



Community Engagement Committee

Report

October 1, 2019 Homer, AK

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Community Engagement Committee met to review and discuss methods and strategies for Council engagement with rural and Alaska Native communities.

Committee Members in attendance:

Becca Robbins Gisclair
Mellisa Heflin
Jennifer Hooper (ph)
Robert Keith

Simon Kinneen (Chair)
Steve Maclean, STAFF
Marissa Mercurieff
Tom Panamaroff

Theresa Peterson
Rob Sanderson (ph)

Members absent: Nicole Kimball

Others in attendance:

Sally Bibb (ph)
Sara Cleaver
Raychelle Daniel
Maria Davis
Lauren Divine (ph)

Baine Etherton
Diana Evans
Bob Foy
Kate Haapala
Rebecca Skinner

Richard Slats
David Witherell
Brenden Raymond-Yakoubian
Julie Raymond-Yakoubian

The Community Engagement Committee (CEC) met in Homer, AK on October 1, 2019 to continue their work to review existing Council engagement strategies and practices to make recommendations for new strategies to improve Council engagement with rural and Alaska Native communities. The CEC agenda and materials are posted online at the Council's [agenda portal](#). The CEC will continue to meet and develop recommendations for the Council. Committee recommendations will be delivered to the Council at the conclusion of the process. Committee reports are considered progress reports until the final recommendations are drafted and presented.

Opportunity for public comment was provided at multiple points during the meeting. Public comment was provided by Mr. Richard Slats, representing Bering Sea Elders Group.

New Council Activities

Ms. Maria Davis presented a summary of activities recommended by the CEC that the Council has already implemented to improve engagement and awareness of the Council. Ms. Davis informed the CEC that despite numerous attempts, the Council has not been able to create a Council Facebook profile. New security actions implemented by Facebook make creating an organizational page extremely onerous. The CEC stated that they were surprised and disappointed by the barriers to establishing a Council Facebook profile, but were confident that Council staff had expended all reasonable efforts to create a profile.

Ms. Davis also displayed and described the flyers and other materials prepared for the Introduction to the Council informational session that was held on the evening of Tuesday, October 1, 2019, the [brief](#)

[summary of agenda items](#) posted on the Council agenda, and the Council meeting press release. CEC members were very pleased with all the materials, and thought they were useful outreach tools. The Committee stated that the brevity of the agenda descriptions is particularly appreciated, and suggested other ways to increase the utility of the brief summaries, including linking the analytical documents, identifying where (SSC, AP, Council) the issue would be addressed, and listing the staff member responsible for the agenda topic, and a description of some terms.

Mr. Steve MacLean announced that Council members, Council staff, and NMFS staff and other Council partners will be receiving cultural awareness training in November and December. The CEC earlier recommended that cultural awareness training would be useful to provide a baseline of understanding of rural and Alaska Native cultures and may make engaging with rural and Alaska Native stakeholders more effective. The CEC requested that Council staff provide a report to the committee at the next meeting.

NMFS AKR Consultation Policies and Procedures

Ms. Sally Bibb (NMFS AKR) provided a summary of tribal consultation policies and procedures in place at NMFS Alaska Region. The responsibility for consultation lies with NMFS, not the Council. The agency sends notice to Tribes about actions that may be of interest to the Tribes. The CEC had a broad conversation about NMFS tribal consultation responsibilities and practices, and about how the Council fits into the agency's tribal consultation responsibilities. Some CEC members regularly request tribal consultations from agencies in their current jobs and have experience with those requests at either the national or regional level. Many on the committee noted the importance of early notice. Some questioned whether the action for which consultation takes place is NMFS approval of Council recommendations, or Council discussions and decisions. Ms. Bibb described processes to bring input from consultations to Council process via several processes, either during or after Council action. Consultations that occur during Council action are brought to the Council by the Regional Administrator's role as a Council member. When consultations are requested after the Council takes final action, the agency is primarily in "listening mode" to identify whether something is raised that would result in NMFS referring action back to the Council or disapproving the Council action.

