

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Stephanie Madsen, Chair
Chris Oliver, Executive Director



605 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

Telephone (907) 271-2809

Fax (907) 271-2817

Visit our website: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc>

Council Meeting FAQ

With all the papers, people and scheduling, Council meetings can be pretty confusing to those who are new to the process. These are a few answers to the most common questions we receive about the Council and the Council meetings.

"It looks like there is more than one meeting going on. How do I know which one to go to?"

There are three major meetings that make up a typical North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (the SSC) and the Advisory Panel (AP) take up the same agenda the Council does—they just begin two days in advance so they can provide their recommendations to the Council. The SSC is made up of scientists and economists and the AP's membership covers a variety of fishing industry sectors as well as conservation groups. Representatives on the SSC, Council, and AP are from Oregon, Washington, and Alaska. The public can comment in each meeting, but usually a person will choose to comment in the AP and repeat his or her comment in the Council meeting.

"How do I know when the item I'm interested in will be discussed?"

The **AGENDA** provides brief information on the items to be discussed, but you will be interested in the **SCHEDULE** which gives the order and a general time items will be discussed in each of the three meetings. Sometimes the Chairperson of each meeting will announce that an issue will be taken at a specific time; usually called "time certain." Otherwise, discussion on an item can run over a specified amount of time, or on occasion, finish early. It is good to view the schedule as sort of a guideline. If you have questions, or have to catch a flight later in the day, you may want to check with a staff member. Usually they have a general idea as to how long an agenda item may continue.

"I want to tell them what I think, I have it written down, and I want to pass it out. What should I do?"

Great! It sounds like you are prepared. If you have something you'd like to hand out to any of the members, **BRING YOUR COPIES WITH YOU** and have your name and date on it. The Council needs at least 25 copies, the AP needs 25 and the SSC need 15. If you are prepared to testify on a specific item, you need to **SIGN UP** for public comment before the agenda item begins, and state who you are representing (yourself, or an organization). The AP, SSC and Council will always have sign-up sheets in the back of the room for each agenda item (The SSC takes public testimony only on scientific issues). The Chair of each meeting will pull this list before the public comment period for the item, and will begin calling names. When your name is called, go to the table. If you have something to hand out, you can give your copies to the secretary seated at the front of the room. **Remember to introduce yourself. Because of time constraints, public comment is limited to 3 minutes for individuals and 6 minutes for groups/organizations.**

"They keep talking about the BOOK. What is that, and how do I get a copy of it?"

Council members, staff, the AP and the SSC receive a copy of the Briefing Book that contains background information, "action memos" which are summaries of the action required, and written public comment on each agenda item. Because of the size of these books and the time required to put them together, they are not available to the general public, but everything in them is put on the table in big stacks out in the hallway. If you sent a written comment before the deadline, it will also be in the books, and in the copies in the hallway.

"How do I find out the results of the meeting? Are the minutes available?"

The AP and the SSC finish their meetings before the Council does, and their minutes are always available once their meetings are completed. A representative from the SSC and the AP use them to give a report to the Council, and copies will be handed out to the public. Since the AP and the SSC are only advisory bodies, their minutes are much more "informal." The Council's minutes are detailed and in some cases provide transcription and are not available until quite a while after the meeting. However, usually a week after the meeting, the Council staff puts together a summary of all the decisions/events that took place. This summary is in a Newsletter format and is available on the website, or can be e-mailed. (If you'd like to get on the Council's e-mail distribution list, contact a member of the staff.) The Newsletter provides a comprehensive summary of a majority of the actions the Council took, and can provide you with contact information for a specific issue, and in some cases direct you to a specific website for detailed information or a motion.

"So the meeting is over, now what?"

If you want to remain involved, make sure the staff has your e-mail address. The agenda and newsletter are quickly distributed that way, and occasionally updates are e-mailed out to the public. Check the Council website for current information—most items are posted there before the meetings. Above all, if you have questions, ask. A staff member can give you a place to start. If you are a member of the commercial fishing community or if your business serves recreational fishers, you may want to get involved. You may not have control over the weather, ocean conditions, or market prices, but if you get involved in the Council process you can have some input into the decisions that affect your business and the conservation and management of the North Pacific resources.