



B1 Executive Director's Report

June 2021

Action Memo

New USCG Commander

On April 23, 2021 Rear Admiral Matthew Bell transferred the command of the Coast Guard's 17th District to Rear Admiral Nathan A. Moore. As the District commander, Admiral Moore will be responsible for all Coast Guard operations throughout Alaska, the North Pacific and the Arctic, which includes protecting life and property, enforcing federal laws and treaties, preserving living marine resources, and promoting national security. A brief biography for Admiral Moore is attached. We thank Admiral Bell for his service on the Council and his 36 years of Coast Guard service, and welcome Admiral Moore to the Council process.

CAPT Jason Brennell and LCDR Jedediah Raskie will continue to serve as the Admiral's designees on the Council.

Craig Cross's Last Meeting

After serving three full terms on the Council, this will be Mr. Cross's last meeting as a Council member. Craig started as an Advisory Panel member starting in January 1996 and served in that capacity until his appointment to the Council in August 2012. He has served as a Council member since then. We all have appreciated Craigs affable manner and his interesting comments and observations, but unless you were paying close attention, you might have missed that he rarely, if ever, made a motion that failed to pass!

Mr. Cross has served as the Council's liaison with the AP, and he has offered his wisdom and advice to all those becoming involved in the process (see pages 18-19 of <https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/resources/MSA40Booklet.pdf>). To summarize, the LESSONS that Mr. Cross has learned along the way – the hard way -- are summarized as follows (his words):

1. Nothing in this process is by accident.
2. It seems you always have to pick a side, even if you don't want to.
3. Not everyone thinks a large catcher processor is cool.
4. It does matter where you live and where your company is based.
5. Fishermen and captains are wise and know a lot, but not everything.
6. Captains and fishermen are right about young fishery biologists.
7. What is a valueless fish today, may be a treasure tomorrow, so treat them as such.
8. It takes 6 votes at the Council.
9. Don't try to show up staff or catch them in a mistake, you will need their help next time.
10. Being earnest, sincere and respectful, will take you a long way in this process.

We wish to thank Craig for his 25 years of service to the North Pacific Council and the wisdom and guidance he has provided in the process. Craig, we will miss you, and we wish you all the best in retirement from the Council - and your upcoming 70.3 mile ironman triathlon!

Staci MacCorkles's Last Meeting

Ms. MacCorkle has been actively participating as a Council member from the State Department for a few years, and I understand that she will be departing in August to serve on her next Foreign Service assignment in Pakistan. We hope her successor (Foreign Service Officer David Moore) will be able to be provide the same level of consistent attendance and participation. Staci, I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for your service on the Council, and we wish you all the best on your next assignment!

Plan Team Nomination

ADF&G has nominated Mr. Andrew Olson for appointment to the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Plan Team. Currently he serves as the Southeast Regional Groundfish-Shellfish Coordinator for ADF&G. Mr. Olson is responsible for supervising all groundfish research in the Southeast Region and he has served as the principal investigator on Demersal Shelf Rockfish and Southeast sablefish stock assessment surveys. A nomination letter and resume are attached. The SSC will review the nomination and provide a recommendation to the Council.

IFQ Amendment Summaries

Ms. Angela Forristall, the Alaska Sea Grant fellow on Council staff, has developed a regulatory amendment summary booklet for the halibut and sablefish IFQ program similar to those previously published by the Council for the GOA and BSAI FMP amendments. The booklet provides an overview of the IFQ program and outlines each regulatory amendment made to the program since its inception. Each summary provides an overview of the purpose and need, analysis, regulation, and results of each action. These summaries are intended to be a resource for IFQ participants, Council, advisory body and Agency members, and the public. It is in the process of final review, and I will alert you all when it gets posted to our website.

Written Comment Policy

The Council has created increased opportunity to provide public input in the past two years and is in the process of implementing additional recommendations to improve rural community engagement stemming from the Community Engagement Committee in February 2021. Our new staff Rural Fishing Community and Tribal Liaison (Dr. Kate Haapala) and I will have ongoing communication with the Council on how those recommendations are being implemented.

