

Council Coordination Committee

May 2023 Meeting

SAFMC “Unofficial Summary”

The Council Coordination Committee (CCC) met May 23 – 25 in Key West, FL, hosted by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council.

The meeting briefing book and agenda are available on the Regional Fishery Management Councils’ website: <https://www.fisherycouncils.org/ccc-meetings>

The CCC received reports from NMFS and discussed a range of summary of discussions and motions is provided to brief the SAFMC on CCC actions. ANPR, National Standards 4, 8, and 9 Guidelines

Approved Motion: The CCC recommends that NMFS extend the comment deadline on the ANPR for National Standard 4, 8, and 9 Guidelines to October 15.

The CCC was updated on NMFS’ plans to update guidelines for NS 4, 8, and 9. The update will take several years, and is being initiated because the existing guidelines are over a decade old. SAFMC will receive a presentation from NMFS on the ANPR at the June 2023 meeting. The current deadline for comment is September 12, 2023. Note this is the Tuesday of the September Council meeting, so if the deadline is not extended SAFMC will not have another Council meeting discussion opportunity on the ANPR. However, there will be additional comment opportunities as the guidelines are developed.

- NOAA Fisheries Science Update

A general update on science operations was provided. NMFS continues to grapple with resource limitations across many scientific programs and balancing basic monitoring and assessment needs with developing initiatives such as wind and climate change. The Councils continue to stress the importance of maintaining survey and fishery monitoring capabilities.

- Budget Outlook

The FY 2024 Presidential budget proposes a slight increase for Regional Councils, however, similar to past increases, it is not likely to offset current rates of inflation. Negotiations were still underway to address the debt limit at the time of the meeting. The final resolution on the limit may have an impact on FY24 and FY25 budgets as discussed at the CCC.

NOAA stands to receive additional funding through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), including 2.6B devoted to coastal climate preparedness and marine and fishery stock assessments. It is not yet known how this funding will be allocated nor whether any will be provided directly to the Regional Councils. NMFS requested feedback from the CCC on priority management actions and tools needed to become better climate prepared.

- Climate Change and Fisheries

The CCC received a report on the Atlantic Coast Scenario Planning Project. NMFS provided an update on the Fisheries Climate Governance Policy, which is a set of guidelines the agency is developing to address governance changes (ie, determining which Council has management responsible for a given species). The CCC's position has been that current approaches work and there is little need for change in policies. There will be additional discussion at the October CCC meeting, and NMFS requests all comments be provided by November 17, 2023.

- Anti-Harassment Policies and Training

NMFS provided an update on the recent anti-harassment training offered to the Regional Councils, and discussed alternatives for future training. The CCC expressed support for an annual training contract so that training can be available on a timely basis for new staff and council members as a part of onboarding and orientation.

- America the Beautiful Initiative

The CCC area-based management subcommittee provided its final report detailing protected and preserved areas throughout the US EEZ.

Approved Motion: The CCC accepts the report of the ABM working group and approves development of an interactive webmap application.

- International Fisheries

The CCC received a summary of a conference on addressing marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdictions and an update on the United Nations Committee on Fisheries (COFI).

- Scientific Coordination Subcommittee

The CCC received a report on the 7th National SCS meeting, held in Sitka, AK, August 15 – 17 2022. The meeting topic was “Adapting Fisheries Management to a Changing Ecosystem”. Motions were approved to form a climate working group to follow up on the SCS meeting as well as address ongoing climate initiatives.

Approved Motion: To form a new CCC climate workgroup to develop a common understanding and voice among the Councils on current capacity, future needs, and fishery management designs that can respond to climate change, while assisting the regional councils in coordinating with NOAA on a response to the Ocean Climate Action Plan.

The CCC continues to support SCS meetings as a valuable opportunity for SSCs to explore cutting-edge scientific topics, and supported convening SCS8 in 2024, hosted by the NEFMC.

