



B1 Executive Director's Report

October 2021

Action Memo

New Council Member

Ms. Anne Vanderhoeven was recently appointed to a 3-year term on the Council. Ms. Vanderhoeven served on the Advisory Panel from 2010-2015, and again from 2018-2021. Anne started her career as a groundfish fishery observer, was the fisheries quota manager for BBEDC, and is currently the Director of Government Affairs for Arctic Storm Management Group. In addition to having served on several Council committees and the Advisory Panel, Ms. Vanderhoeven is an active member of numerous fishing related organizations. Welcome aboard Anne!

Dr. Balsiger Retiring

Dr. Jim Balsiger, the regional administrator for NOAA Fisheries Alaska Regional Office, has announced his retirement at the end of November. Jim has served in this capacity since May 2000. Prior to his current role, Jim was the Regional Science and Research Director at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center. From February 2008 to 2010, he served as the Acting Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries in Washington, D.C. Dr. Balsiger was recently recognized by NOAA Fisheries Leadership Council for his 47 years of service at NOAA Fisheries.

Dr. Balsiger has a long history of working with the Council, and working on North Pacific fisheries issues. In 1971, he published a groundbreaking paper with Dr. Brian Rothschild on a linear programming model to optimize salmon harvests in Bristol Bay (see: <https://spo.nmfs.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf-content/1971/691/rothschild.pdf>). His 1974 Ph.D. dissertation was "A computer simulation model for the eastern Bering Sea king crab", and he published many other papers on North Pacific fish stocks as a scientist at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center. He was the Chairman of the Gulf of Alaska Plan Team in the 1980s, and served as a member of the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee in the 1990s.

On behalf of the Council, I wish to thank Jim for his 21 years of service as a Council member, and for his many years of hard work to conserve and manage North Pacific marine resources. We wish you all the best in retirement!

Plan Team Nominations

ADF&G has nominated Dr. Philip Joy for full appointment to the BSAI Groundfish Plan Team, filling the vacancy left by Jane Sullivan. Currently he serves as the Marine Fisheries Biometrician in Juneau. Dr. Joy is responsible for assisting with state-wide stock assessments, biometric quality control and data analysis for groundfish fisheries with an emphasis on rockfish and sablefish. In August, Chairman Kinneen made an interim appointment of Dr. Philip Joy to the BSAI Groundfish PT so that he could attend and participate at the September Plan Team meeting.

ADF&G has nominated Ms. Caroline Brown to fill the vacancy left by Dr. Jim Fall on the Social Science Plan Team. Currently, she serves as the Northern Regional Program Manager (since 2017) and Acting Research Director (since December 2020) for the Division of Subsistence. She served as the only social

science representative on the Joint Technical Committee that advises the Yukon River Panel and currently serves as the alternate U.S. Co-Chair of the panel.

ADF&G has nominated Mr. Jared Weems to replace Ben Daly on the Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan Team. Currently, Jared is a Fishery Biologist III in the Shellfish/Groundfish research group in the Westward Region and is finishing a PhD in Fisheries, focusing on blue king crab recruitment limitation in the Bering Sea. He has professional expertise in North Pacific and Arctic marine food web structure and energy transfer as well as marine zooplankton and meroplankton invertebrate taxonomy, biology, and ecology.

The Alaska Fisheries Science Center has nominated Dr. Mike Litzow to the BSAI Crab Plan Team. Dr. Litzow is the NOAA Fisheries Kodiak Lab Director and has served as the Program Manager for the Alaska Fisheries Science Center – Shellfish Assessment Program for the past two years. He oversees the bottom trawl survey and is a collaborator on a variety of research projects on crab movement, life history, and physiology.

Nomination letters and resumes are attached. The SSC will review the nominations and provide a recommendation to the Council.

SSC Nomination

WDFW has nominated Ms. Kathryn Meyer for appointment as the primary WDFW representative on the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Ms. Meyer serves as a Senior Research Scientist in the WDFW Marine Fish Science Unit. Her background and work experience are in groundfish stock assessment, management strategy evaluation, conservation economics and ecosystem process work, primarily in the California Current ecosystem. A nomination letter and resume are attached. Dr. Theresa Tsou, WDFW's current representative on the SSC, will serve as her alternate.

In August, Chairman Kinneen made an interim appointment of Ms. Meyer to the SSC so that she could participate as the WDFW SSC representative at the October meeting. As noted in the SSC Handbook, all prospective SSC members, regardless of whether they are at large or statutory agency appointees, are subject to approval by the Council.

