Agenda Item C.5.b
Supplemental NWFSC Report 1
November 2022

Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Annual Guidance Memorandum for Fiscal Year 2023

October 2022

NOAA FISHERIES

Contents

Executive Summary

This new Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Guidance Memorandum sets out the Center Leadership Team's vision and priorities for October 2022–September 2023. We have streamlined the structure to focus more on actionable goals, while still providing links to many helpful resources and contextual information documents throughout. The FY23 AGM is divided into two main parts.

The first part encompasses the first four chapters, one for each of the four goals identified in the Center's Vivid Description of the Future:

1. Vivid Description Goal 1: Science in Service. The Center's top priority, in FY23 and every year, is maintaining our standards for high-quality and application-oriented science. This means staying flexible, embracing change, and planning for the future—within the realities of our budget. This year, we stopped ranking projects, instead prioritizing them under four categories (*must do*, *should do*, *could do*, and *consider phasing out*) that evaluate how well the projects align with the Center's science priorities. In FY23, we will continue to support the main goals of the NMFS Strategic Plan. We will begin implementing the aquaculture and salmon recovery science strategic plans that were developed last year, while initiating a process of developing a strategic plan for sustainable fisheries science. We will also partner within and outside NOAA on offshore wind energy projects. Finally, we will work with the regional data governance team to develop data management Center-wide.
2. Vivid Description Goal 2: Organizational Excellence. We are not planning any major reorganization in FY23. Instead, our priorities this year will focus on:
    - Fostering a sense of belonging by supporting Center cross-teams, encouraging hybrid workplace collaboration, promoting an equitable workplace, and providing more and new opportunities for staff to connect socially.
    - Transparently developing and executing our Internal Fund, and calling upon each division to provide the same level of transparency and accountability with its own budget by using a common rubric.
    - Beginning to implement the results of our organizational design efforts by focusing on supporting mechanisms such as expanding and enhancing the use of cross-divisional teams and sharing division-level budget summaries with staff, and recruiting an acting FE Division Director.
3. Vivid Description Goal 3: State-of-the-Art Habitats for Science and People. We remain committed to moving from the Montlake campus to a new leased facility, but delays in securing Congressional approval mean our target move date of July 2025 may be unrealistic. In the meantime, we continue to invest in upgrading the facilities at both Manchester and the Western Regional Center. We are also exploring options for the Station Chief vacancies at Pasco, Pt. Adams, and Newport.
4. Vivid Description Goal 4: Partnerships, Public Outreach, and Education. In FY23, we continue to emphasize the mutually beneficial collaborations that allow us to work more effectively and efficiently while advancing our science mission. We also continue our focus on promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility by asking programs to consider how they promote respect and inclusion in their annual Executive Program Briefings. Finally, we'll extend our inclusive communications

efforts to expand our internal and external communications efforts via a redesigned Homeport, Presentation Labs, RPTS integration with our public-facing, searchable publications database, and a new West Coast Instagram account, among others.

The Appendix provides background information to better understand the political, financial, and personnel constraints that guide our decision-making. It also provides more details about the APP process and how it was revised this year.

1. Policy. This section contains links to the DOC and NMFS strategic plans that dictate the major themes and focuses of our scientific endeavors.
2. Budget. The House Appropriations Report provides an overall NMFS budget of nearly $1.1 billion, an increase of $84 million over FY22. The Senate Apprpriations Report has not yet been voted on, but a press release indicates that it provides an overall NMFS budget of $1.11 billion, or $10 million more than in FY22. However, we are not expecting a final budget until after the November 2022 election. As the new Congress will likely control the budget, these numbers may change at that time.
3. Staffing. This section discusses our workforce planning efforts in light of the realities of labor costs, while acknowledging that we lost 6.8% of our staff in FY22. It also discusses critical vacancies, the senior research scientists' report, and the Fisheries Promotion Advisory Board's guidance for noncompetitive promotions. We also discuss Center cross-teams and reiterate our support for the Center's standing and ad-hoc committees.
4. APP Process. Finally, we provide a description of the APP process, the revisions we made to it this year, and the reasoning behind those changes.

You can find all of the files associated with this AGM, including summary tables, in this Google folder.

Introduction

Our Annual Guidance Memorandum (AGM) outlines the Center's priorities for Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23). We, the Center Leadership Team (LT), aligned these priorities with the goals outlined in the DOC, NOAA, NMFS, and NMFS West Coast Region strategic plans. We also emphasize our Center vision and the input we receive from colleagues and stakeholders.

This year's AGM contains four major sections, one for each of the four goals identified in the Center's Vivid Description of the Future. More detailed information on FY23 policy, budget, staffing, and the APP process can be found in the Appendix. That information can help you better understand the political, financial, and personnel environments that guide our decision-making.

We relied on input from Center colleagues and stakeholders in setting this year's priorities. We also utilized the Activity Plan Prioritization (APP) process for scientific projects, the internal fund development for operational and administrative support, the Vivid Description Implementation Plan, and the Rightsizing project recommendations from FY21.

We thank you for taking the time to read and react to this AGM. The LT is focused on their individual roles within the Center and also on developing the foundations of a highly functioning team. We are excited about the possibilities as we continue to work toward the goals outlined by the Center in the Vivid Description of the Future and its Implementation Plan.

Finally, please note that this Google folder contains all of the files associated with this AGM.

Vivid Description Goal 1: Science in Service

Science in FY23

APP Categorization

We evaluated 119 proposed projects. Acknowledging the quality of the research and the dedication of the scientists, the Division Directors provided individualized feedback for all proposed projects. You can view the results of this year's prioritization of the Center's proposed projects. Rather than ranking, this year, the LT prioritized projects under four categories: *must do* (41), *should do* (55), *could do* (17), and *consider phasing out* (2). Note that a few projects were not categorized in this way. This is either because they are in the process of being phased out, or they were focused solely on regional work plan funds (EBFM/SAIP).

What do I need to know?

The 6th annual APP evaluated 119 projects to support NMFS's mission. Instead of ranking, the projects were prioritized into 4 categories: *must do*, *should do*, *could do*, and *consider phasing out*. Our highest-priority activities align with the goals identified in the NMFS Strategic Plan. These include amplifying the economic value and ensuring the sustainability of fisheries, and conserving and recovering protected species while supporting responsible fishing and resource development.