Approved Motion: The CCC approves the proposed theme for SCS-8: “Applying ABC Control Rules in a Changing Environment.” The SCS is also asked to recommend how workshop conclusions can be shared with the CCC and the Councils in a manner that encourages the use of workshop results. This recommendation should be delivered to the CCC at the fall CCC meeting.”

The CCC also updated the SCS Terms of Reference to allow NMFS representation on the planning team. This aligns the official policy with current practices and acknowledges the role of NMFS in supporting and helping to organize SCS meetings.

Motion: The CCC TOR for the Scientific Coordination Subcommittee is modified to read (change in yellow): “The SCS will consist of the Chairs from each of the Regional Council Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSCs), or their respective proxies. The SCS can invite participation by up to three additional NMFS scientists when planning SCS workshops.”

- National Standard 1 Technical Guidance

The CCC received an update on the NS1 Technical Guidance document that has been under development for several years. This is a critical document, as NS1 addresses the management foundations of MSY reference points and stock status determinations. The SAFMC SSC will receive a presentation on the guidance document at its July 27 meeting. NMFS requested comments by August 31, 2023. SAFMC comments will be drafted following the SSC discussion.

- CCC Communications Subcommittee

The CCC communications subcommittee, consisting of information and outreach staffers from each Council, met to discuss communication practices. The group discussed topics such as public comment, social media, websites, meeting management, public engagement, and the National Council’s website. The CCC noted that the national website is useful for sharing information on CCC policies, subgroups, and meetings, and the national calendar has reduced scheduling burdens.

Approved Motion: The CCC supports the modifications to the U.S. Regional Councils’ website and continued updates and maintenance.

Approved Motion The CCC directs the communications group to plan an in person meeting for 2024 and seek approval from the CCC in October of the proposed discussion items.

- Establishing Fisheries Regulations in Sanctuaries

Due to personnel issues, the planned presentation on this topic was not provided, and was instead rescheduled for the October 2023 meeting. There was discussion on challenges Councils have experienced in dealing with sanctuaries in their areas of jurisdiction, particularly in the WPFMC region where over 50% of the EEZ is included in sanctuaries.

The CCC continues to support the MSA as an effective tool for managing fisheries resources in sanctuaries.

Approved Motion: The CCC submit a letter to the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and the National Marine Fisheries Service that acknowledges a shared responsibility to conserve and sustainably manage the nation's living marine resources. Accordingly, there should be a reasonable process that allows both the Council and Sanctuary to carry out their missions and achieve their objectives with minimum conflict.

- Integration of the Endangered Species Act

The CCC received an update on the CCC working group addressing the NMFS ESA policy directive. The group's work is ongoing, and has so far included regional and NMFS leadership meetings related to the policy directive.

- Marine Resources Education Program (MREP)

The CCC received an update on the MREP program, from its beginning in the Northeast to its current expansion to most of the Nation. Recent attention is being given to the remaining region not covered by MREP in some way, the Western Pacific.

- CCC Habitat Working Group

The CCC Habitat Working Group includes habitat staff from each Council. The group's current focus at this time is primarily wind energy and EFH reviews. Members were also involved in the area-based management group that contributed to the America the Beautiful initiative described above. A workshop is planned for January 2024 to address climate change preparedness and resilience as related to EHF and HAPC designations.

- Council Member Ongoing Development (CMOD)

The CMOD program is a CCC initiative intended to support professional development and exchange across Council's for Council members and staff. The meetings are informational and do not result any recommendations or policy actions. The first CMOD meeting, held in November 2022, addressed new approaches to EBFM and EAFM. The program was highly rated by those who attended and the CCC intends to continue the effort. Future meetings will likely be held in odd-numbered years, offset from SCS meetings that will be held during even-numbered years.

Approved Motion The CCC agrees to hold the second Council Member Ongoing Development (CMOD) session in 2025, hosted by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. The NPFMC will provide a report at the October CCC meeting on a theme, estimated costs (including a proposal for sharing of costs between NMFS and the Councils), and other logistics.