AP Interim Appointment

Chairman Kinneen has made an interim appointment of Ms. Susie Zagorski to fill the AP vacancy left by Anne Vanderhoeven's Council appointment. Ms. Zagorski has a Masters of Science in Environmental Science from APU, and has on-deck experience with the salmon excluder EFP work in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. She currently works as purser aboard the C/P Starbound. She will serve on the AP through December 2021, at which time the Council will review all nominations for AP membership. Note that Ms. Vanderhoeven's AP appointment was through 2023.

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 October meeting comment period was open for 13 days, from September 17 to September 29.

No submitted comments were removed. However, there are 14 submitted comments that have automatically-redacted words as a result of our profanity filter, although in the context in which they are applied in the comments, none of the filtered words appear to be profane or offensive. None of the redacted words affect the ability of the reader to understand the meaning of the comment. We are currently using a generic, free profanity filter from the internet, which is quite comprehensive, and while we can't know exactly what underlying word was redacted, in most cases it is possible to figure out the word. The particular words that were redacted in our 14 comments are the following: kill, killer (as in whales), drunk (driver), crabs, pollock, rape/raping (and pillage), stupid, and sex/sex ratio. Based on this experience, we are looking into paying for a more customizable profanity filter, or we could consider not using one at all.

CCC Updates

The regional fishery management councils Council Coordination Committee (CCC) will hold its next meeting by webinar on October 19-21. The agenda, presentations, and background papers will be posted here: <http://www.fisherycouncils.org/ccc-meetings> The agenda will include updates and discussion of various issues including an outlook on budgets, NS1 technical memorandums, introduced legislation to reauthorize MSA and implement other changes, review implementation of several Executive Orders, approaches to underserved communities, and other issues.

Technical Memorandum on ACLs for Data-limited Stocks

At this meeting, the SSC is reviewing a draft NS1 Technical Memorandum on Managing with Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) for Data-limited stocks in Federal Fisheries Management Plans that was developed through a workgroup that included regional fishery management council staff. The Council will want to send a comment letter to NMFS based on the SSC review.

The draft Tech Memo is here: <https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/2021-05/Draft%20Tech%20Memo%20Data%20Poor%20ACLs%205%204%202021.pdf?null>

Recent Draft Legislation

Two new fishery related bills have been introduced since the June meeting. H.R. 3764, the “Ocean-Based Climate Solutions Act of 2021”, (Rep. Grijalva, D-Arizona) was introduced on June 8, 2021. This bill directs the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to provide for ocean-based climate solutions to reduce carbon emissions and global warming; to make coastal communities more resilient; and to provide for the conservation and restoration of ocean and coastal habitats, biodiversity, and marine mammal and fish populations; and for other purposes. This bill is a scaled back version of the bill introduced in the last Congress and reviewed by the Council’s Legislative Committee in January.

On July 26, 2021, Congressman Huffman (D-California) introduced legislation to reauthorize and amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (H.R. 4690, the “Sustaining America’s Fisheries for the Future Act of 2021”). The legislation was referred to the House Natural Resources Committee and in addition, to the House Agriculture Committee, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned. The legislation is similar to the “discussion draft” of a bill that was circulated in December 2020 and reviewed by the Council’s Legislative Committee in January. Note that the other MSA reauthorization bill introduced in this congress is H.R. 59 “Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act” introduced on January 4, 2021, by Congressman Young (R-Alaska), which is virtually unchanged from the bill introduced in the last Congress.

The eight regional fishery management councils received a request for comments on H.R.4960 from Representative Huffman's staff, with responses requested by September 30. Based on prior review of the draft bill by the Legislative Committee, a comment letter was drafted and reviewed by Legislative Committee members prior to being finalized and submitted by the deadline. The Council's comment letter is attached.

Rural Fisheries Community/Tribal Liaison Activities

The purpose of this update is to convey to the Council the recent and ongoing work carried out by Dr. Haapala under her Rural Fisheries Community/Tribal Liaison (Liaison) responsibilities, and more specifically, that work which is related to the proposed Yukon River community outreach trip and related salmon bycatch concerns.

Recall that the Council recommended that staff work with the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) to schedule an outreach trip to some of their member communities in summer 2021, as it was proposed to the Council during staff tasking at the June 2021 Council meeting. Both Chinook and summer and fall run chum salmon are an extremely important subsistence fishery in Alaska and Canada. Returns of Chinook salmon and summer/fall chum salmon to the Yukon River in recent years, and particularly in 2021, have been very low.

Dr. Haapala coordinated with TCC, Council members and staff to schedule an outreach trip August 3-4, 2021. However, that trip was postponed because of Covid-19 concerns and TCC did not feel the timing was right to have as many Chiefs, communities, Council members and staff involved in this important conversation as they would like. The Council is committed to participating in a Yukon River outreach trip in the future when scheduling permits.