How can I help?

If your project is phasing out or being realigned, try to keep an open mind! Work with us to help you find new opportunities at the Center.

The new categories can be described as:

- **Must do:** Projects having the highest alignment with Center priorities and the most critical outcomes. Center resources would be dedicated to and, when available, directed toward these projects first and foremost.
- **Should do:** Projects very well aligned with Center priorities and having valuable outcomes. Available Center resources would be dedicated to these projects once we have ensured our capability of carrying out the core work in must-do projects.
- **Could do:** Projects aligned, at least in part, with Center priorities and/or more closely with broader agency goals, and having outcomes that, while important, are less impactful and represent a lower risk to the Center mission.
- **Consider phasing out:** Projects for which the case for alignment with current Center priorities is the hardest to make, and having outcomes that no longer advance the core mission of the Center.

We assessed most projects in the should- or could-do categories based on the project as a whole. However, some projects with multiple foci may contain elements that range from must do to consider phasing out. We look forward to further discussions with project leads on how to approach Project Planning Database (PPD) entries in FY23 to ensure a clearer assessment of project elements. In response to feedback from previous cycles requesting better communication on the priorities, each science DD met with the staff who proposed projects in the PPD. The DDs provided feedback and explained the results of the APP specific to that project prior to the release of this AGM.

The revised APP criteria continue to align strongly with the three main NMFS priorities as identified in the NMFS Strategic Plan—however, note that a new, not-yet-finalized strategic plan is still in development:

1. Amplify the economic value of commercial and recreational fisheries while ensuring their sustainability.
2. Conserve and recover protected species while supporting responsible fishing and resource development.
3. Improve organizational excellence and regulatory efficiency.

The Center's research provides evidence-based scientific information and support of these agency goals—mainly the first two. We will continue to support foundational work aligned with FY23 Center priorities. Associated with each NMFS goal below, we have included high-priority activities identified during the APP and by our management partners.

NMFS Goal 1

"Amplify the economic value of commercial and recreational fisheries while ensuring their sustainability."

In FY23, we will support this goal, in part, by engaging in the following **priority science and service activities**:

- **Deploy and support fisheries observers** to collect fishery-dependent information aboard groundfish and other commercial fishing vessels on the U.S. West Coast. **Produce mortality estimates** of groundfish, protected species, and other species in support of stock assessments, policy, in-season quota tracking, bycatch reduction, and research. Participate in regional and national efforts to implement **electronic reporting and electronic monitoring**.
- **Develop adaptive plans and fully execute surveys** for U.S. West Coast groundfish while strengthening data collection collaborations and improving methods to enhance our surveys. This will include advancing forthcoming recommendations of the Ocean Surveys Working Group, identifying options to execute surveys in poorly sampled areas, and continuing collaborations with Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) to develop an integrated West Coast Pelagics and Ecosystem Survey by 2025.
- **Conduct and enhance stock assessments, models, and management strategy evaluations**, including incorporating select biological data, ecosystem drivers, and socioeconomic information, where possible.
- **Provide technical support and service** to WCR, Council, and Treaty bodies (e.g., the U.S.–Canada Pacific Hake (whiting) Treaty and the Pacific Salmon Treaty); support Council initiatives.
- Maintain a robust program of **economic and sociocultural data collection, analysis, and research** to inform management decisions and amplify resource value in commercial and recreational fisheries, and understand human–ecosystem interactions.
- Develop analyses to **help identify and mitigate the impacts of U.S. West Coast offshore wind development** on surveys, stock assessments, ecosystems, and communities.

- **Strengthen and build collaborations** within the Center and with others on groundfish life-history data analysis and research (diet, aging, maturity), including exploring and adapting methods in eDNA and population genomics to aid stock assessments.
- **Improve data governance**, strengthen enterprise database, cloud, and artificial intelligence/machine learning capabilities, process decades of backlogged environmental data, and develop and share standardized protocols and products to facilitate efficient data analysis, access, and reuse.
- **Research the impacts of ocean acidification** on marine and anadromous fish.
- Contribute to the understanding of the environmental conditions impacting fisheries and fishing communities to **inform ecosystem-based management** by collecting and analyzing critical data on ecosystem and climate drivers, responses, and indicators.
- **Continue to participate in the Western Regional Action Plan (WRAP)** to address climate change impacts.
- **Support the Office of Law Enforcement** with forensic analyses of suspect seafood products and the development of field analysis tools.
- Develop technology for a) **sustainable aquaculture** of marine finfish and shellfish, and b) to **understand the ecological interactions of aquaculture operations**, including:
    - Work with WCR and the Office of Aquaculture (OAQ) to **provide guidelines and scientific advice for biosecurity risk assessment and fish health management**.
    - **Refine and transfer technologies for sablefish aquaculture** to tribal and industry partners.
    - **Develop macroalgae-based fish feeds** and other strategies that promote fish health and prevent disease.
    - **Develop non-GMO methods for the production of sterile fish and shellfish**, to mitigate the genetic risks of aquaculture operations.
    - **Understand the impacts of climate change** and the resiliency of shellfish species to multiple environmental stressors (such as ocean acidification).
    - **Understand the ecological interactions of shellfish aquaculture and eelgrass.**

NMFS Goal 2

"Conserve and recover protected species while supporting responsible fishing and resource development."

In FY23, we will support this goal, in part, by engaging in the following **priority science and service activities**:

- **Research and monitor Southern Resident killer whales (SRKW)** in support of the Species in the Spotlight Action Plan.
- **Develop ecosystem models relevant to protected salmon and SRKW**, including salmon ocean distribution, climate change impacts, cumulative risks, and management actions.
- Contribute **biological, social, and economic scientific analysis and advice** to advance the highest-priority management, conservation, and recovery actions in endangered species recovery plans.

