

A BRIEF GUIDE TO NPFMC COMMITTEES AND WORKGROUPS

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council operates through an open, publicly-accessible process, that allows for the involvement and input of fishery stakeholders, environmental organizations, Alaska communities, as well as any interested members of public. From time to time, depending on the issues before the Council, advisory groups such as committees or workgroups are appointed by the Council Chair to assist Council decision-making by providing recommendations on specific Council actions, or for gathering and providing information on a subject in focused public meetings in a manner that is outside of typical Council or NMFS staff assignments.

Advisory groups, such as committees and workgroups, provide a specialized and valuable function so that with due consideration of all the information presented to it, the Council can make sound decisions that maximize the benefit and sustainability of Alaska's fishery resources. Public input provides important information in the development of alternatives and insights on the potential impacts of actions to various stakeholders.

COMMITTEES

Standing or ad hoc committees may include members of the Council, as well as a number of knowledgeable members of the public. The composition of committees is determined by the Council on an issue-by-issue basis, and each committee has a well-defined purpose and may have a set of operating rules that include statements about the committee's 1) purpose, 2) membership, and 3) organization – including chairs and vice-chairs, rules of order, meeting frequency, agenda development, and reporting procedures. Because committee meetings are public, notice of a committee meeting must comply with federal noticing rules. Committees may meet during the Council meeting week, but before the Council itself comes to order, or entirely separate from the Council meetings.

WORKGROUPS

Most Council workgroups or interagency working groups consist of Council and Agency staff, and usually have a more analytical function than committees. Workgroups may focus on a very specific issue within a larger Council action. Workgroup products are often specialized documents that are later reviewed by other advisory groups such as committees.

Some workgroups, however, may operate in a more formal manner that is similar to that of Council committees. The Council may define the scope and purpose of any advisory group it creates, what work it will assign the group, who will be assigned to the group, when it will meet, etc. These workgroups operate and provide feedback to the Council in a manner that is consistent with the Council's needs. Because the Council operates within the context of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, in order to be useful, advisory group feedback to the Council must be consistent with Magnuson-Stevens Act. Council and Agency staff are typically assigned to advisory groups as support and to assist in determining Magnuson-Stevens Act consistency of their recommendations.