

## **MAFAC: A GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND SUMMARY**

The **Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC)** was established under a federal charter (see Appendix X) by the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) on February 17, 1971, to advise the Secretary of Commerce on all living marine resource matters that are the responsibility of the Department of Commerce. MAFAC members draw on their expertise and other appropriate sources, such as the National Marine Fisheries Service, to evaluate and recommend priorities and needed changes in national living marine resources policies and programs such as the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Marine Mammal Protection Act, legislation and the federal budget, science programs, and other areas of primary interest to the Secretary. The members represent a wide spectrum of commercial and recreational fisheries, environmental, academic, state, tribal, consumer and other related national interests.

### **MISSION**

The MAFAC membership represents a broad cross-section of geographic, cultural, and political views as well as a variety of expertise and experience. Advice is on matters that the Secretary brings to the Committee and on issues that are of growing concern in the view of the Committee. The Committee is available to the Secretary on an ongoing basis as a source of expertise to be consulted in the development of fisheries policy.

### **STRUCTURE**

The committee functions solely as an advisory body (complying fully with the Federal Advisory Committee Act) who reports to the Secretary. The Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere is the designated chair of the Committee, and the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries serves as the Vice-Chair. The Committee elects a Committee Liaison to NMFS, and a NMFS staff person serves as Designated Federal Officer/Executive Director. The Vice Chair and Committee Liaison are responsible for working with the Designated Federal Officer to develop the meeting agenda and meeting logistics. The Vice Chair presides over the meeting, appoints subcommittees and membership to standing subcommittees, and reports to the Secretary of Commerce on the results of MAFAC meetings.

### **MEMBERS**

For over 35 years MAFAC has maintained a group of diverse and expert members in terms of professional and academic expertise and representing regional, national or international perspectives on living marine resources. The current composition of the Committee balances geographic and sectoral representation and includes expertise in aquaculture, seafood and trade, commercial and recreational fishing industries, natural resource management, environmental organizations, and social, economic and biological sciences. All members are recognized leaders in their field and contribute a wide-range of knowledge and experience.

The Secretary of Commerce appoints members to MAFAC. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries solicits nominations through a Federal Register notice to the public. In

developing a list of suggested appointees for the Secretary's consideration, the Assistant Administrator reviews the nominations of highly qualified individuals from a balance of U.S. geographical regions, including Puerto Rico and the Western Pacific and the U.S. Virgin Islands. As a general policy, the Vice Chair will recommend to the Secretary that members seeking re-appointment to a second term be given priority over new appointees. Members who have missed 3 meetings in their first term will be asked to step down. When seeking new members for appointment, the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries will make clear to potential members the expected time and travel commitment involved with service on MAFAC. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries will make every reasonable effort to ensure a diverse membership, including by geographic representation and occupational interest.

### **MAFAC CONSULTANTS AND OTHERS**

The Executive Directors of the 3 Marine Fisheries Commissions chartered by Congress serve as consultants to MAFAC. Travel and expenses at MAFAC meetings are reimbursed in the same way as non-Federal MAFAC members. Consultants have the same opportunity to participate in MAFAC activities as appointed members but are not entitled to vote. MAFAC is also assisted by federal contract persons for identified NMFS/NOAA issue areas, who work with the Committee substructure throughout the year to ensure effective input and discourse in support of MAFAC's efforts.

### **MEETINGS**

MAFAC meets twice a year with supplementary meetings as determined necessary and approved by the Committee Chair. The proposed time period, location, and agenda topics for the subsequent meeting are included as an agenda item at each MAFAC meeting. The topics for consideration on the agenda are derived from DOC and NOAA current or forthcoming issues suggested by the federal participants, and ideas and topics suggested/requested by MAFAC members. Subcommittees meet during MAFAC meetings. Subject to the approval of the Chair and NMFS and the availability of funds, subcommittee meetings may also be held at times and in locations where MAFAC is not scheduled to meet. The Chair and the Designated Federal Officer will make every effort to ensure that briefing materials for each meeting are provided to MAFAC members at least two weeks prior to the meeting. In general, meetings are held over a period of 3 days, with additional time as needed for travel.

### **SUBCOMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS**

MAFAC has 5 standing subcommittees and such *ad-hoc* working groups as necessary. The Subcommittees are: Executive; Strategic Planning, Budget and Program Management; Commerce; Protected Species; and Ecosystem Approach. There is also a Working Group on Recreational Fisheries. The Vice Chair serves as ex-officio member on all subcommittees and may appoint one or more MAFAC consultants as advisors to the subcommittee. In addition, the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries will identify a contact point within NOAA Fisheries for each subcommittee. Members may serve on more than one Subcommittee or working group without term limits and based upon their interest and request to participate. When appointing members to working groups,

preference will be given to members who are not already members of other subcommittees. Subcommittee chairs will be elected by the subcommittee members.

The role of a subcommittee is to "frame the issue" and provide information to MAFAC, which will then decide collectively what kind of advice to give. If no consensus can be achieved, majority /minority views will be presented with an accompanying record of decision.

**Subcommittees:**

- **Executive Subcommittee** (The Subcommittee Chairs, the Committee Vice Chair, the Committee Liaison, and the Executive Director): Assists with agenda development, assignments and administrative issues for Committee business.
- **Strategic Planning, Budget and Program Subcommittee:** Reviews and advises on strategic planning elements, and reviews and provides input on the status of existing management programs within NOAA, particularly as they relate to the statutory mandates such as the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.
- **Commerce Subcommittee:** Reviews and advises on emergent industry and socio-economic issues such as off-shore aquaculture, seafood technology and consumer interests.
- **Protected Resources Subcommittee:** Reviews and advises protected species programs under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act.
- **Ecosystem Approach Subcommittee:** Provides a format for reviewing programs and initiatives involved with the development and implementation of ecosystem approaches to fisheries management.

**Working Group:**

- Working Group on Recreational Fisheries