

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council – May 2018
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)?
- For Council meetings, a press release with the meeting agenda is sent out to our snail mail and email lists about 3 weeks before the meeting. The email list includes about 1,900 contacts and the snail mail list includes about 800. People can subscribe on our website.
 - For SSC meetings, AP, and other meetings, the agenda and meeting information are typically only posted on our website. Some people subscribe to our website calendar via RSS and receive updates that way.
- B. Communication with Council/Committee members
- The ED sends out a draft agenda to Council members for review/comment ~6 weeks in advance. Council staff work directly with Committee chairs to develop agendas for Committee meetings.
 - The ED emails Council members when briefing materials are available online.
 - For AP or Committee meetings, the lead staffer is typically responsible for distributing meeting materials to meeting participants.
- C. Document distribution
- Council Meetings – Briefing materials are posted on meeting pages (www.mafmc.org/briefing) approx. 2 weeks in advance. Hard copy briefing books are mailed to members who choose to receive them (about half). A few printed copies of all materials are available for members of the public at Council meetings.
 - SSC Meetings – Briefing materials are posted on SSC meeting pages (www.mafmc.org/ssc-meetings) as they become available (we aim for at least two weeks ahead of the meeting). No hard copies are sent out.
 - AP and other meetings – Meeting information and materials are posted on meeting pages linked to the Council calendar (www.mafmc.org/council-events).
- D. Coordination with other local/federal agencies and NGOs
- Select federal officials are included on our non-voting member list and receive Council meeting materials and updates. Other state/federal officials and NGO reps are on our email list.
 - Greater Atlantic Regional Office and Northeast Fisheries Science Center provide periodic reports which we include in our briefing materials.
 - For specific fishery issues, the lead Council staffer is responsible for coordinating with their NMFS counterpart(s) to ensure everyone is on the same page prior to the meeting.

2. During the Meeting

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

- None. We will occasionally make copies of documents when necessary, but we generally require documents to be submitted in advance for printing at the Council office.

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

- Council meetings
 - Council meetings are broadcast via webinar using Adobe Connect.
 - Participants are in “listen only” mode so they can hear discussion and view whatever is projected on the screen (presentations, motions, documents, etc.) but can’t interact with the Council or provide comments.
 - We do not provide a telephone-only option for Council meeting webinars, although there is an Adobe smartphone app that users can connect with.
 - Council members must be present to vote.
- SSC Meetings
 - SSC meetings are broadcast via webinar whenever (this is a new development)
 - Remote participation by SSC members is generally not allowed, unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as when weather conditions prevent several members from traveling to a meeting. Staff members from GARFO or NEFSC may be permitted to participate and/or give presentations remotely after review by the Executive Director on a case-by-case basis.
 - Members of the public are in “listen-only” mode and are not able to provide comments or participate in any way.
 - Webinar connection information is posted on the relevant meeting page on the Council website.
- Advisory panel (AP) and Committee meetings may be held in person or by webinar.
 - Remote participation via webinar is generally not allowed during in-person AP and Committee meetings unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as when weather conditions prevent several meeting participants from traveling to a meeting. When practicable, the Council provides listen-only webinar access during in-person AP and Committee meetings. Webinar attendees are able to listen to the meeting discussion but typically are not able to participate in any way.
 - When a meeting is conducted entirely by webinar (i.e. no in-person meeting), members of the public may be given opportunities to provide comments and ask questions as time allows.

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

- Written public comments can be submitted up until a deadline a couple days prior to briefing book mail out. Comments submitted after the briefing book deadline and before the beginning of the meeting must be submitted via an online form.

- Public comments on specific actions (i.e. public hearings or scoping comments) have separate deadlines so that comments can be summarized in the briefing book.
- We have opportunities for public testimony during each agenda item involving a vote. When time allows, the Council will allow public testimony on other agenda items during the meeting.
- During the last day of each meeting there is an opportunity for comments on other issues not addressed by the Council during the meeting.
- We generally don't accept public comments via webinar during Council meetings. This is due in part to the technical/logistical limitations of the webinar/speaker setup at meetings. Occasionally webinar participants will email staff with questions for presenters, which we try to relay when time allows.
- SSC Meetings - Relevant written public comments are provided to SSC members prior to meetings. There are limited opportunities for public comment in person during SSC meetings.

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

- All materials and presentations are posted on the meeting page as soon as they are available.
- We provide some hard copies of all briefing materials for the public.
- Documents not included in the briefing book are posted as supplemental materials on the website. This often includes organizational reports not submitted by the briefing book deadline.

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

- We don't have formal guidelines. Most requests for interviews come to me (Mary), and I will direct to the appropriate staff member. We haven't had any issues with cameras and microphones.

3. Post meeting

A. Getting meeting decisions out to the public (newsletters, website, social media, etc.)

- We usually write one press release about the most important issue or decision from the meeting. This goes out 1-2 days after a meeting. For topics we expect to get a lot of press attention we'll try to get it done on the day of the decision. This is sent to our email list and posted on our website and Twitter.
- The week after the meeting we post a report summarizing the discussion and decisions from the meeting. This usually includes 1-2 paragraphs per major agenda item.
- Motions are posted on the meeting page as soon as they are finalized (a few days after the meeting)

B. Press releases – who drafts, how distributed, when?

- I draft the initial press release and send it to the appropriate staff member(s) for review and revision. Sometimes for more technical issues, the staff lead will write a first draft. The final draft is then sent to the ED for review and approval.
- Press releases are posted in the news section of our website (www.mafmc.org/news, also visible on the home page) and are distributed via our email list and posted on social media.

C. Meeting materials – What is stored and where (e.g., documents, actions, minutes, audio/video); Public access; Searchable

- All meeting materials are publicly available on the web page for each meeting. Items posted include:
 - Summary documents – Agenda, Motions, Meeting Report
 - For each agenda item – Briefing Tab (the compilation of documents posted/distributed for that item in the briefing book prior to the meeting), Supplemental Documents (items distributed after briefing book mail out and during the meeting), Presentations (converted to PDF), and the Webinar Recording
- Copies of everything are stored on the server at the Council office.
- Internally, we manage documents for current meetings on SharePoint so that anyone can access them from the cloud.

4. Areas to improve

A. Areas your Council is looking for solutions: information distribution, broadcasting meetings, teleconferencing?

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B. Finish this sentence: I wish our Council had the ability to do more outreach. With additional staff time and resources, I would like to be able to focus on developing more and better informational materials and reaching a broader audience of stakeholders.