

Council Outreach Workgroup Meeting Report

November 24, 2008

10 am – 4 pm

NPRB conference room
1007 West 3rd Avenue, Suite 100
Anchorage, AK 99501

Workgroup Members Attended: Paula Cullenberg, Duncan Fields, Bob Henrichs, Jennifer Hooper, Eric Olson (Chair), Caleb Pungowiyi

Council staff: Nicole Kimball, Chris Oliver (Executive Director)

Other participants: George Plentikoff, Barbara MacManus

1. Introductions & purpose of the meeting

After introductions among the group, the Chair summarized the purpose of the meeting. This workgroup was formed with the purpose of reviewing a discussion paper on potential approaches to implementing the Council's groundfish policy workplan priority to improve communication and participation with communities and Alaska Native entities. The workgroup was tasked with providing recommendations to the Council on an overall approach to improve upon its existing public process, understanding that there may be ways to better engage with communities and Alaska Native entities on a consistent basis, as well as on projects that may be of specific interest to these stakeholders. The Council approved initiation of this workgroup at its June 2008 meeting.

2. Review Council action to-date & handouts

The workgroup was provided with several documents prior to the meeting, and these were reviewed briefly by Council staff (Nicole Kimball). These documents included:

- A Potential Approach to Implementing the Council's Groundfish Policy Workplan Priority: Increase Alaska Native and Community Consultation (May 2008)
- Chinook Salmon Bycatch Outreach Plan and Outreach Flyer (2008)
- Arctic Fishery Management Plan Outreach Plan and Outreach Flyer (2007)

The purpose was to review the policy approaches that had been presented to the Council at prior meetings, highlighting those that the Council appeared most interested in, and use the suggestions in the May 2008 paper as a starting point for the group's discussion. Review of recent outreach plans (Arctic FMP and Chinook salmon bycatch) also provided some background, such that the workgroup understood recent outreach efforts specific to two ongoing projects. These examples were effectively test projects for the project-specific outreach approaches suggested in the May 2008 discussion paper.

3. Discussion: potential pathway for improving Council outreach & stakeholder participation

The group discussed the potential for a standing Council committee that could provide input to the Council on ways to improve outreach to Alaska Native entities and communities, as well as recommendations on specific Council actions that may warrant a more detailed outreach plan, beyond the

normal Council process. The pros and cons of such a committee were thoroughly addressed. The discussion considered Council budget restraints, broad representational interests, Council staff time, and the importance of community considerations under the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act. After lengthy discussion, the group eventually developed a strong consensus that a standing “Alaska Native and community outreach” committee should be formed by the Council. The committee would operate as any other Council committee (no-host). The primary purpose for the committee would not be to provide the Council with community input on particular actions, but rather to provide the Council with recommendations regarding how to better communicate with Alaska Native groups and communities. Specifically, the workgroup recommended three primary tasks for the committee:

- 1) Advise the Council on how to provide opportunity for better understanding and participation from rural communities and Alaska Native entities (two-way communication).
- 2) Provide advice on which Council actions/issues need a specific outreach plan, and prioritize those issues.
- 3) Facilitate input on the type of community-specific information that should be in Council analyses. The intent is to find ways to improve the community impacts sections of analyses, and to have a focused means to do so on a regular basis. These recommendations may be universal in nature, but would not preclude review of a particular analysis.

The group noted that the membership of such a committee could be very dynamic, in that the committee chairman could request “advisors” to help inform the committee as new issues arise. The primary goal is to have a structured and consistent way to vet issues, even if region-specific, project-specific, or at-large advisories to the committee may be necessary. While the group did not consider specific membership, it agreed that a relatively small committee would likely be the most effective and productive. The workgroup discussed designing a committee that would not exceed nine members, which includes two Council members (Olson and Fields). The workgroup deferred to the Chair to designate committee members, recognizing that the primary goal is to appoint members with appropriate expertise, and that some broad geographic representation would be considered to the extent practicable. The group also discussed the frequency of potential committee meetings, and requested no less than one a year, if current issues warranted a meeting. One member expressed a desire to have meetings as often as quarterly.

Other suggestions relevant to the standing committee recommendation are as follows:

- A specific annual budget should be attached to this effort. Council Executive Director can provide additional information on budget limitations at future meetings. Workgroup members asked about the potential for regional corporations or other entities to fund travel specific to Council outreach plans, but the Council and Council members are not permitted to receive external funding to conduct Council business. However, regional corporations could fund individual committee members to participate in the committee process, or fund individual residents to travel to Council meetings.
- Location of committee meetings. Focus on Anchorage initially, and ensure that the location does not preclude any member from attending. Consider committee meetings in rural Alaska in the future. The workgroup also recommended teleconferencing committee meetings if necessary, in order to have maximum participation.
- Committee staffing. The workgroup hoped that that committee would not take significant staff time, but that the majority of staff time would be devoted to project-specific outreach plans. The workgroup did not recommend hiring a tribal liaison, but to use existing staff at this time. (The

Executive Director noted that the Council is not positioned to hire new staff in the near future.) The workgroup questioned whether NMFS may have staff available to help fulfill a logistics coordinator role toward this effort, and requested that NMFS be approached and encouraged to help support the committee's outreach efforts.

