

CORE PRINCIPLES

GAO Recommendation: The GAO found that the adoption of core principles are the hallmark of any successful public deliberative process and recommended a set of core principles to guide stakeholder participation activities.

NOAA Response: NMFS agrees with this recommendation. The core principles of participation noted by GAO are embodied in the various statutes governing Council and NMFS proceedings. A working group made up of key individuals from within NOAA Fisheries Service headquarters and regional offices, and the Councils refined the core principles listed in this report for application within the context of Council operations.

The Core Principles are:

- Use an open and clearly defined decision-making process;
- Make key information readily available and understandable;
- Actively conduct outreach and soliciting stakeholder input;
- Involve stakeholders early and throughout the decision-making process;
- Foster responsive, interactive communication between stakeholders and decision makers;
- Use formal and informal participation methods; and
- Include all stakeholder interests.