

5 Compensation, ~~and travel,~~ and virtual meetings

5.1 Compensation

From the Council's SOPPs: SSC members shall serve without compensation, except that (subject to the availability of appropriations), a stipend may be paid to members of the SSC who are not employed by the Federal government or a state marine fisheries agency.⁴

The Council's compensation policy for SSC members is as follows:

- The current rate for SSC stipends is ~~\$250~~300.00 per day.
- Compensation is limited to attendance at formal meetings of the SSC (actual meeting days), or to the Chair, Vice-Chair, or designee while officially finalizing⁵ and reporting SSC minutes during the course of a Council meeting.
- Compensation may be paid on a per day basis whether attendance was in excess of eight hours a day or less than eight hours a day.
- "Homework" time in preparation for any meeting, or attendance of any meeting other than those specified above, is not compensable nor is travel time to or from such meetings.
- Stipend payments are subject to annual tax reporting through Form 1099/1096. All new SSC members are required to submit signed form W-9 to the Finance Officer prior to receiving any compensation.

5.2 Travel

From the Council's SOPPs⁶: SSC members who are not federal employees will be reimbursed for paid travel expenses incurred in the performing of Council their duties, including transportation, room, meals, and incidental travel expenses, at per diem limits established by the federal government for the applicable geographic locale in accordance with applicable law and Council travel policy. Claims of reimbursement are to be submitted on specified forms to the Finance Officer within 30 days following completion of travel.

SSC members will be reimbursed for travel expenses when attending SSC meetings in accordance with applicable law and Council policy. ~~The Council no longer reimburses actual travel expenses, but rather uses per diem limits as described below.~~ The Council is not authorized to reimburse expenses for members of the committee who are employed by the Federal government.

Hotel Reservations

Reservations for the hotel should be made under the Council room block, in advance of each meeting. The Council's travel coordinator will email details, and members are asked to make reservations accordingly. These rooms are part of a contract for the whole meeting, and to meet our room block obligations, SSC members are expected to stay at the Council hotel.

Airline Reservations

All airfares must be booked as coach class, and economy fares are preferred and encouraged when available. There are many coach airfare options, please book your airfare to result in the best economic value. We understand that flexibility is necessary to engage effectively in the Council process. Therefore, you do not have to buy the cheapest ticket available, but rarely is it necessary to purchase the most

⁴ as defined in 50 CFR 600.134

⁵ In general, compensation for finalizing minutes will be limited to 1 day per meeting in excess of actual meeting days, plus days on which an SSC report is provided to the Council, unless prior authorization is granted by the Executive Director.

⁶ Language in the SOPPs states that SSC members will be paid actual travel expenses, but this policy has been revised by the Council and SOPPs are being updated to reflect accordingly.

Complete meeting materials since 2013, and some earlier documents, are available in the [meeting archive](#) on the website, along with the Council newsletter that reports on Council actions at each meeting. There is also a specific archive of all meeting minutes, including [SSC reports](#).

Our website also provides information about the current composition of the [Council](#), [AP](#), and [SSC](#), together with a list of [NPFMC Committees](#) and membership and a list of Council [staff](#). Collectively, along with long-term stakeholders, you will hear this group referred to as the Council ‘family.’

