

## SALMON ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON COUNCIL MEETING AND PROCESS EFFICIENCIES

The Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) reviewed the Council Efficiencies and Effectiveness White Paper at our August 31 meeting.

The SAS is interested in improving meeting efficiency, but not at the expense of effectiveness or responsiveness.

Specifically, referring to the White Paper on page 9 under item 2 “Tactical and Operational considerations”, the SAS is strongly committed to having in-person meetings in March and April for the formulation of ocean salmon season recommendations. We would also strongly recommend that an in-person format be used for significant salmon issues at meetings other than March and April. Significant salmon issues might include changes to the Salmon Fishery Management Plan, changes in catch areas, bycatch monitoring and reduction actions, and other such items that would require lengthy discussion or interaction with other advisory bodies or industry representatives. For other topics or “minor” salmon issues, one-day remote (online) meetings are most suitable, and we have found that SAS member participation increases. The SAS would also note that Council staff are challenged when two advisory bodies to which a single staff member is assigned meet at the same time remotely. This most often occurs in March and April when both the SAS and Salmon Technical Team are meeting concurrently.

Hybrid meetings are an area of concern for the SAS. The SAS prefers that the SAS meetings be either in person, or online, but not a mix of both. Remote participation by SAS members is possible when there are extenuating circumstances, however, the in-person presence of an alternate is preferable. Remote public participation during the SAS meetings raises many concerns for the SAS. The March and April 2022 hybrid meetings were challenging both technically and procedurally. While the SAS is confident that the Council’s IT staff will solve the technical issues, remote public participation remains challenging. Remote participants do not have the full context of the discussions, are not able to easily ask questions, do not have the benefit of personal discussions with advisory panel members, staff or agency advisors and are not involved in one-on-one member discussions. Remote participants do not have the benefit of observing the full Council process and may fail to appreciate the complexity of meeting and the multitude of challenges required to develop and approve the salmon season package. This is especially true for the critics. There has been concern raised about remote presence during negotiations conducted both in-state, sector-to-sector, and state-to-state. Of necessity, these types of discussions occur simultaneously, in many different locations where remote participation would be impractical technically and are impossible to schedule in advance.

The SAS understands our role as conduits for public input to the Council. The advisory bodies were created to represent a broad spectrum of the public, albeit those most closely associated with exploiting the resource. We are tasked with public outreach in our represented “communities” in order to understand the will of the public with respect to the management of their fishery resources.

As an officially recognized advisory body, we operate within the Council Operating Procedures, ensuring that we provide Council advice that conforms to an established process and that meets legal requirements. The desire for more public input permeates the Council process at all levels. We want feedback, ideas, and points of view to be brought to the Council, but at what cost? Modern technology has opened the door for more public access and clearly the Council has the opportunity to broaden the scope of that access. The question is, at what point does that broadened access change from being valuable to becoming unmanageable? Council agendas are already ponderous, requiring lengthy meetings and schedule manipulations to allow for full Council discussion and deliberation. Adding voluminous public comment via internet connections could interfere with the conduct of business. The value of that input, in a society that is increasingly polarized and driven by extreme points of view, may be questionable. The same could be said for advisory body meetings at some key points in the process. In addition, Council staff logistic challenges increase incrementally with the addition of more equipment to fully hybridize each advisory body meeting. Additional equipment would need to be purchased, transported, monitored, repacked, and stored. Hotels would need have the capability to support additional technology. We conclude that gearing up to hybridize advisory body meetings would probably not pass the cost/benefit test. Increasing remote access to Council meetings will have to be carefully thought out and structured. We ask the Council to keep in mind that disruptions in their meeting schedule have downstream effects on the advisory bodies and the public's ability to rely on posted agendas to guide their participation in Council meetings.

Remote presentations to in-person advisory body meetings are certainly acceptable with the appropriate technical equipment.

The SAS, and the Council family in general, are highly effective primarily because of the relationships that have been and are developed and nurtured when meeting in person. While there are most certainly cost savings associated with remote meetings, those benefits are minor when compared to the increased effectiveness of discussions that are in person in an atmosphere of respect, trust, and mutual dedication to Council process. Hybrid meetings would come at a cost in both equipment and meeting efficiency.

PFMC  
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