- **Coordinate and collaborate with WCR and the Office of Protected Resources on ESA and MMPA consultations.** Provide scientific expertise to Biological Review Teams handling ESA listing petitions.
- Assess how our current salmon research portfolio aligns with the critical needs identified in the Center's **salmon recovery science** strategic plan, determine how to address any gaps, and continue to support related activities, including:
    - Continue research to **improve the effectiveness of conservation hatcheries** to prevent extinction and support recovery of ESA-listed salmon and steelhead.
    - Conduct research to **inform WCR's ESA review of hatchery genetic management plans**.
    - Understand the **exposure levels and health impacts of stormwater contaminants on protected species**. Provide science advice to WCR and the Office of Protected Resources related to biological opinions on the impacts of chemical contaminants on protected resources.
    - Analyze and evaluate the **genetics and genomics of salmon, and anadromous fishes, to inform protected species management and actions**, including recovery planning, hatchery supplementation, habitat modifications, and harvest.
    - Evaluate mitigation strategies to **reduce the impacts of marine mammal predation on steelhead** survival in Puget Sound.
    - Develop new, and align existing, **salmonid life-cycle models based on environmental and climate factors in freshwater, estuarine, and ocean habitats** that affect salmon and steelhead life histories and population dynamics.
    - **Collaborate with WCR on the Rebuilding Report** in support of the Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion, with a focus on what new science and actions are needed to best support decision-making.
    - Develop and apply state-of-the-art **juvenile salmonid detection systems** to enhance survival estimates of PIT-tagged fish in the Columbia River estuary in support of WCR needs regarding upstream hydropower operations and related activities.
    - Evaluate and help steer restoration priorities and efficacy following natural resource management actions, including **floodplain/estuary restoration and barrier removals** using field–life-cycle modeling techniques.
    - **Conduct ocean research on salmonids, their prey resources, and environmental factors** that influence distribution, with a focus on climate-mediated processes.
- **Collect and analyze data on fisheries and protected species interactions**, including large whale entanglement, seabird bycatch, and avian predation, to inform fisheries and protected resources management.
- **Employ and advance eDNA research** to aid in the management of critical protected species and populations.
- **Conduct biomonitoring of contaminants and HAB toxins** in protected resources and the ecosystems that support them.

Regional work plans

Beginning in FY19 and continuing now through FY24, each Fisheries Science Center receives a $600K lump sum to support projects within a "regional work plan" in two main categories: 1) the Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management [EBFM] Implementation Plan, and 2) the Stock Assessment Improvement Plan [SAIP].

Subject to HQ approval, we are required to distribute the funds in roughly equal amounts between them. We cannot use these funds for federal employee salaries or any physical infrastructure needs. In reviewing these particular proposals, the review team considered factors such as whether the project's scope was appropriate for the two sources of funding and whether it aligned with Center priorities. You can read the list of projects that we will propose to NMFS HQ.

Robust Science Planning

Priorities for FY23

When drafting the implementation plan for this goal in 2018, the Science in Service Implementation Team recognized the need to maintain the quality of NWFSC science and to ensure that the Center is:

1. Nimble and responsive to current and future Agency priorities.
2. Able to adopt new technologies.
3. Able to maintain a culture that fosters innovation and collaboration.

What do I need to know?

Our top priority is maintaining the Center's standards for high-quality science. We'll achieve this by staying flexible, adapting to and embracing change, and planning for the future.

How can I help?

- Read and look for ways to connect your work with the new aquaculture and salmon recovery science strategic plans.
- Be an innovator and collaborator.
- Attend the NMFS Mandate and budgeting tutorials and workshops.
- Follow data management procedures to ensure nothing is lost or misplaced.

In FY23, we will continue to make progress on the Robust Science Planning strategies by implementing the results of long-term science planning and focusing on Center-wide data management.

Long-term science planning and implementation

- **Start implementing the aquaculture and salmon recovery science strategic plans.** Share them with stakeholders within and outside of NMFS and initiate conversations about how best to partner and engage in pursuing the visions stated in those plans.
- **Establish several cross-organization/interdisciplinary teams** focused on science themes from the salmon recovery science strategic plan. At a minimum, these teams should deliver an annual assessment to the LT on the research themes to inform LT prioritization during the APP process.
- **Incorporate science themes from the aquaculture and salmon recovery science strategic plans into the criteria for FY24 APP** and decision-making on resource allocation in FY23, specifically:

    - Inform decision-making for **resource allocations and staff reassignments/hiring**.
    - **Identify current projects in the PPD that align with science priorities** and resource needs for high-priority projects.
    - Provide **additional funding to science priorities**, should new temporary or permanent funding become available in FY23.
- Initiate exploration and foundation development of a Center and/or NMFS **sustainable fisheries science strategic plan** to strengthen our support for healthy fisheries, ecosystems, and communities. The plan would identify our highest priorities to focus on existing resources, investments when additional funding is provided, and staff tasking/reassignment opportunities to fill critical gaps. We envision a small team in close collaboration with other Fisheries Science Centers. OST will execute this process, guided by existing MSA and NOAA mandates and priorities, informed by lessons learned from previous science planning teams.
- Support coordination within NOAA and with other partners related to **offshore wind energy**, an emerging area of focus for the west coast. We'll continue to contribute to monthly meetings between BOEM Pacific Leadership and West Coast NMFS leadership to discuss current activities and prioritize future activities. There are also resources proposed in the FY23 budgets (see Appendix). A standing NMFS West Coast Offshore Wind Energy Coordination (OWEC) team was established in 2022 by WCR, NWFSC, and SWFSC. This team is the main coordinating body for NMFS's west coast offshore wind energy work. Members of its science team come from each of the Center's science divisions. The Center will continue to work with and through this team, BOEM, and partners in the states, tribes, and industries on advancing the Administration's goals for green, carbon-neutral energy development. Read more about NMFS west coast offshore wind energy.
- Continue to **improve communication, transparency, and understanding within the LT** about the current state of and vision for all science divisions.
- **Enhance staff understanding of what drives our work**:
    - Develop and share **NMFS Mandate tutorials** that describe legal/federal-level mandates, regional priorities (regional action plans), and DOC, NOAA, and NMFS strategic plans.
    - Describe and receive **feedback on Center priorities** (APP, AGM, visioning).
    - Provide **budget education and transparency**:
        - Develop and use a **consistent budget planning template across divisions** for the first time.
        - **Share divisions' budgets appropriately with staff** to increase understanding of how critical needs are resourced and to make decision-making more transparent.

