

## COUNCIL STAFF PROPOSED SEPTEMBER MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

Council staff is recommending the September Council meeting in Spokane, WA be held with a combination of an in-person Council session and webinar meetings for advisory bodies. While we recognize the benefits and desire to meet in person again, our approach is intended to take some small steps into a somewhat uncertain future of how meetings may be structured in the post-COVID era. For September, it appears very unlikely National Marine Fisheries Service West Coast Region staff other than the Regional Administrator and/or Assistant Administrator will have travel authorization; therefore any Management/Technical Teams would not be able to meet fully in-person. There are some technical issues with conducting “hybrid” meetings that our IT staff are anticipating, but have not had time to satisfactorily resolve. So given the number of simultaneous meetings that our staff officers will be handling and technical challenges, we feel a hybrid meeting approach is not feasible at this point and so are recommending webinar-only meetings for the advisory bodies.

Council members will be expected to travel to Spokane, and there will be no options for Council member remote participation, again, due to currently unresolved technical challenges; however, remote public comment can be accommodated in a manner similar to how it has been taken during webinar-based Council meetings. State, Federal, and Tribal agency staff would be invited to travel to Spokane to support their Council members. If it appears that a quorum will not be in attendance the entire meeting may need to be conducted via webinar.

Council staff will travel to Spokane and conduct all advisory body webinars from there so they can appear on the Council floor, participate in staff meetings, and be available to Council members for consultations.

Advisory body members for HMS, groundfish, ecosystem, and Enforcement Consultants (or others that overlap the Council meeting) may travel to Spokane and be eligible for reimbursement of travel expenses and per diem if they wish to attend their webinar from their personal hotel room. Meeting rooms will not be set up to accommodate “hybrid” meetings where some members are in person and others are not. However, traveling to Spokane will allow these people to attend the Council and state delegation (if any) meetings, testify in person to the Council, and socialize with others that are present in Spokane.

For those in attendance in Spokane, we will need to follow Washington state and local COVID safety measures. Hopefully by then we will be approaching the end of the pandemic and restrictions will be relaxed. However, we do encourage all those that are eligible to get your COVID vaccinations, practice appropriate safety precautions, and join us in Spokane.

We would like to have a decision on this proposal at the June meeting, but if that is not possible, a final decision on the structure of the Council and advisory body meetings will need to be made no later than July 30 so we can file the *Federal Register* notice, send out meeting invitations, and notify the hotel of any changes.