

Council Communications Group

Harrigan Centennial Hall, Eagle Room #7, 330 Harbor Drive, Sitka, AK 99835

May 22-23, 2018 8:30 am – 5 pm

7. Council and advisory body meeting communication protocols: Sylvia WPFMC

How do Councils communicate with advisory bodies? Round table discussion to include what works and what has been problematic regarding:

- **Q&A sessions, public hearings, committee and AP/SSC reports**
- **How is information conveyed to Council**
- **Minority reporting**
- **Protocol for AP and Council meetings via webinar.**

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council has 20 advisory bodies with about 200 advisors total. Some advisors are on more than one committee.

- Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC)
- Four Advisory Panel (AP) subpanels for the American Samoa Archipelago, Hawaii Archipelago, and Mariana Archipelago (Guam and CNMI)
- Two Plan Teams (PT) for pelagic and insular/archipelagic fisheries
- Four Regional Ecosystem Advisory Committees (REACs) for American Samoa, Hawaii and Mariana Archipelago (Guam and CNMI)
- Community Demonstration Project Program (CDPP) AP
- Education Committee
- Fisheries Data Collection and Research Committee (FDCRC)
- Fishing Industry Advisory Committee (FIAC)
- Hawaii Bottomfish Advisory Review Board (BARB)
- Marine Planning and Climate Change Committee (MPCCC)
- Non-Commercial Fisheries Advisory Committee (NCFAC)
- Protected Species Advisory Committee (PSAC)
- Social Science Planning Committee (SSPC)

The Western Pacific FMC convenes approximately 32 meetings annually:

- 3 regular meetings of the Council in March, June and October (two in Hawaii and the third alternately in American Samoa or in both Guam and the CNMI)
- 3 SSC a week before the Council meetings
- 12 AP subpanels before the Council meetings. On occasion, subpanels meet jointly before a Council meeting
- 4 REACs, with timing based on staff travel to the island areas

- 5 Archipelagic and Pelagic Plan Teams, PSAC, MPCCC and SSPC (one each), tied to production of the Council's annual Stock Assessment and Fisheries Evaluation reports
- 3 FDCRC (one for each subpanel)
- 2 FIAC and NCFAC (one each)

The CDPP AP, Hawaii BARB and Education Committee meet as needed. A scholarship selection subcommittee of the Education Committee “meets” annually by email to review scholarship applicants.

Program staff members are assigned as leads for the Council and various advisory bodies:

- Program officer: Council, FIAC, Hawaii BARB, SSPC
- Ecosystem scientist: SSC, Archipelagic PT, FDCRC
- International fisheries coordinator: Pelagic PT
- Fisheries analyst: 4 AP subpanels, 4 REACs, CDPP AP, NCFAC
- Protected species coordinator: PSAC
- Communications officer: Education Committee, MPCCC

Administrative staff members and island coordinators in American Samoa, Guam and the CNMI assist them:

- Travel coordinator/scheduler: airplane and hotel reservations, travel orders, per diem
- Technical assistant: communications (dropbox, google drive) and documents (briefing books, flash drives)
- Island coordinators: coordination with fisheries and fishing industry members; communication support with local and federal agencies based in those island areas

The Western Pacific Region is unique in its communications challenges.

- Time difference from Hawaii to American Samoa is one hour and to Guam and the CNMI is 20 hours (they are on the other side of the dateline).
- Postal mail takes a couple of days to Hawaii neighbor islands and 7 to 10 days to American Samoa, Guam and CNMI. Larger items have to go through customs in American Samoa and CNMI and can go missing, especially desirable items.
- Travel time by air is 6 hours to American Samoa, 8 hours to Guam and 10 hours to CNMI.
- Internet connectivity for conference calls and large files is problematic in American Samoa and the CNMI.

Given these challenges, pre- and post-communications to Council and advisory body members are typically done electronically via email and drop box or google drive. NOAA members can't access drop box from their work emails.