Refine annual science prioritization with the APP

After the major refinement of the APP undertaken in FY22, we will reflect on lessons learned and implement minor process improvements in FY23. Those improvements include:

- **Incorporate science priorities from the aquaculture and salmon recovery science strategic plans into the criteria for FY24 APP.** Target investments in science directly relevant to the priorities laid out in these strategies.

- **Refine the regional work plan (RWP) process** targeting EBFM/SAIP funds (see FY22 APP):
  - Need **more robust proposals and/or subject-matter expert (SME) review** of ongoing projects.
  - Need **clearer guidance on the scope of proposals** appropriate for these funds.
- **Increase collaboration between Planning Officer, OMI, and Division Coordinators** on improving budget information in PPD submissions.

Center-wide data management

The NOAA Data Governance Committee was established in 2022 to 1) better address the federally mandated executive orders and procedural directives, and 2) align NOAA's data management goals with the federal data strategy.

As part of this new framework, NOAA will assign an assistant chief data officer within each line office. The Center will continue to work through the Northwest Regional Data Governance Team (RDGT) and collaborative efforts like OpenScapes to improve the quality, reproducibility, and accessibility of data for internal, external, and public users. In FY23, the RDGT—in collaboration with Scientific Data Management (SDM), divisions, and program managers—will continue to build the foundation of our data enterprise with investments in:

- Evaluating resourcing levels and organizational design.
- Developing data inventories and data management plans.
- Supporting data standardization, systems improvement, and data rescue.
- Planning future capabilities.

Vivid Description Goal 2: Organizational Excellence

Intentionally Rebuilding Our Community

After two and a half years of enforced isolation, the Center needs to intentionally reestablish its sense of shared identity, collaboration, and mission. We have decided to focus on Organizational Excellence Objective 2:

> "*To foster a 'heartfelt sense of collegial community' and a 'strong sense of belonging and commitment' as called for in the Vivid Description, the Center needs to ensure that all staff feel welcomed and valued. This means ensuring a workplace free of bias in the broad sense, and proactively demonstrating institutional respect for employees. Staff that feel included and empowered are more likely to have high morale and be more productive as a result.*"

What do I need to know?

We need to be intentional in creating the Center and community we most want. We'll implement supporting mechanisms, such as more transparent budgeting and cross-division teams, to help the organization thrive. Further, we'll invest in growth and learning, especially for our supervisors, to equip them to be good, compassionate managers.

How can I help?

- Do your part to make the people in your life feel included and empowered.
- Contribute to one of the Center's staff-led committees.
- Share your experience in transitioning to a hybrid environment.

Our efforts in FY23 will focus on the following priority goals:

- **Support employee-led teams and workgroups** (see Center Cross-Teams):
  - Execute **work plans for WECT and TIDE.**
  - Develop and execute **work plans for DC Council, Data Management Work Group, Station Managers' Council**, etc.
- **Foster hybrid workplace collaboration:**
  - **LT meetings at each field station** on a rotating, quarterly basis.
  - **Upgrade communications technology** and increase support to field stations through a team of Facilities Management professionals.
  - **Share best practices and offer training** to take advantage of tools to increase collaboration (e.g., Calendar, Spaces, Keep, etc.).
  - **Host all-hands and similar Center-wide engagements from field stations.**
  - Provide guidance and training to **take advantage of tools and best practices to increase collaboration**.
- **Promote an equitable workplace:**
  - **Recognize the value of a mixed workforce** (FTEs, contractors, students, etc.) containing all levels of education and experience.
  - **Increase inclusion of contract and grantee employees** while communicating and following appropriate roles and responsibilities of our blended workforce through training and dialogue.
  - Ensure ongoing **transparency of budget development and execution**.
  - **Update Center core hours policy** for the hybrid workplace.

- Provide more **opportunities for staff to connect socially**:
  - Inclusive gatherings/activities.
  - "Lunch with Leadership" events.
  - Continue "Coffee with Chums" events.

Internal Fund

The Internal Fund represents the fixed costs of operating and sustaining the Center. The transparent development and execution of the Fund are central to efficient and effective science support. Each year, we carefully estimate the costs of maintenance, utilities, IT, acquisitions, management, contingencies, etc. Once reviewed and approved by the LT, these overhead costs become the basis for charges placed against our base appropriations, temporary income, and reimbursable credits. The sum of these charges represents the Center's Internal Fund. Once established, the Internal Fund Budget serves as the year's standard by which we measure our execution. Leadership receives biweekly updates to ensure maximum transparency and accountability.

New for FY23, our **research divisions will use a common rubric to provide the same level of transparency and accountability** in developing and executing their budgets.

Organizational Design

Last year we focused on the organizational design process. The FE and CB Division Directors led the process, engaging the thoughtfulness and skills of Center colleagues, aided by expert consultants, our WCR and Restoration Center colleagues, and incorporating input from the Center community.

In FY23, we will shift our focus toward implementing the results of our organizational design efforts. Supporting mechanisms hold the most promise to achieve the goals in the original charge: improving organizational function and enabling the Center to implement recommendations from the science strategies.

Supporting mechanisms directly address existing challenges and opportunities based on input from the Center community and on criteria developed by the core design team to gauge the success of the organizational design process. These actions are independent of organizational structures and will improve organizational excellence. They are also linked to McKinsey levers and recommendations from the Vivid Description Implementation Plan.

Of the many supporting mechanisms developed by the core design team, about a dozen rose to the top after prioritization by the core design and leadership teams. Following further input from the Center community, **we will implement several of the supporting mechanisms in FY23** and plan for the future implementation of others:

- We selected the supporting mechanism for **expanding and enhancing the use of cross-divisional teams**, especially to advance science priorities, as a priority this year. It was not only identified as a top priority through polling, but was also a consistent feature of all the possible organizational structural models that the core design team created.