Fishery management plans

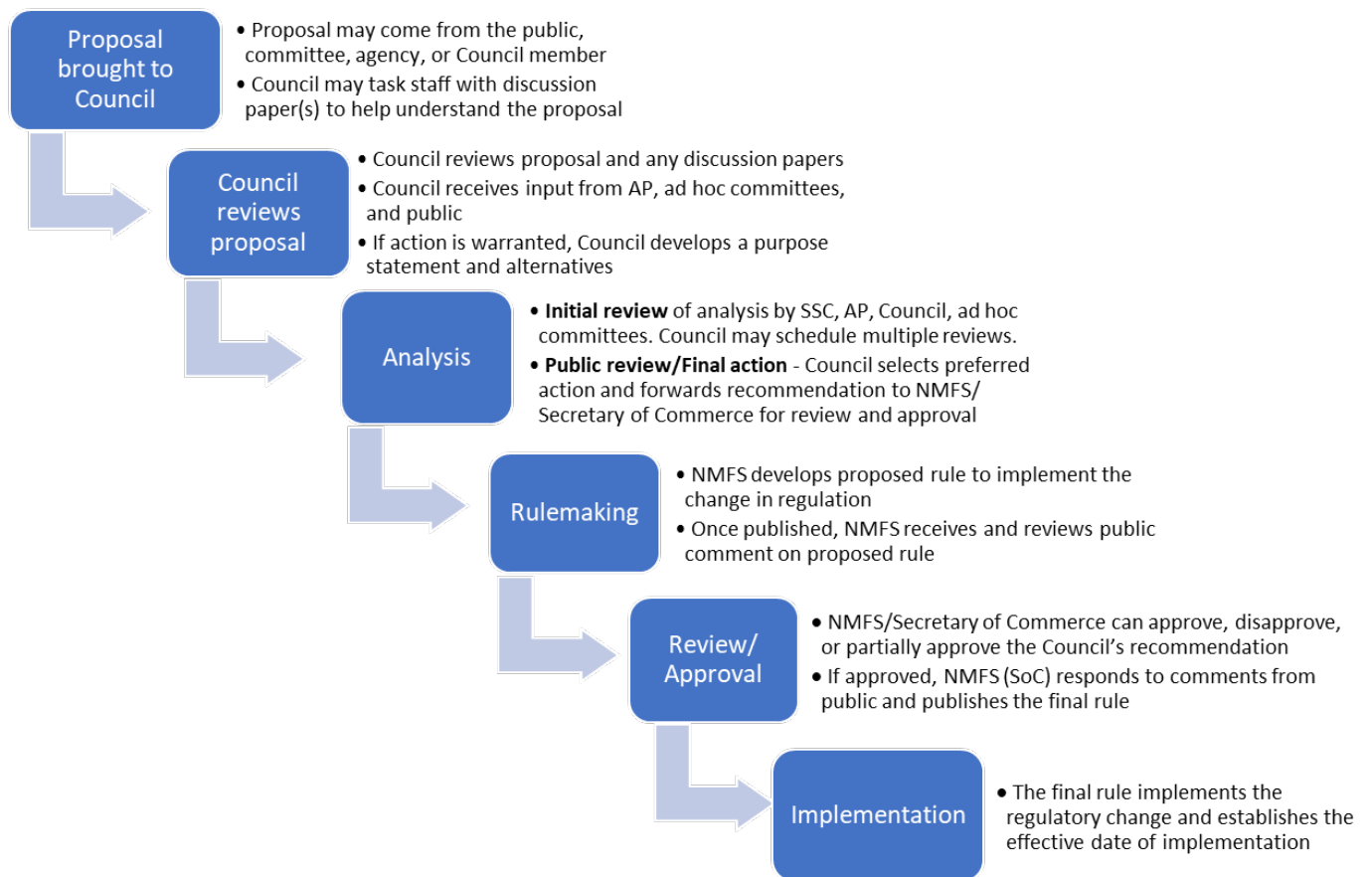
The Council has prepared and implemented six FMPs for fisheries off Alaska, described below. The Council spends much of its time on amendments to the groundfish FMPs, which have each been amended more than one hundred times. Summary reports provide an overview of the amendments for the BSAI Groundfish FMP and the GOA Groundfish FMP. Similar reports are being developed for the BSAI Crab FMP and the IFQ program.

- Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish FMP: this FMP includes all species of groundfish (pollock, cod, flatfish, sablefish, rockfish, etc.) and management measures for vessels using trawl, longline, pot, and jig gear. Inseason management of these fisheries is conducted by NMFS in Juneau.
- Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP: The GOA groundfish FMP also includes the major groundfish target species except for a few that are management by the State of Alaska. Many management measures mirror the BSAI groundfish FMP.
- Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crab FMP: This FMP includes all species and fisheries for king and Tanner crab (red, blue, and brown king crab, Tanner crab, and snow crab). Inseason management of these fisheries is provided by ADF&G in Kodiak.
- Alaska Scallop FMP: This FMP was developed to control fishing effort in the weathervane scallop fishery. Only 9 vessels are permitted under a license limitation program. Inseason management of the fishery is provided by ADF&G in Kodiak.
- Alaska Salmon FMP: The Salmon FMP was developed to prohibit fishing for salmon in the EEZ except by a limited number of vessels using troll gear in Southeast Alaska. The Council is revising the salmon FMP to manage any salmon fishing occurring in the EEZ, beginning with Cook Inlet. All salmon fisheries conducted in State waters are managed by the State of Alaska.
- FMP for Fish Resources of the Arctic Management Area: The FMP includes snow crab, Arctic cod, and saffron cod, and was developed in response to the different and changing ecological conditions of the Arctic which could create conditions leading to commercial fishery development in the U.S. Arctic Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

6.2 Overview of the Council’s Decision-making Process

The procedure for changing Federal fishing regulations follows a standardized process, set forth by a combination of laws, regulations, operational guidelines, policies, as well as adjustments and adaptations developed by the Council to increase efficiency, provide public participation, and produce quality outcomes. As shown in Figure 1, and discussed below, there are several key steps in the process. The SSC plays a very important role in the development of fishery regulations by: 1) ensuring that the environmental and economic analyses used for decision making by the Council are scientifically adequate; and 2) establishing scientifically-based annual catch limits as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act and detailed in the National Standard 1 guidelines.

Figure 1 Council decision-making process



The process follows several distinct steps, as detailed below.

Proposal for Change

Concerns and proposals for change are brought to the Council’s attention by the public through the AP, SSC, or other committee, or directly to the Council via written or oral public comment during the ‘Staff Tasking’ agenda item at each Council meeting. For example, at the SSC meeting during discussion of an agenda item, testimony or deliberations may reveal a scientific conservation issue that the SSC feels should also be addressed, and the SSC may recommend initiating an analysis or discussion paper to explore the issues. It is helpful to the Council if the SSC provides rationale for recommending new scientific issues to be addressed.

Discussion Paper

A discussion paper is frequently prepared by staff as a first step to flesh out the scope of the problem identified, and discuss issues that may be of concern in the development of alternatives. For very complex issues, several discussion papers may be necessary to explore the full scope of an issue before reasonable alternatives can be developed. For relatively simple changes, where the problem and alternatives are self-evident, a discussion paper may not be necessary, and the issue can go straight to analysis, even without developing a problem statement and range of alternatives. The SSC does not normally review issues at the discussion paper stage, unless they specifically relate to scientific matters.

Research priorities

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council's research priorities cover a wide range of topics and are organized and managed within a publicly accessible [database](#). Ranking of research topics is done using four priority categories: *Critical ongoing monitoring*, *Urgent*, *Important (near term)*, and *Strategic (future needs)*. These priority categories have specific [definitions](#) that emphasize the correspondence of research to the Council's time horizon of management concerns. In accordance with Council procedures, the SSC and Council review research priorities each year at the Council's June meeting. Prior to Council review, the Council's Plan Teams review existing research priorities and make recommendations for modifications or additions, as needed. Following the June meeting, the updated five-year research priorities are provided to NMFS as well as research and funding entities.

Over the last several years, the SSC has been working to improve its research priorities process in order to streamline the database of research topics into a more digestible format. It is the role of the SSC to provide prioritize research needs for North Pacific fisheries and recommend priorities to the Council.

Fishery Ecosystem Plans

The Council has also adopted Fishery Ecosystem Plans (FEPs) for some of its ecosystem areas. These are Council documents that are not actionable, like a Fishery Management Plan, but rather are used to inform Council policy options and associated opportunities, risks, and tradeoffs affecting FMP species, communities, and the broader ecosystem in a systematic manner. Under the overarching guidance of the Council's Ecosystem Approach policy, the Council's FEP sets goals and objectives for the ecosystem that direct the process by which the Council should manage fisheries, monitor the ecosystem, and prioritize new research projects. The Council has established a Bering Sea FEP [team](#) to provide advice about how the Council should use the Bering Sea FEP framework to achieve objectives.

