

February 2023 assessment of Council agenda projects and staffing requirements

In October 2022, NMFS alerted the Council about staffing constraints that would affect regional office staff involvement in the development and implementation of some Council projects. The following table provides an assessment of Council projects with respect to NMFS' priorities, and evaluates to what degree Council staff are reliant on NMFS expertise to respond to Council tasking.

NMFS priorities from October 2022 B reports

- 1) keeping fishing operational and preventing overfishing (inseason mgmt, monitoring programs, specs, halibut mgmt measures), legal mandates (eg rebuilding, FOIA, litigation), emergency rules
- 2) work on FMP and reg amendments, with priority on conservation, legal considerations, Council priorities, and proximity to mandatory deadlines. Rulemaking for final actions higher priority than input on analyses making way through Council process.
If it's not a conservation issue and only affects a small number of participants, likely lower priority

Staff guidance for Council staff tasking discussion

1. For NMFS must do items, business as usual re setting priorities at staff tasking/ planning in 3 meeting outlook
2. For lower priority items:
 - we can continue to be fairly transparent with timing for Council staff-only items
 - caution needed re setting timing for new/batter's box actions that will require rulemaking. Don't want to have to redo analysis with new information if sits too long without rulemaking.
 - unlikely to schedule actions where NMFS early input is critical (eg those with regulatory or implementation nuances)
3. Staff continue to look for sense of Council priorities with respect to big picture themes as well as specific projects
4. Continued expectation that 3-meeting outlook may be more variable than last few years, as we try to capitalize on windows to move projects forward

	Project	Council Meeting Dates	Comments?	
NMFS higher priorities	Support for ongoing Council projects	Specs - groundfish, crab, scallop, halibut	various	
		Cook Inlet salmon (litigation-driven)	Dec-Apr	
		FMP BiOps on ongoing groundfish fisheries	ongoing NMFS project in 2023	
	Council has completed, NMFS is doing rulemaking	Snow crab rebuilding	final in Feb 2023	
		EM Trawl monitoring rulemaking	final in Oct 2022	
		Halibut ABM	final in Dec 2021	PR published 12/9/2022
		BSAI Pcod trawl CV coop (PCTC)	final in Oct 2021	PR published 2/9/2023
		IFQ omnibus	final in April 2022	FR expected to publish by March 2023
		EDR adjustments	final in Feb 2022	FR published 2/6/2023
	Other Council-related items taking NMFS time	ongoing inseason management, monitoring programs support, tribal engagement and consultations		
FOIAs - ABM				
NMFS lower priorities - final actions	Council has taken action, rulemaking not yet started	CGOA rockfish adjustments	final in June 2022	
		Small boat cod	final in Oct 2022	
		RQE fee collection	final in April 2022	
		Area 4 vessel cap interim measures	final in Feb 2023	
NMFS lowest priorities - actions underway	Analyses that don't require rulemaking	BS FEP Climate Change Taskforce work	Apr - ?	continued AFSC involvement critical, but not AKR
		EFH FMP amendments from 5 year review	Feb-Jun?	Summary report in Feb led to FMP amendments (needs some AKR staff work for FMP amendment but not as intensive as rulemaking)
		PSEIS discussion paper	Feb - ?	need direction from Council in Feb, subsequent iterations will require review and involvement from NMFS AKR/ NOAA GC
		BS FEP LKTKS Taskforce work	April - ?	continued AFSC involvement critical, but not AKR
		A80 program and allocation review	Oct	can prepare with limited NMFS involvement
		OECM review	batter's box	workload primarily Council staff
		GOA Pcod sector allocation review	batter's box	likely can do with AKFIN
		BSAI Crab program review	batter's box	likely can do inhouse or in working with AFSC, but industry may be looking for some changes which would involve NMFS down the line
		IFQ program review	batter's box	likely can do inhouse if need be, however NMFS has a list of administrative issues they wanted to fold in
		Analyses that Council staff can	Staff support for Salmon Bycatch Committee work on chum salmon	Apr - ?

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complete but which will require rulemaking	Universal data collection discussion paper	Feb	AKFIN, with Council staff support and consultation with RAM
	AIGKC facility use caps	Jun-Oct (T)	Much work can be done inhouse, some data needs
	Greenland turbot in longline pots	Apr	Final action analysis mostly in house as NMFS input already incorporated
	Area 4 vessel use cap (long term)	batter's box	As currently structured, likely can do inhouse if need be- will need RAM/OLE input. Interim action taken that will last through 2027.
Analyses that need NMFS input before final action	Crab C shares recent participation	Jun-Oct	Mostly needs RAM input, also regulatory input, otherwise can largely do inhouse
	Small sablefish release	Jun - ?	Staff update in June; considerable effort with AFSC assessment authors and observer program to come up with DMRs for sablefish.
	AIGKC start date discussion paper	batter's box	Start date aspect requires collaborative thought w/ NMFS and ADF&G.
	CSP revised allocation	batter's box	Would require active AKR and ADF&G participation
	Pot gear regulation consistency	batter's box	NMFS-led effort, does not involve Council staff