- We will complement workforce planning efforts on existing cross-teams (see Workforce Planning). This will include developing best practices, beginning with a **pilot program involving teams focused on several of the multidisciplinary themes from the salmon recovery science strategic plan** (see Robust Science Planning). The pilot will consist of standing up or recruiting existing teams; setting objectives, expectations, and parameters; providing LT sponsorship; developing team charters with the support of facilitated training; and evaluating team function and progress according to predetermined milestones. We will develop and share best practices for cross-teams at the Center, particularly those with a science focus, with all existing and new teams.
- The supporting mechanism of **sharing division-level budget summaries and spending priorities with staff** to ensure budget transparency and understanding will also be a focus in FY23. We will build on the advances made this past year regarding budget transparency and work to improve routine budget summaries across divisions.
- We are considering the implementation of other supporting mechanisms in FY23, especially as they align with efforts that are ongoing or proposed elsewhere. **The full Center LT will develop, endorse, and support the organizational design implementation plan**, which will contain more details about all of the supporting mechanisms developed by the core design team.
- The FE and CB Division Directors will continue taking the lead in executing the implementation plan. We will **recruit an acting FE Division Director for FY23**, and organizational design implementation will be a major focus for that position.

We are not planning for a major structural reorganization in FY23. Through our organizational design work and discussions with the LT, we have not yet identified a compelling "boxes and lines" reorganization plan that would significantly improve the Center's ability to realize its mission and vision. Rather, we expect to address many of the key organizational issues and opportunities through the supporting mechanisms. We may continue to explore and execute smaller-scale changes to our structures that support organizational efficiency and effectiveness. We will leave the possibility of major structural reorganization open pending ongoing organizational design work.

Professional Development

We will continue to invest in professional learning and development. We are committed to the following opportunities in FY23 and are working with WECT to identify possible other opportunities aligned with our Vivid Description Implementation Plan:

- **Individual development plans (IDPs):** We continue to encourage the development and execution of IDPs. Check out these helpful IDP resources.
- **Mid-level career leadership development:** We support the participation of at least one employee per division in NOAA's new mid-level career leadership development program.
- **360s for supervisors:** We will create a second cohort of supervisors undertaking a 360° assessment and associated coaching.
- **Openscapes:** We will support another round of Openscapes training.

- **Welcome to the West Coast Workshop:** We are partnering with WCR, SWFSC, the Office of Law Enforcement, and the General Counsel Office to host a workshop in La Jolla, CA, in February 2023 for all federal employees who are new to the Center since the last workshop was held in early 2020.

Continuing to build a high-functioning Leadership Team

We will build on past efforts to make the new Center LT a highly functioning team. This coming year, we will **develop an annual calendar for the LT** so that the timing for important decisions is clearly communicated. This will help prepare LT members for important recurring duties such as staffing plans, annual divisional budgets, the APP, etc.

In addition, **the LT commits to holding quarterly retreats** focused on seasonal management priorities, teambuilding, and a deeper understanding of the science conducted at the Center. This helps make the new LT charter established in March 2022 a reality by creating time and space for the LT to tackle important topics and tasks deliberately.

In support of the Center's Vivid Description of the Future, we will **hold a retreat in November 2022 that includes all supervisors** to: 1) share consistent budget planning across the Center, discussing ways to better resource priorities, and 2) continue building shared leadership capabilities for the Center.

Best practices evaluation of divisional leadership and support

As part of ongoing efforts to optimize the effectiveness of how the Center's divisions function, we've asked an external consultant with Overland Resource Group to identify best practices and strengths/challenges of how various roles are structured to lead and support science divisions within the Center. The evaluation involves **interviews with staff** in those positions and people outside the Center in similar roles.

The intent is to provide data to the LT to consider in shaping these roles to be as meaningful as possible to the people in them, to deliver optimal leadership and support to the science divisions and the Center, and to provide a consistent approach to division leadership and management across the Center as a whole. The analysis is also expected to provide information that may be helpful to the team-chartering process that the Division Coordinators have initiated. **We expect this work to inform LT decision-making and future hiring and organizational structure decisions.**

Vivid Description Goal 3: State-of-the-Art Habitats for Science and People

We continue planning for our facility needs for the near future. This is necessary because of aging buildings, the mismatch between our existing facilities and our current and future needs as detailed in our Vivid Description of the Future, and SR 520 highway construction activities. We strive to be proactive and thoughtful about the changes many labs and office spaces will undergo. Maintaining a safe, secure, and professional workplace is our utmost concern, and several facilities-related decisions will remain front-and-center this year.

What do I need to know?

We are undertaking 3 major facilities projects:

1. Developing a request for bids for a new state-of-the-art leased facility in Seattle.
2. Refurbishing and reinvigorating the Manchester Field Station.
3. Creating a description and plans for new facilities at WRC.

How can I help?

- Continue to provide input to process, including change management.
- Actively engage in the design development process, which is the next significant milestone for the leased space.

The President's FY23 budget includes significant investments ($83.2M) for the Center's facilities. Both the House and Senate marks fully support this request. In addition, the Inflation Reduction Act includes resources supporting NOAA facilities funding.

Lease Acquisition for New Seattle Campus

NOAA remains committed to its 2020 decision to relocate the Center's Seattle presence from the Montlake campus into a new leased facility. With this commitment, the General Services Administration (GSA), the federal agency responsible for federal leasing activities, is leading a lease acquisition for the future Center.

A lease of this magnitude requires **congressional approval**. Therefore, a lease prospectus is at the NMFS Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for forwarding to Congress. Once the prospectus is approved (expected in late calendar year 2022), a lease will be acquired that meets our needs through a competitive process in FY23, with a **targeted move date of July 2025**. However, GSA has recently advised that this schedule is very likely to slip—due to "increased procurement time necessary for the test fit"—by up to 20 additional months.

Key points to consider:

- **The relocation will include capital investments at Manchester and at NOAA's Western Regional Center (WRC) at Sand Point.** These investments will meet the requirements identified through the last few years of requirements documentation, including the Program of Requirements developed in FY22 through a contract with BHDP and the efforts of many Center staff.
- We expect Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) construction on the Portage Bay phase of **SR520 reconstruction** to begin in early 2024. This will necessitate a move to **temporary swing space** for some of our most sensitive labs

and possibly for office space for several years beginning in 2024. We also anticipate building on our experience with telework during the COVID pandemic to **support large-scale telework** during that period. We will continue to plan for this time frame.

- Meanwhile, we will continue to invest in the safe operation of our current campus. We plan to **operate the visitor center at Montlake and have onsite guard support** for times when the visitor center is not staffed throughout FY23.
- Finally, we will continue to invest in technology to support **hybrid working environments**.