In addition, I have fielded numerous calls, interviews, and emails from reporters and public inquiring about the Council's April decision to establish a written policy on written comments, which is based on the Department of Commerce's existing policy. My written response to a National Fisherman article can be found here: <https://www.nationalfisherman.com/alaska/council-responds-on-public-comment-changes>

The staff has further fleshed out the policy details and procedures to implement the policy for the June meeting. The public was notified of the policy prior to submitting written comments. The formal policy as currently drafted can be found here: <https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/MISC/CommentPolicy.pdf>

To be clear, the purpose of the policy is to increase public participation while protecting privacy and following conventional standards. Under the policy, the staff would not remove any written comments unless they very obviously did not meet the policy. Now that the public is aware of the policy when they comment, and a profanity filter has been applied, I would anticipate removal of any comment to continue to be a very rare occurrence. There seems to be concern from the public about what types of comments would be removed (other than profanity or vulgar language), so I have provided a few examples to help describe what types of comments could be deemed unacceptable under the DOC and Council policy:

- personal attacks – “Mr. So-and-so is an ugly ignorant monster.”
- offensive terms targeting protected classes – Offensive terms based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability; including hate speech that expresses prejudice against a particular group, particularly on the basis of race, religion, or sexual orientation.
- promoting service or products – “Buy fishing lures at calvinsstupendusfishingtackleshop.com!”
- non-fisheries-related (off topic) – Someone accidentally submitted a personal email, credit card number, or social security number.
- unsupported accusations – (staff interprets this to be personal in nature): “Mr. So-and-so likely broke the law by doing X.”

At every meeting, staff would report 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. I expect that implementation of this policy will continue to evolve over time with improvements in technology, experience with implementation, and further public comment and Council direction.

The June meeting comment period was open for 15 days, closing on COB May 26.

E.O. 14008 Update

On May 6, the White House publicly released a preliminary report, Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful, which is available here: <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/report-conserving-and-restoring-america-the-beautiful-2021.pdf>

As directed by President Biden’s Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, the report provides recommendations on how the United States should achieve the goal of conserving at least 30 percent of our lands and waters by 2030. The report recommends broad principles for engaging stakeholders in an inclusive and locally led effort to conserve and restore U.S. lands and waters. The Administration envisions this report as the first step in an ongoing dialogue, engagement, and collaboration with local, state, and tribal governments, as well as a range of diverse stakeholders.

The report notes that “As a long-standing global leader in conservation, the U.S. is among the top four countries in the world in the amount of remaining intact natural lands, has already established marine protected areas in approximately one quarter of U.S. waters, has a strong stewardship tradition on working lands among ranchers, farmers, and forest owners, and has been a pioneer in the management of fish and wildlife.”

The report also notes that “To develop and track a clear baseline of information on lands and waters that have already been conserved or restored, the U.S. Government should establish an interagency working group of experts to build an American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas. The Atlas would be an accessible, updated, and comprehensive tool through which to measure the progress of conservation,

stewardship, and restoration efforts across the United States in a manner that reflects the goals and principles outlined in this report.

The report notes various databases, including the NOAA's Restoration Atlas and Marine Protected Areas Inventory, could be used in the Atlas. "The American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas would aggregate information from these databases and others, supplement this information with information from the States, Tribes, public, stakeholders, and scientists, and provide a baseline assessment of how much land, ocean, and other waters in the U.S. are currently conserved or restored, including, but not necessarily limited to:

- The contributions of farmers, ranchers, forest owners, and private landowners through effective and voluntary conservation measures;
- The contributions of Fishery Management Councils and their conservation measures under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; and
- The existing protections and designations on lands and waters across Federal, State, local, Tribal, and private lands and waters across the nation.

The report also notes that "... the United States boasts one of the most dynamic and innovative wild-capture fishery management systems in the world under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act. The management measures that are available to fisheries management authorities, such as gear-based restrictions and habitat-based measures, could be applied to achieve improved conservation outcomes that benefit the health of fisheries as well as other marine species and habitats. NOAA should work closely with regional fishery management councils to identify areas or networks of areas where their fisheries management efforts would support long-term conservation goals.