When the summer 2021 Yukon River outreach trip was postponed by TCC, staff committed to **a)** creating a second Bering Sea salmon bycatch flyer using more plain language to reach new audiences; **b)** providing a virtual presentation to TCC communities about the Council, its jurisdiction, salmon bycatch management, and its public comment process; **c)** continuing conversations with TCC about the idea of a winter 2022 summit that would bring together Chiefs, communities, and multi-agency decision-makers like the Council, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Alaska Department of Fish & Game for a more extended conversation on the challenges Yukon River communities are facing right now with respect to salmon; **d)** finally, there was interest from both TCC and involved Council members in pursuing an outreach trip in summer 2022.

On September 14, 2021, Council and NMFS staff participated in the "Yukon River Advocacy Series: Yukon River Fisher Participation in the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council" hosted by the Yukon River Fisheries Drainage Association (YRDFDA). Council staff (Dr. Haapala and Dr. Stram) gave a presentation and answered questions on the Council's jurisdiction, Chinook and chum salmon bycatch management, an overview of how Council meetings work, and how to submit written and oral public comments. Council staff have distributed Council outreach flyers, the Bering Sea salmon bycatch management flyer, and a primer on Bering Sea Chinook salmon bycatch monitoring prepared by FMA staff at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center to organizations connected with the Yukon River. Staff are continuing to work on an updated Bering Sea bycatch flyer.

Other Recent Staff activities

- Jim Armstrong resigned from the Council staff; his last day was August 24. He will be working as a technical advisor with the Freezer Longline Coalition. A vacancy notice has been widely circulated and is posted on the Council's website.

- Steve MacLean has also resigned from Council staff, effective October 15. He will be working for WWF as the program manager for Arctic issues.
- On June 24, David Witherell, Diana Evans, Diana Stram, Bill Tweit, and Simon Kinneen met by teleconference with Government Accountability Office (GAO) analytical teams who are working in response to congressional mandates to provide information on NMFS and regional fishery management council efforts to prepare and adapt fisheries management to the impacts of climate change, and on how NMFS and the councils are preventing overfishing and rebuilding overfished stocks. We prepared a written report in advance of the meeting to assist them with answers to their prepared questions and topics of interest (attached).
- Following the June meeting, David Witherell and Maria Davis spent time responding to a FOIA request from Jim Johnson (DFU) requesting all written communications to or from David relative to 1) the release of small sablefish, 2) BSAI Halibut ABM, and 3) changes to the public comment process. All records were relayed to the FOIA office at AKRO.
- On August 11, Diana Evans, Jim Armstrong, Sarah Marrinan, and Katie Palov (ADF&G) met by teleconference with the Global Trust assessment team to answer questions regarding the AK-RFM Reassessment for the Bristol Bay RKC, EBS Snow crab, St. Matthew Blue KC, EBS Tanner crab and AI Golden King Crab.
- As noted previously, on September 14, Dr. Haapala and Dr. Stram participated in the YRDFA Advocacy Series on participation in the NPFMC process to provide a general overview of the Council process and how to participate as well as provide information on salmon bycatch measures.
- On September 24, Dr. Stram participated in the ICES/PICES WG44 meeting on the Integrated Ecosystem Assessment of the Northern Bering and Chukchi Seas.
- On August 5, Sarah Marrinan listened to the public report briefing on The Use of Limited Access Privilege Programs in Mixed-Use Fisheries, a report of the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine's Ocean Studies Board.

Committee Meetings

- The IFQ Committee met on September 27 to review the IFQ Omnibus amendment package. The committee report will be provided under Agenda Item C-2.
- The Partial Coverage Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee (PCFMAC) met on September 17 to review the Draft 2022 Annual Deployment Plan and receive an update on the Partial Coverage Integrated Analysis Work Plan. The committee report will be provided under Agenda Item C-5.

Meetings this Week

The Council will meet in Executive Session on Wednesday, October 6 after the Council meeting ends for the day to discuss the Plan Team nominations and other administrative matters.

Vacancy Announcement

The Council is seeking to hire a Fishery Analyst to work in the identification and analysis of environmental, social, and economic issues pertaining to fisheries management off Alaska. This person will participate as part of a team of biological, economic, and social analysts from Council staff and from the staffs of other agencies. Details of the announcement can be found here: <https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/MISC/AnalystVacancySeptember2021.pdf>
Applications are due by 5 pm Alaska time, Friday, October 15, 2021.