Mr. Richard Slats provided public testimony.

After public testimony committee members noted that Tribes receive many letters from Federal agencies about issues on which they may wish to request consultation. The complexity of some letters and notices can make it difficult to discern what information is relevant for each Tribe. Committee members also noted that there are differences between regional organizations (or corporations in Alaska) and Tribes, and information needs to be sent to the appropriate organization. The committee was also interested in how NMFS determines what information "may be of interest" to tribal organizations. Ms. Bibb indicated that experience and historical knowledge of what has been important in the past plays a large part in making that determination.

CEC Discussion

The committee had a broad discussion concerning three main topics:

- ideas to improve understanding of the Council's purpose and objectives, and the Council's understanding of rural and Alaska Native issues and concerns
- ways to make Council information more available to rural and Alaska Native communities
- goals and methods for direct engagement by Council members and staff with rural and Alaska Native communities.

Although these were separate agenda topics on the published agenda, the committee determined it would be easier and more useful to discuss these issues together. This report does not fully describe the suggestions from the committee because they were considered "draft" ideas and were not developed

further to assess the feasibility or utility of each. Rather, the CEC will review a draft report prepared by staff that provides a full list of recommendations from the committee and present their work product to the Council in a full report, expected in June 2020.

Mr. Tom Panamaroff and Theresa Peterson presented a list of “[barriers to participation](#)” in Council meetings from the Kodiak Rural Regional Leadership Forum. Barriers that were identified by the Forum participants included: logistical constraints to travel, local knowledge of issues, and discomfort in speaking at an unfamiliar and formal venue. Forum attendees also suggested some remedies for those barriers, some of which could be implemented by the Council.

The committee discussed several times that engagement and communication must be a “two-way street”, and that effective engagement requires participation by rural and Alaska Native communities. The committee considered opportunities for rural and Alaska Native organizations and communities that have not typically participated to become involved in the Council process. The committee suggested that a travel scholarship to support rural participation may be possible. It was noted that there are some organizations that are already working to engage young fishermen in the Council process, and those organizations may provide for or support travel scholarships to encourage participation by rural or Alaska Native representatives. It was also noted that part of the purpose of the committee is to make recommendations to improve Council member engagement with communities, and that objective should not be lost.

The committee discussed opportunities for Council members to visit rural and Alaska Native communities that do not have the logistics to host a full Council meeting. The committee expressed that Council members (and staff) should visit both hub communities and smaller villages around the hubs, as was also suggested in the minutes from the June 2019 meeting. It was suggested that it would be a good opportunity for Council members and staff to provide the introduction to the Council process presentation.

The committee discussed additional roles for Council staff, or potential new staff positions to provide a “tribal liaison” to act as a single point of contact for Tribes, Alaska Native, and rural communities to communicate with the Council. Many Tribes are already familiar with tribal liaisons at Federal agencies and the committee suggested it would be an efficient way for the Tribes to communicate with the Council.

The Committee discussed other opportunities for Tribes to communicate directly with the Council. These include:

- “tribal reports”, similar to the co-op reports that are presented to the Council annually,
- a standing tribal advisory committee that could serve as a less formal venue for Tribes and rural communities to present their concerns and learn about Council actions and provide feedback on the Council’s engagement efforts,
- and modification of testimony procedures at the Council to ease potential discomfort with testifying.

However, some committee members noted that one objective of the community engagement committee is to improve opportunities for rural and Alaska Native communities to engage directly with the Council, and adding another layer (e.g., tribal advisory committee) could further remove tribal and rural information from the Council.

The committee discussed some other organizations that work directly with Tribes, including the State of Alaska Boards of Fish and Game, and Federal Subsistence Board. The committee requested that staff reach out to the State and Federal Subsistence Board about how those organizations interact with Tribes and regions.

The committee recommended that their next meeting be held in conjunction with the December Council meeting, and suggested Monday, December 2 as their preferred date.