On a related note, I listened to an interesting webinar on MPAs relative to the E.O., the Protected Seas database, and development of an MPA Guide, can be found here:

<https://www.openchannels.org/webinars/2021/planning-30x30-us-assessing-protection-us-waters>

NOAA Fisheries leadership expressed an interest in having a discussion with the Councils on the principles and recommendations in the report, and how best to achieve the 30-percent goal, including through Fishery Management Council actions, and a presentation from NOAA Fisheries leadership will be provided at the start of the Council meeting.

CCC Meeting

The regional fishery management councils Council Coordination Committee (CCC) held its annual meeting remotely on May 18-20, 2021. The agenda, presentations, and background papers can be found here: <http://www.fisherycouncils.org/ccc-meetings> The agenda includes updates and discussion of various issues including an outlook on fisheries surveys, MSA legislation, implementation of Executive Order 14008, offshore wind development, annual catch limits (ACLs) for data limited stocks, efforts to increase marketing and seafood competitiveness, and a review of draft procedural directives on EM confidentiality and financial disclosure and recusals.

The CCC meeting issues affecting the North Pacific Council included:

- Establishment of a new Subcommittee on Area-based Management to assist the CCC in working through the 30 by 30 initiative and providing advice to NOAA Fisheries.
- Overview of a Draft Technical Memorandum on managing ACLs for data-limited stocks, with comments due on October 1. However NMFS has stated that they will accept our comments after the deadline as necessary to accommodate the SSC/Council meetings in October.
- Overview of a Procedural Directive on applying information law to electronic monitoring data, and establish requirements for EM programs to address data confidentiality, FOIA, and Federal records. A draft will be release in early June with comments due July 15. We requested an extension of the comment period until October. You will hear more about this in the FMAC report.
- Overview of Policy and Procedural Directives on guidance for financial disclosures and recusals. Members of the CCC provided initial feedback and comments are due July 5.
- The Scientific Subcommittee meeting, hosted by our Council, will be postponed until 2022 so that it can be held in-person.
- The first Council Member Ongoing Development (CMOD) workshop will be held November 2-3, 2021 in Denver, CO with a focus on ecosystem-based fisheries management. Each Council will send 3 Council members and 1 staff person to attend.

I will distribute the written summary report of the CCC meeting when completed and released by the CCC Council Chair (PFMC).

Recent Staff activities

- Several staff (Witherell, Cleaver, MacLean) attended the webinar on "The 'Why' Behind 30x30: The State of the Science on Marine Protected Area Benefits"- available online here: <https://www.openchannels.org/webinars/2021/why-behind-30x30-state-science-marine-protected-area-benefits>
- Several staff (Cleaver, Armstrong, MacLean, Stram) attended the Pacific Sablefish Transboundary Assessment Team (PSTAT) virtual workshop on April 27-28, 2021, to learn more about their sablefish management strategy evaluation project and to provide feedback on the management strategy evaluation (MSE) goals and objectives.
- Dr. Haapala and Diana Evans attended the Kawerak Knowledge and Research Sovereignty Workshop, May 20-21.

Committee Meetings

The Partial Coverage Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee (PCFMAC) met on April 19 to discuss NFWF proposals, receive updates on partial coverage cost efficiency projects and 2022 ADP and future partial coverage funding. The committee report will be provided under Agenda Item C-1.

The Ecosystem Committee met on April 20 to receive updates on the Ecosystem Workshop proposal, the EFH 5-year review, the Council's April action on Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs), and discuss potential topics for the committee to review in the coming year. The Committee met again on May 27 to discuss the BS FEP report, ecosystem workshop planning, and upcoming ecosystem committee meeting schedules. The committee report will be provided under Agenda Item E-1.

The Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee (FMAC) met May 17 to discuss the abbreviated 2020 observer annual report, the analytical workplan for partial coverage cost efficiencies, federal record status of PSMFC data review, the Alaska region implementation plan, EM innovation, and monitoring committee structure. The committee report will be provided under Agenda Item C-1.

The Trawl EM Committee met on May 21 to discuss EM cost metrics, the 2021 Trawl Electronic Monitoring (EM) program update, and development of draft alternatives for regulated Trawl EM program. The committee report will be provided under Agenda Item C-2.

Meetings this Week

The Council will meet in Executive Session on Wednesday, June 9 after the Council meeting ends to discuss administrative matters.