The SSC provides scientific review of the FEP documents and reports, the recommendations of the FEP team, and analytical methods for projects (action modules) proposed under the FEP framework.

Marine mammal, seabird, habitat status reports

Periodically, the SSC will request to hear status reports on marine mammals and seabirds that interact with the Council-managed fisheries, or habitat research. These reports may not always have a nexus to a specific Council decision, but are an important opportunity for the SSC to stay apprised of the status of populations and ongoing research that is relevant to the SSC's broad objective to provide scientific and technical advice to the Council. The SSC will also review methods used to implement actions relevant to fisheries management which pertain to marine mammal and seabird species, or habitat conservation.

Exempted fishing permits

An exempted fishing permit is a permit issued by the NMFS Alaska Region to allow groundfish fishing activities that would otherwise be prohibited under regulations for groundfish fishing. These permits are issued for limited experimental purposes to support projects that could benefit the groundfish fisheries and the environment. Examples of past projects supported by an EFP include the development of new gear types for an underutilized fishery and development of devices that reduce prohibited species bycatch.

The Regional Administrator is required to consult with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council before issuing an EFP. As such, the SSC has the primary responsibility to review the EFP application, and provide comments to the Council about the utility of the proposed experiment. Depending on the project, the SSC may request that the applicant report back to the SSC on the success, or otherwise, of the experiment once it has been completed.







Plan Team Nominations

The SSC reviews all proposed candidates for the Council's various Plan Teams. The SSC reviews the candidates with respect to their qualifications and how their expertise relates to the requirements of the Plan Team's terms of reference or any other intent for candidacy (for example, if the Council has specifically solicited for a particular expertise to add to the team). The SSC will review these nominations in Executive Session and provide recommendations to the Council in the SSC report.

Most of the Council's Plan Teams have very broad language on membership in their Terms of Reference, but in practice Plan Team members are generally scientists and management staff from state and federal agencies, the IPHC, and university-affiliated scientists. Council staff that coordinate the different Plan Teams are also members of the teams, but the SSC does not typically review Council staff candidates.

Specifically, for the Social Science Planning Team (SSPT), the SSC has articulated additional criteria for evaluating candidacy. The SSC has sought to identify candidates whose affiliations allow independence (i.e., generally speaking are employed by state, federal, or tribal agencies, are academics, or are independent experts), who have had experience and a broad understanding of social systems and issues throughout the North Pacific region, and who have had experience with marine fisheries under federal jurisdiction. The SSC has examined nominees' record of advancing the frontiers of their field, and experience applying qualitative metrics, or local knowledge and traditional knowledge within regulatory processes, as this experience is critical for the nominee to support the SSPT in providing guidance to the SSC and the Council.

6.46.5 Primary Council staff administrative contacts

Council Staff	Person to talk to about...	Contact info
David Witherell, Executive Director 	Council administration Issues of concern Approval of alternate travel procedures in extenuating circumstances	David.witherell@noaa.gov (907) 271-2809
Diana Evans, Deputy Director 	SSC agenda, schedule Release of documents for review before the meeting Coordination of the SSC report presentation to the Council	Diana.evans@noaa.gov (907) 271-2815
Shannon Gleason, Administrative Assistant 	Travel arrangements, including hotel and flight reservations and EasyBiz Financial disclosure forms Submitting the draft SSC report during the meeting, and the final report afterwards	Shannon.gleason@noaa.gov (907) 271-2812
Nicole Schmidt, Finance Officer 	SSC stipend compensation Travel reimbursements, claim forms	Nicole.schmidt@noaa.gov (907) 271-2818
Maria Davis, Communications/ IT Specialist <i>Lead for administrative team</i> 	Council electronic agenda, accessing review documents Technical or communications issues	Maria.davis@noaa.gov (907) 271-2808
Sarah La Belle, Administrative Assistant 	Council meeting email updates, newsletter Council electronic agenda Technical or logistical issues	Sarah.labelle@noaa.gov (907) 271-2505