Manchester Investment

In FY21, we identified a combination of our Montlake and Mukilteo science portfolios that will move to Manchester (see the Capital Projects Summary). We also developed requirements for this space in collaboration with OMB, with input from staff. In FY23, we will continue working with OMB and the NOAA Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (OCAO) to **design and build the needed infrastructure at Manchester** using funding initially secured for the Mukilteo Research Station project, together with FY23 appropriations. We will also **recapitalize the Manchester seawater system** with funding obtained in 2018 from the agreement reached with WSDOT for Montlake.

Western Regional Center Investment

In FY21, we identified a combination of Montlake and Mukilteo science portfolios that will move to WRC (see the Capital Projects Summary). These components will join the existing Center components in Sand Point. In addition, we will continue working with OMB and OCAO to design a recapitalization project to meet our needs. Funding for this is anticipated in FY23. However, **execution here may lag behind Manchester and Montlake**, as there are ongoing NOAA planning efforts for the WRC campus and coordination with other NOAA entities is ongoing. In FY22, we selected an NWFSC Station Chief for WRC who will continue through FY23.

Field Station Management

Three of our Station Chiefs retired or moved on in 2022—from Pasco, Pt. Adams, and Newport. In FY23, we will explore and develop a hiring plan to address the vacancies, including the potential to **combine the Pasco and Point Adams Station Chiefs** into one position and to **hire a Station Chief in Newport**. In the interim, we continue to provide acting personnel for these positions and are working collaboratively between OMI and the science divisions to identify key needs at stations and how best to address those needs.

Vivid Description Goal 4: Partnerships, Public Outreach, and Education

Effective Collaborations

Mutually beneficial collaborations (in all shapes and forms) can help us fill technology, knowledge, skill, and financial gaps. Intentional collaboration allows us to work more effectively and efficiently, and the innovative solutions we develop together will advance our science mission. We'll pursue effective collaborations by:

- Having **conversations about the aquaculture and salmon recovery science strategic plans** with people inside and outside the Agency whose needs may align with ours.
- **Supporting cross-division teams** that introduce new perspectives and break down silos, bringing in subject-matter experts (e.g., communications) at strategic points in the process.
- **Promoting regional collaboration** within west coast NOAA offices to enhance organizational alignment and consistent communication and messages.
- Returning to **more in-person, face-to-face interactions and rebuilding relationships** with colleagues and collaborators.
- **Creating a Center Outreach Policy** to provide pathways to engagement for anyone at the Center.
- Collaborations may change with our evolving priorities. In FY22, the program meetings highlighted collaboration and partnerships, and we want to continue building on that. This year, we'll **invest time and energy in collaborations that align with our 2023 priorities**, including, but not limited to:
  - **Tribes, states, and others involved with the Columbia Basin Partnership** and the implementation of the Rebuilding Interior Columbia Basin Salmon and Steelhead Report.
  - **Traditional fisheries partners**, including the Council, Commission, and states.
  - **Salmon and aquaculture stakeholders** critical to the implementation of the aquaculture and salmon recovery science strategic plans.

What do I need to know?

Working well with others and aligning our needs is a common thread through all our 2023 AGM actions. We'll be exploring and, in many cases, rebuilding relationships with others as we emerge from the pandemic and reevaluate our priorities. We'll rely on strategic, inclusive communication practices to help us increase awareness and understanding about who we are, what we do, and how we do it.

How can I help?

- Plan early for how you'll communicate about your projects, activities, or news.
- Take the time to build (or rebuild) your relationships with new (or current) collaborators and engage local communities and underserved audiences.
- Consider sharing photos that showcase your work from the field or lab for us to promote via social media.
- Be aware of unconscious biases and create safe, inclusive spaces.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

The Center's success is predicated on fact-finding with diverse audiences (many of whom are not technical experts, including members of Congress, media, and affected and interested citizens), among them other researchers from various disciplines—even those within our own Center. Communication is just one aspect of the Center's multifaceted effort to build a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible environment. In FY23, we will:

- Continue to host **Program Meetings with a focus on opportunities to include diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in your work**. In particular, we would like to hear how programs have meaningfully advanced a respectful and inclusive environment. Also, we'll evaluate these and look for ways to share these findings with others who may need to know.
- Look into compensation or other **options to fairly treat our interns, speakers, and others who offer a service**.
- Examine existing Center activities such as all-hands meetings and Monster Jam to **determine if events should continue in-person, hybrid, or completely virtual** through a lens of equity, inclusion, and accessibility.
- Embrace **inclusive communications strategies** to better engage our diverse audiences. This includes incorporating inclusive language and images, offering aides for hearing and visually impaired audiences, and using storytelling to make our work more relevant and accessible.

Communicating What We Do and How It Affects Others

It's everyone's responsibility to share our scientific findings, administrative requirements, the value of our work, and engage with those who can most affect or be affected by our actions. In addition to our standard actions to promote our work online, through media, and in-person, we will also:

- Continue to offer **regular short science talks** to highlight science work at the Center.
- **Expand the use of Presentation Labs** and other communications expertise to enhance our communication skills.
- Improve Research Publication Tracking System (RPTS) reporting and integration with a **public-facing searchable database**.
- Stand up a **new West Coast Instagram page** to expand our reach to new and different audiences online.
- Redesign **Homeport in Google Sites** to improve internal communication.
- **Integrate communications planning early and often into Center activities** to take advantage of communication opportunities. Bring in communications staff and other expertise as needed.

Appendix

In this Google Folder, you can find all files associated with the FY23 AGM. This information provides background information to better understand the political, financial, and personnel constraints that guide our decision-making, as well as the processes we have in place for efficient and effective coordination across the Center.

Policy

FY23 will be the second full year of the Biden Administration. We now have most of the NOAA political appointees in place. The Administration continues to emphasize climate change and equity as two of its major priorities at every level, including NOAA. One of the major climate change priorities for this Administration is the development of clean energy, including offshore wind energy.

Department of Commerce: As required by law when a new Administration comes in, DOC released a new strategic plan covering the 2022–26 period. This plan reflects the Administration's priorities for climate and equity. It also emphasizes data, science, conservation, and the workforce.

