska Natives**

The North Pacific Research Board (NPRB) is [seeking nominations](#) to fill a new seat on the Board representing Alaska Natives. The nominee should possess personal knowledge of, and direct experience with, subsistence uses. This is a three-year term, and the deadline for nominations is August 28, 2026 (4:00 PM AKST).

## **Changes on Council Staff**

**Ms. Maria Davis** will be retiring from the Council staff on August 1st, after almost 27 years working for the Council. During her time on staff, Maria has led - and sometime dragged - the Council into the digital future, beginning early on with improvements to our website, and eventually achieving her goal of a paperless meeting. Among her many legacies:

- Development of the Council eAgenda, the idea for which began when she first sourced a program designed for civic engagement at city council meetings. She later contracted with PSMFC to build us a custom version that is now also used by other Councils. The eAgenda has allowed us to digitize and archive Council meeting materials online all the way back to 1976.

- Broadcasting of Council meetings long before remote participation became the norm. Maria pioneered the use of Adobe Connect in 2009 to allow stakeholders to listen to Council deliberations without incurring the expense of travel. This solid foundation launched a largely seamless conversion to virtual meetings during COVID, and under her leadership, we now have remote participation routinely at all Council-hosted meetings, and easy-to-access, time-stamped YouTube recordings for SSC and Council meetings.
- Evolution of the Council newsletter, website, and other Council communications products.

Maria is an early adopter who also believes in lifelong learning, and is ever curious and eager to apply new tools to improve how we work. Under her leadership, she has restructured our administrative staff into a core team that accomplishes not only administrative support and meeting logistics, but also IT problem solving and complex audio/visual technical work in support of Council meetings. We will miss her high energy, innovative spirit, and big ideas. I wish her all the best with her retirement plans!

**Ms. Sarah La Belle** rejoined the Council staff in late April as our new Administrative Team Lead. Sarah worked for us from 2018 to 2024 as a technical/ administrative specialist, before leaving to work with the oil and gas industry in Anchorage. We are very fortunate to have been able to lure her back to us at the Council!

### **Recent Staff and Council member activities and publications**

- Several Council members and Sara Cleaver participated in the annual Marine Resources Education Program (MREP) 2026 workshop in February, and the North Pacific MREP Steering Committee meeting in May, both in Juneau.
- Anna Henry participated in the NPRB spring Science Panel meeting in Seattle, WA March 31-April 1, and Nicole Kimball chaired the NPRB spring meeting April 30-May 1.
- Curry Cunningham represented the NPFMC SSC at a CIE review of the new NOAA FIMS (Fisheries Integrated Modeling System) stock assessment tool in April 2026.
- Angel Drobnica, Rachel Baker, Diana Evans, and several other Council members and staff hosted and attended the CCC meeting in Homer on May 19-21.
- Anita Kroska and former Council member Bill Tweit are among the co-authors of a recently published 2026 [Fish and Fisheries article](#) by Sethi, S.A., R.D.Murphy Jr., M.R.Baker, et al. "Challenges and Opportunities for Strengthening Bottom-Tow Fisheries Sustainability."

### **Committee and Plan Team meetings**

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

- The **Ecosystem Committee** has met twice, on March 6th and May 8th. The May meeting was to provide recommendations on two agenda items that the Council is reviewing at the June meeting, and their minutes can be found attached under agenda items E1 and E2. The March meeting was the inaugural meeting for the new committee membership, and the agenda was largely informational, however the meeting minutes are available under the staff tasking agenda item F.
- The **Scallop Plan Team** met in April 6th to review a stock assessment and harvest specifications for scallop, and the report and recommendations for restructuring the Scallop Plan Team are included under agenda item C3.

- The **BSAI Crab Plan Team** met May 11-15th to review stock assessments and harvest specifications for Aleutian Islands and Pribilof Islands golden king crab, and other issues of interest. The Council will receive the report under agenda item C2.
- The **Fisheries Monitoring Advisory Committee** met May 18th to review the 2025 Observer Annual Report, and provide recommendations on NMFS' preliminary direction for developing the 2027 Annual Deployment Plan. Their report is included under agenda item C1.
- The **Executive/Finance Committee** met in closed session on June 3rd, to discuss the status of the Council's finances and other internal administrative matters.

### **Other Activities this week**

The Council will have catered lunches this week. On Thursday June 4th, the Council is scheduled to have a joint lunch with the Advisory Panel.

The Council will meet in **Executive Session** on Friday, June 5th at 3pm to discuss initiating a call for SSC and AP nominations for 2027, a report from the Executive/Finance Committee, and other administrative matters.

The Council, Pacific Seafood, and other industry partners are hosting a **reception** on Thursday, June 4th, from 6-8pm, at the hotel in the Oak/Hemlock Room on the 2nd floor. We will have an opportunity to celebrate our departing Council member, Rudy. A flyer is posted to the eAgenda.