

EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS/NOAA Fisheries) has developed a draft Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy (Agenda Item C.2, Attachment 1) and [invited comments from the public](#) and Regional Fishery Management Councils. The development of the strategy is driven by guidance in executive orders. The first executive order (EO) on environmental justice was issued in 1994 ([EO 12989](#), Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government). The current administration has issued additional related EOs: [EO 13985](#), Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government; and [EO 14008](#), Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad. Mr. Sam Rauch, NOAA Fisheries, Deputy Assistant Administrator, made a preliminary presentation on the draft strategy at the Council’s June 2022 meeting.

Traditionally, environmental justice has been conceived as a concern related to the distribution of harmful impacts among different communities. However, the definition that NMFS is working with (originally developed by the Environmental Protection Agency) includes the concept of “equal opportunity.” NMFS interprets equal opportunity to include the distribution of benefits that result from policy actions. The NMFS draft strategy identifies a number of barriers to achieving equity and environmental justice (EEJ), including structural barriers. Structural barriers could include, for example, prioritization of fishery survey activities to support those commercial and recreational fisheries that are the most sought-after or generate the largest economic benefit—which could mean that the development of scientific information needed to support management of species important to underserved communities is given less attention.

NMFS is planning to finalize the strategy before the end of this year. After it is finalized, NMFS will transition to the development of regional implementation plans next year. Implementation plans will not be limited to fisheries but cover the broad range of NMFS’ responsibilities. Councils will not be required to participate or contribute to the development of the regional plans, but NMFS will reach out to the Councils as the plans are developed and Council involvement will be welcomed. Full implementation of the strategy will depend on funding. More information on the development of this strategy, including translation to various languages, is available from the [NMFS webpage](#) on development of this strategy.

On August 19, the Council sponsored a [presentation on the strategy](#) for its advisory bodies. This presentation was recorded for those unable to attend. While the public comment deadline was August 31, NMFS will be accepting comments from its Council partners after that deadline. The Council Coordinating Committee has also convened a work group to consider EEJ issues and will be addressing EEJ issues at its upcoming meeting. The Council’s task is to decide if it wants to comment on the draft national strategy and if so, provide staff guidance on the content for such a comment.

Council Action:

Review NMFS Draft Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy and provide comments, as appropriate.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item C.2, Attachment 1: NOAA Fisheries, Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy.
2. If received, Public Comments are electronic only ([see e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

C.2 Equity and Environmental Justice

Jim Seger

- a. Report of the National Marine Fisheries Service Stacey Miller/Abigail Harley
- b. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Review National Marine Fisheries Service Draft Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy and Provide Comments

PFMC
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