NMFS Strategic Plans: NMFS is developing a new strategic plan to reflect the new Administration's priorities. That said, our understanding is that it will continue to be organized around the same three themes we have seen in many NMFS strategic plans of the past: sustainable seafood, protected resources, and organizational excellence. The latest plan is for 2019–22 and has the following main goals:

1. Amplify the economic value of commercial and recreational fisheries while ensuring their sustainability.
2. Conserve and recover protected species while supporting responsible fishing and resource development.
3. Improve organizational excellence and regulatory efficiency.

Once the new plan is finalized, it will, in turn, motivate updates to region-level strategies, including our own West Coast Geographic Strategic Plan 2020–2023.

Budget

The Center's budget mainly comes from annual federal appropriations, as with most federal agencies. Each year, the President proposes a budget to Congress. Congress then develops a budget through the Appropriations Committees in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Each of these committees develops its own proposed budget for the federal government. Historically, this has been a bipartisan process. However, like many things, this has become a more partisan process. In Congress, the Democratic party majority has controlled the markup process more than is the historical norm. That means that, when it

comes to the final budget and the need for bipartisan support, particularly in the Senate, the amounts we are likely to see in FY23 will be less than in either chamber's Appropriations Report, as the final budget incorporates views from the Republican minority members.

For this year, the House report was issued in July 2022. The Senate finished its report in August 2022, but we have not seen the specific language yet. We are not expecting a final budget until after the November 2022 election. This means that a) we expect to be on a Continuing Resolution (CR) beginning 1 October 2022, and b) the new Congress elected in November will likely control the FY23 budget. If either or both chambers flip parties, the final budget may end up significantly different than the marks.

The NOAA FY23 blue book was released in the spring. It detailed the President's FY23 budget. The following components are relevant to NWFSC:

- **The overall NMFS budget was $1,172,038,000**—an increase of $156M over FY22.
- **Climate, Ecosystems, and Fisheries:** "*Fisheries and Ecosystem Science Programs and Services: Climate-Ready Fisheries: Climate-Informed Fisheries Assessments and Management Strategies for Changing Oceans:* NOAA requests an increase of $10,000,000 as part of the NOAA cross-line office Climate Ecosystem Fisheries Initiative (CEFI) to support the expanded production, delivery, and use of climate science in fisheries assessments and management to address the impacts of climate change on marine resources, fisheries, and the many businesses and communities that depend on them. With these funds, NOAA will establish a nationwide ocean modeling and decision support system that provides decision-makers with climate-informed advice on changing ocean conditions, impacts on marine resources, and best management strategies to reduce impacts and increase economic resilience. These funds ensure that increased understanding of changing ecosystems is incorporated in management decisions."
- **Offshore Wind:** "*Fisheries and Ecosystem Science Programs and Services: Wind Energy: Fisheries Science & Technical Reviews:* NOAA requests an increase of $8,669,000 to assess the effects of planned offshore wind energy activities on fish, fisheries, and ecosystems. Funds will support the regulatory review process for offshore energy assessment and FY 2023 Budget Summary | Chapter 3—National Marine Fisheries Service advances scientific understanding of the interaction of offshore wind on NOAA trust resources to help inform the regulatory review process. Offshore wind development is rapidly expanding and represents a new use of our marine waters requiring substantial scientific and regulatory review. NOAA is requesting a total of $36,680,000 in four complementary areas within NMFS and $8,719,000 within NOS for a total of $45,399,000 to support offshore wind energy development and mitigate potential impacts of offshore wind energy projects."
- **Surveys:** "*Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys, and Assessments: Climate-Ready Fisheries: Advancing Fisheries Survey Capacity for Commercially and Recreationally Valuable Species:* NOAA requests an increase of $11,562,000 for surveys, sampling, and analysis capabilities to better track species that are shifting their distributions due to climate change while working to restore survey days at sea (DAS) for fish and protected species to levels that were performed in the recent past. Surveys are core to our fisheries and protected species management mission. The data gathered

through surveys inform stock assessments, management actions, and predictions of future trends. Funds will primarily be used to acquire survey capacity to increase the geographic extent of surveys and collect more climate and environmental data by purchasing supplemental DAS on NOAA ships and chartered vessels, and by investing in advanced sampling technologies (e.g., Saildrone, DriX) to augment survey capacity using innovative approaches."

- **Facilities:** "*NOAA Construction: Northwest Fisheries Science Center Facilities Consolidation:* NOAA requests an increase of $83,200,000 for the consolidation and realignment of NWFSC facilities in the vicinity of Seattle, Washington. Necessary improvements will be made to ensure the continuation of the research and innovation to build sustainable fisheries, restore threatened and endangered species, safeguard healthy ecosystems, and reduce risks to human health."

The House Appropriations Committee adopted the FY23 House Appropriations Report on 28 June 22. It contains the following of particular relevance to NWFSC:

- **Overall NMFS budget of $1,099,964,000**—an increase of $84M over FY22.
- **Offshore Wind:** "The Committee applauds the President's initiative to support the growth of offshore wind energy as part of the broader goal of reducing carbon emissions. As such, the recommendation includes an increase of no less than $39,149,000 above the fiscal year 2022 enacted level for NOAA's initiatives in support of wind energy, fully funding the requested increases." Some of these increases are intended for the west coast, including NWFSC.
- **Climate-Ready Fisheries:** "*Transition to Climate-Ready Fishery Management.*—The Committee recognizes the serious impacts of climate change on fisheries and protected species, and the corresponding need for increased resources to prepare for climate-ready management of living marine resources. Sustainable fisheries management and protected species conservation are made more challenging by climate change-driven impacts, including changes to the distribution, productivity, and abundance of fish stocks, protected species, and the habitats on which they depend. The Committee supports NMFS' proposals to address these new requirements and provides an increase of $7,000,000 above the fiscal year 2022 enacted level, including no less than $5,000,000 from Fisheries and Ecosystem Science Programs and Services, to support this work to prioritize activities that will make fisheries and fishing-dependent communities more adaptable to climate change. NMFS is also directed to increase the scope and pace of efforts and consider new initiatives that will maintain sustainability and yield greater stability in Federal fishery and protected species management as the oceans change."
- **Southern Resident Killer Whales:** "*Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW).*—The Committee provides an increase of not less than $1,000,000 above the fiscal year 2022 enacted level for the SRKW program for research and monitoring to improve the recovery of the species. The Committee further encourages NMFS to support existing partnerships between Federal and State agencies, Native American tribes, public ports, and nonprofits to monitor and reduce noise impacts on this endangered species."
- **Pacific Salmon:** "*Pacific Salmon.*—The Committee provides $73,000,000 for Pacific Salmon, $6,000,000 above the fiscal year 2022 enacted level. The recommendation provides no less than $6,500,000, an increase of $1,500,000, within Pacific Salmon to

implement NMFS' Hatchery and Genetic Management Plans (HGMPs) and to continue to address the backlog of HGMPs as directed in previous fiscal years. The Committee directs NOAA to examine opportunities to leverage the existing civilian conservation corps model to develop a dedicated workforce to accomplish priority salmon habitat improvement projects and other priority near-shore restoration goals that have been identified as part of the recovery strategy for one or more of the twenty-eight populations of salmon and steelhead currently listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA."

