



E Staff Tasking

June 2023 Council Meeting

Action Memo

Council Staff: David Witherell, Diana Evans

Action Required:

1. Review Committees and Plan Teams
2. Call for AP and SSC nominations for 2024
3. Provide input to staff regarding planning future Council meetings
4. Provide direction on tasking priorities and scheduling

BACKGROUND

Committees and Plan Teams

Membership

Posted on the eAgenda is the updated Council committee list reflecting changes since April 2023. As reflected in the ED report, the Council has also received two candidates for the BSAI and GOA Groundfish Plan Teams, to replace departing members. The Council may announce whether to make these appointments during this agenda item.

At this meeting, the Council is also scheduled to call for nominations for 2024 Advisory Panel and SSC members. All members of the SSC are up for reappointment, and 8 members of the Advisory Panel. Should the Council put out a call for nominations, staff will set up a portal over the summer through the Council eAgenda to accept nominations through November 1, 2023. The Council will discuss AP and SSC appointments in December 2023.

Status of future advisory group meetings

The following Committee and Plan Team meetings are currently anticipated:

- **BS FEP Local Knowledge/Traditional Knowledge/Subsistence (LKTKS) Taskforce** – June 22, 2023; virtual
- **BS FEP Climate Change Taskforce** – Aug/Sep 2023
- **BSAI Crab Plan Team** – week of September 11-15, 2023
- **Ecosystem Committee** – Sep 2023 (T)
- **Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee (FMAC)** – Sep 2023
- **Partial Coverage Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee (PCFMAC)** – Sep 2023
- **Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee (PNCIAC)** – Sep 2023
- **Joint Groundfish Plan Teams** – week of September 19-22, 2023; November 2023
- **Charter Halibut Management Committee** – October, December 2023

Tasking and Scheduling

Posted on the eAgenda are updated versions of tasking documents for background material: the 3-meeting outlook, Council staff responsibilities, and the groundfish workplan.

As described in the D3 action memo, the SSC (only) reviewed the Crew Data Collection discussion paper at the Council's request at this meeting. The Council and Advisory Panel had previously reviewed the paper in February 2023. If appropriate, the Council may choose to take additional action relative to this paper under this agenda item.

Meeting cycle adjustments

As described in the B1 Executive Director's report, the Council tasked staff to prepare a more in-depth discussion on the potential implications of reducing the number of annual Council meetings from five to four, or to consider making some meetings virtual-only. While the Council's original interest was to address workload concerns and agenda efficiency, changing the number of in-person meetings would also represent a cost savings for the Council. The paper requests Council feedback on whether staff should pursue either of these options beginning in 2025, as well as a request for input on how to weigh other factors with respect to selecting the timing and location of meeting venues. The staff paper has also been scheduled for SSC and Advisory Panel review.

October 2023 agenda

We have not posted a preliminary October 2023 agenda, however the agenda items for October are listed on the 3-meeting outlook. At the October meeting, the AP and Council will consider BSAI crab specifications and proposed groundfish specifications, potentially final action on EFH FMP amendments, preliminary review of the chum salmon bycatch analysis (see below for additional detail), and tentatively initial review of Area 4 vessel use caps and crab facility use caps analyses. The Council also has several other discussion papers and reports scheduled, including the 2024 Observer Annual Deployment Plan, a report on the Secretarial Amendment for the Salmon FMP, the Bering Sea LKTKS protocol, the Amendment 80 program review and a workplan for the BSAI crab program review, a discussion paper on other rockfish and demersal shelf rockfish, and a proposed Climate Change Taskforce workshop outline. We will distribute a preliminary agenda in early August.

In order to set expectations appropriately, we are providing some additional information on the **Chum salmon bycatch preliminary review analysis** scheduled for October:

The primary purpose of the October review is to provide the Council and the public with more information on how the alternatives adopted by the Council in April 2023, to reduce Western Alaska chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery, would work. Typically, when the Council adopts a Purpose and Need statement and set of alternatives, staff analyze the environmental, economic, and social impacts of those alternatives in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and other applicable law. However, the Council stated its intent was for analytical staff to bring back additional information to help the Council determine a reasonable range of alternatives for impact analysis. As such, this Preliminary Review analysis will provide information to assist the Council in determining:

1. The appropriate range of values to be analyzed for a chum salmon PSC limit that would apply to the Bering Sea pollock fishery and how that limit would be allocated among fishery sectors (Alternative 2).
2. The relative feasibility of a Western Alaska chum salmon PSC limit (Alternative 3).
3. The scope and quality of information available to construct an index of Western Alaska chum salmon abundance that could be used to determine years (i.e., years of low abundance) when the Bering Sea pollock fishery would operate with a chum salmon bycatch limit in place.
4. How could additional regulatory provisions in the pollock industry's Incentive Plan Agreements (IPAs) work to a) avoid areas of the southeastern Bering Sea with known high encounter rates of Western Alaska chum salmon and b) provisions to utilize the most refined genetic information available to further prioritize the pollock fishery avoid areas and time with a higher proportion of Western Alaska and Upper/Middle Yukon chum stocks.

After review of the chum salmon bycatch Preliminary Review analysis in October, the Council could choose to modify its Purpose and Need statement and/or the alternatives, request further analysis, and/or initiate dialogue with other management agencies at its own discretion. The Council is not required to take action based on statute and this analysis is not part of a mandated program or allocation review. At this time, Initial Review on this analysis is tentatively scheduled for the April 2024 Council meeting in Anchorage, AK.

Public Comment

Written public comments that have been submitted to the Council are available on the eAgenda.