Due to the unreliability and low bandwidth of Internet in American Samoa and the CNMI, if advisory bodies meet by teleconference, video is seldom used and audio is typically by phone with the webex used to share PPTs and documents.

The Council's three regular meetings are available for viewing by the public via webinar, but the meetings themselves are not held by webinar, unless they are emergency meetings or meetings to address a few agenda items.

Council meetings typically have the following agenda items in the order listed:

- Reports and presentations on the various issues under a major agenda section (i.e., Agency Reports, Program Planning and Research, Pelagic and International Fisheries, American Samoa, Hawaii and Pacific Remote Island Areas, Mariana Archipelago (Guam and CNMI), Protected Species, and Administrative Matters)
- Advisory body reports and recommendations, delivered by chair of the advisory body. The last of these is the SSC. There is no minority reporting. Recommendations are typically by consensus as is the island way.
- Standing Committee report and recommendations (if the relevant standing committee met)
- Public comment or public hearing (if related to an initial or final action on a regulatory measure). Interested public can sign up to testify before and during the public comment period. Written statements are copied by staff and provided to Council members if they are submitted about a week before the meeting or if copies are provided to the Council staff at the meeting for distribution. Council members may or may not engage in a Q&A with the public providing comments or testimonies.
- Council discussion and action

Note: The Council agenda includes an agenda item for public comments on issues not on the agenda.

Communication with AP

- The Council AP consists of a chair, vice chair and subpanel chairs (and, in one instance, a subpanel vice chair as well) for each island-based subpanel (American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii, CNMI). The function of the AP is housed in the Council's Statement of Organization Practices and Procedures, which includes the number, makeup and eligibility criteria of the members, length of terms, and appointment of officers.
- Council staff communicates with the AP through the AP subpanel chairs and primarily through email. Council staff previously sent AP members weekly informational mailings on topics of interest to them through Constant Contact but discontinued this as the members were not opening the emails.

- The AP subpanels meet formally three times a year before the Council meeting. The Council publicizes these meetings in the local newspapers, FR Notice, etc. The meetings are held face-to-face. There is no AP webinar protocol because not everyone has access to the Internet. Phone calls are used instead.
- The Council staff starts the agenda for the AP meetings with a basic template that includes Council actions and discussion of AP issues. The AP is supposed to provide the issues they want to discuss and make recommendations on ahead of time.
- The AP subpanel chairs provide their reports and recommendations from their formal meetings to the Council when it meets. There is no minority reporting as recommendations are made by consensus. If the AP members cannot agree, they simply note a discussion about the issue in their report rather than a recommendation. The AP reports and recommendations are available to the public on the Council website.
- The AP subpanel chairs are working on AP guidelines. Council staff plays a large role in logistics for the meeting and drafting the report, but running the meeting and facilitating discussion is up to the subpanel chair.
- APs have informal monthly meeting and their own Face Book pages. Some communicate with each other through WhatsApp.

Public Hearings

- The Council may hold public hearings to provide interested persons an opportunity to be heard with respect to the development of Fishery Ecosystem Plans (FEPs) or plan amendments, and with respect to the administration and implementation of the MSA. The Council uses its judgment regarding when and where such hearings should be held, provided they are held in the particular geographic area concerned. The Council may dedicate a portion of a meeting to a public hearing on FEP issues under consideration at that meeting.
- When a hearing is appropriate, the Council chair designates at least one voting member of the Council to preside. Conduct of the hearing, beyond the stipulation that all persons be afforded an opportunity to present their views and be given a chance for expression, is within the discretion of the hearing official under whatever instructions the Council may wish to provide.
- Timely notices of each hearing that is not part of a Council meeting are published in the Federal Register prior to the hearing. Advance notice is given to the local media with the place and time, providing timely notice prior to assure that all interested parties are made aware of the opportunity to make their views known.
- An accurate record of the participants and their views, obtained by use of a tape recording, typewritten transcript or detailed minutes, are made available to the Council and maintained as part of the Council's administrative record.