

New England Fishery Management

Council and Advisory Body Meeting Communication Protocol Topics

1. Pre-meeting

A. Publicizing - What is provided (press release, announcements, etc.)? How is it provided (email, snail mail, etc.)? Who are the recipients (e.g., distribution lists)? We announce in a notice(s) sent via both snail and email 3 weeks prior to a Council or AP meeting. They are distributed to anyone who signs up, mostly industry and ENGOs, but press is also included. A number of media reps often call for a briefing about any hot button issues prior to meetings of the full Council.

B. Communication with Council/Committee members

NEFMC staff communicates with his/her committee chair as the agenda is developed for each Council meeting. It's similar for AP meetings. Staff and species' committee chairs also always discuss their agenda items and materials prior to any Council meeting.

Additionally, the ED meets with each staffer (plus deputy and PAO if available) who will be preparing documents, presenting PPTs etc. on the topics to be addressed at Council meetings. The results of AP meetings are communicated at the next meeting of the appropriate species' committees and ultimately to the full Council. Council staff handles the documentation and communication of their meetings results.

C. Document distribution

All relevant documents are posted on our website prior to AP and Council meetings. Late documents are provided at the meetings. This includes correspondence from NOAA, public comments, etc. Flash drives or discs are provided to Council members at their meetings. A few still want paper!

Discs and paper copies of decision-related documents are available on a first come first served basis for the public on our hand-out table.

D. Coordination with other local/federal agencies and NGOs

Not sure what this means. We often have presentations from NOAA Fisheries or other agency types. They are asked to request time on the agenda from our ED or PAO before we draft the agenda or before it is finalized in order to provide adequate time.

We generally accommodate NOAA, Coast Guard, etc, in other words out "partners," but not necessarily anyone who simply wants to be heard offering the next bright idea. Not sure this answers the question though.

2. During the Meeting

A. What technology/copy room/office is available and for whom?

The NEMFC uses hotel business facilities for copying. All presenters are requested to provide any presentations prior to the meeting so that they can be loaded on Council laptops. If they make the 3-day in advance deadline, we also will copy them, as well as any accompanying documents.

If they do not provide the materials in advance, the NEFMC asks them to bring copies for the audience and Council. It's usually about 40- 50 copies, depending on the interest in the topic. Anyone who arrives at a Council meeting with documents to be passed out is responsible for their own copying and must check in with staff if they want their material distributed to ur members at the meeting. We discourage this and generally include late materials in our weekly email to Council members instead.

- B. Broadcasting (audio/video, webinar, etc.) including voting issues and other policy issues.

The NEFMC broadcasts via GoToWebinar all full Council and SSC meetings. All discussions are included in the broadcast, plus PPTs, and any motions as well as the ensuing Council votes. Species committees and AP meetings are broadcast only if there is extra staff available to monitor the webinar.

- C. Public interaction during meeting - How is public allowed to comment (e.g., via teleconference)? Are there specific timeframe(s) for public comment?

Comments are taken after Council discussion of each major topic, occasionally more than once if the Council discussion is protracted and the issues are controversial.

There is a general time limit of 3 minutes for public comments during which we use a light apparatus (green, yellow, red).

There is also a public comment period that last anywhere frpm 15-30 minutes on every Council meeting agenda to allow the public to identify Council-related issues that are not listed on the formal meeting agenda. The NEFMC does not ask the public to comment via the webinar.

- D. Distribution of materials during meeting and what is the medium (paper handouts, website uploads, etc.)?

See 1C. We generally do not distribute materials during our meetings, but will do so during breaks, and only if the documents are necessary to the discussions or presentations listed on Council meeting agenda. No miscellaneous stuff.

- E. How press is handled during meeting - Request for Interviews; Guidelines on cameras and microphones.

All photographic devices as well as microphones are allowed. The NEFMC has also purchased relatively inexpensive equipment to allow press mics to be plugged into our sound system. We only ask anyone taking photos or filming to avoid becoming obtrusive to our Council members. This means the must stand back from members chairs while during the meeting and not hang on top of them. We also do not allow press to sit in the middle of our U-shaped table/seating arrangement for any reason given that it can be an impediment to discussions because of the distraction.

3. Post meeting

- A. Getting meeting decisions out to the public (newsletters, website, social media, etc.)
Some press releases are prepared during Council meetings, but more commonly issues are summarized after the meeting in the form of a newsletter. This often takes several days. In the interim, motions and recordings are published on our website as soon as possible following the meetings, usually within a day or two. Anyone requesting the draft motions is accommodated, but must acknowledge that caveat.
- B. Press releases – who drafts, how distributed, when?
PAO drafts and ED and Chair review prior to distribution.
- C. Meeting materials – What is stored and where (e.g., documents, actions, minutes, audio/video); Public access; Searchable
All available online, minus video, which we do not offer at this time.

4. Areas to improve

- A. Areas your Council is looking for solutions: information distribution, broadcasting meetings, teleconferencing?
I would like to see people ask questions via our webinar. To be fair, sort of, we did try this for some time and it was a less than productive exercise.
- B. Finish this sentence: I wish our Council had the ability, or more correctly the time to prepare/write our documents in plain English in order to make them more accessible to everyday people! It does not seem possible given the timeframes required to address the frequent management changes. And I have made little progress in raising the issue.