- The workgroup recommended leaving all of the project-specific approaches, from the May 2008 policy paper, to the full committee for discussion. All of these suggestions should be considered when determining how to develop a project-specific outreach plan.

The workgroup also talked about a general goal of increasing rural participation in the fisheries management process and commended the Council's effort on the Arctic FMP and Chinook salmon bycatch outreach efforts. While direct contact is preferable, it may not be possible due to cost and logistical difficulties – either for rural residents to travel to Council meetings, or for the Council to meet in rural areas.

One suggestion discussed at length was the possibility of teleconferencing the Council meetings, and allowing public testimony to be provided over the phone. The intent is to find a way to provide feedback on a local level directly to the Council. The group agreed that this was not a feasible idea. There were several practical concerns, as the length of Council meetings and time allotted for each agenda item would not be able to accommodate this practice. The group then discussed the possibility of a video feed or streaming the meeting (listen only), allowing people outside of Anchorage or Seattle to listen to the meeting in real-time. The workgroup left further discussion of this issue to the standing committee.

The workgroup also suggested asking resource agencies to assist in project-specific outreach plans (e.g., Arctic FMP, salmon bycatch). The group discussed whether NMFS could contribute resources (e.g., staff, sponsor workshops, etc), and suggested that the Council work jointly with NMFS when possible. For example, if NMFS is conducting a tribal consultation in a rural community, staff should determine whether the Council can conduct an outreach meeting, if appropriate, in the same location and timeframe. Staff should also determine whether there are ways that the Council outreach efforts can bolster tribal consultation efforts, without confusing the Council's outreach priority with the agency responsibility to provide government-to-government consultations. There may be some meaningful efficiencies to be gained, recognizing that any action should not confuse the Council's outreach efforts with the agency's obligation to fulfill its tribal consultation requirements.

One member also suggested developing a cycle such that Council members travel to rural Alaska and convey information on the Council process and current issues, while receiving input directly from Native and community residents. This suggestion stemmed from the discussion paper, and the group had sufficient interest in this approach such that they recommended it be considered by the standing committee, if initiated.

The workgroup also recommended creating a database (i.e., running calendar) of regional meetings, such that the Council and staff would be aware of regularly scheduled (typically annual) meetings in rural Alaska that draw a broad cross-section of stakeholders. This would allow staff to better plan outreach meetings, as well as potentially provide the opportunity for Council members to attend and/or provide presentations on Council issues. It would also provide a quick way to find contact information for interested stakeholders when implementing a project-specific outreach plan. Examples of meetings to include were: Association of Village Council Presidents, Alaska Federation of Natives, Alaska Board of Fisheries, boroughs, Alaska Forum on the Environment, Alaska Inter-tribal Council, Alaska Native Regional Corporations, stateside Native co-management groups, etc. It was suggested to contact State of Alaska staff to see if this type of effort has already been completed.

Finally, the workgroup discussed some simple strategies to broaden current participation in the Council process, such as posting the Council agenda in some key village newspapers. Two members of the workgroup (Hooper and Pungowiyi) participated in Council outreach meetings on recent issues (Chinook salmon bycatch and Arctic FMP, respectively). They offered to contact others that participated, in order to provide feedback to Council staff on the strengths and weaknesses of those approaches.

4. Summary of primary recommendations

The workgroup recommends the Council initiate a standing committee (*Council Community Outreach and Impacts Committee*) to provide: input to the Council on ways to improve outreach to Alaska Native entities and communities; recommendations for specific Council actions that warrant specific outreach plans; and input on the type of community-specific information that should be provided in Council analyses.

The workgroup recommends creating a database (i.e., running calendar) of regional meetings, such that the Council and staff would be aware of regularly scheduled meetings in rural Alaska that draw a broad cross-section of stakeholders.

The workgroup recommends that other potential outreach strategies identified both in this workgroup report, and in the May 2008 policy paper, should be further discussed by the standing committee and detailed recommendations provided to the Council.

5. Schedule future meeting if necessary

The workgroup did not see a need for a future meeting of the workgroup. The workgroup recommended moving forward with the recommendation to appoint a standing committee, prior to the April 2009 Council meeting. A committee meeting could then be scheduled, with more formalized recommendations on outreach provided to the Council at its April or June 2009 meeting.