- **Fish Surveys:** "*Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys, and Assessments.*—The Committee provides $213,768,000 for Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys, and Assessments, $26,268,000 above the fiscal year 2022 enacted level. The recommendation includes an increase of $5,000,000 above the fiscal year 2022 enacted level for additional surveys and assessments, including to support the Climate-Ready Fisheries initiative. The Committee encourages NMFS to consider increasing evaluations on species that are listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature as vulnerable, endangered, critically endangered, or are listed under the ESA; as well as those that have outdated stock assessments or no stock assessments at all; if they lack annual catch limits; or if rebuilding progress has not been evaluated."
- **Fishery Information Networks:** "*Fishery Information Networks.*—Within funding provided for Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys, and Assessments, the Committee provides no less than $24,000,000 for the Fishery Information Networks."
- **Aquaculture and Carbon Sequestration:** "*Carbon Sequestration Through Aquaculture.*—The Committee recognizes advances in aquaculture such as deep-water kelp sequestration and oyster farming play an important role in mitigating the impacts of a changing climate. Like land forests, kelp forests act as powerful carbon banks, removing up to twenty times more carbon per acre than land forests. The Committee encourages NOAA and OAQ to support sustainable carbon sequestration demonstration projects in deep ocean water."
- **Facilities:** The report supports the full $83M request in the president's budget for the NWFSC facility investment. "There is significant concern that several NMFS laboratories will soon be unable to perform basic scientific functions, given the age of the infrastructure, state of disrepair, and changing physical environments in which they are located. Within the funds provided for NOAA Construction, NOAA shall prioritize investments in the Northeast and Southeast, where regional footprint studies identified NOAA's most pressing facilities challenges, and continue the implementation of the Northwest Regional Footprint Study, as requested. As part of this work, NOAA is encouraged to accelerate the competitive solicitation process for proposals from academic, university, and nonprofit partners to colocate NMFS laboratories as a means of leveraging extramural research and enhancing scientific capabilities."
- **Minority Report:** This report included a minority report from the committee's Republican members that reads, in part: "Finally, this bill simply spends too much. We remain deeply concerned about the runaway spending of this Majority and Administration. With a topline increase of nearly $9.8 billion and double-digit percentage increases for many of the agencies in this bill, the spending level is irresponsible…. We must never lose sight of the consequences of runaway federal spending, and the hardships felt across American communities and industries as the resulting, record-high inflation takes its toll on our great nation. For the sake of struggling families, we must reject this trend of undisciplined spending, regain a focus on our national responsibilities, and make tough choices to slow the growth of the federal government."

On 28 July 2022, the Senate Appropriation Committee Chair issued a press release linking to the proposed Senate Appropriations Report language. While this has not yet been voted on by the Appropriations Committee, and it is not clear to what extent the Republican members of the committee were involved, the following elements of that proposed language are relevant to the Center:

- **Overall NMFS budget proposed at $1,110,076,000**—about $10M more than the House mark and $94M more than the FY22 enacted budget.
- **Adjustments to Base:** "The increased funding provided shall be used to cover the requested ATB costs, across all NOAA line offices, among other programmatic increases highlighted herein."
- **Offshore Wind:** "*Fisheries Surveys and Offshore Wind.*—The Committee supports the responsible development of renewable energy projects off the Atlantic Coast, as proposed by the administration. The Committee provides a total of $16,500,000 above the fiscal year 2022 enacted level across NMFS to address consultation and permitting, stock assessment, management, and protected resources need related to the expansion of offshore wind energy projects. Of this amount, $1,500,000 is within Marine Mammals, Sea Turtles, and Other Species; $4,000,000 is within Fisheries and Ecosystem Science Programs and Services; $7,000,000 is within Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys, and Assessments; and $4,000,000 is within Fisheries Management Programs and Services."
- **Pacific Salmon:** "*Pacific Salmon.*—The Committee provides $72,000,000 for Pacific Salmon, which is $5,000,000 above the fiscal year 2022 enacted level. Within the funding provided for Pacific Salmon, the Committee encourages NOAA to work with partners to address the backlog and expedite approval of Hatchery and Genetic Management Plans, and support the implementation of new Habitat Conservation Plans. In addition, NMFS is encouraged to work with State and Tribal partners on pinniped removal, as appropriate."
- **Climate, Ecosystems, and Fisheries:** "The Committee recognizes that sustainable fishery management is made more challenging by climate change-driven impacts, including changes in the distribution, productivity, and abundance of fish stocks. Thus, the Committee provides $1,000,000 within Fisheries and Ecosystem Science Programs and Services to pilot an operational system that provides climate-informed advice on changing ocean conditions, impacts on marine resources, and best management strategies to reduce impacts and increase economic resilience. In addition, NMFS is encouraged to establish Fisheries and Climate Decision Support Systems to deliver the climate-informed advice needed for effective marine resource management in rapidly changing oceans."
- **Monitoring:** "*Northwest Fisheries Ecosystem Monitoring System.*—Within funds for Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys, and Assessments, the Committee provides $850,000 to maintain a time-series monitoring system of hydrographic and ecological data to inform fishery management on the Northern California Current."
- **Aquaculture:** "The Committee provides $22,000,000 for NMFS Aquaculture, which is $4,000,000 above the fiscal year 2022 enacted level. Within the additional funding provided, NOAA is encouraged to upgrade equipment and to increase the amount of staff focused on aquaculture at all NMFS fisheries science centers, including returning staffing levels to those in the fiscal year 2010 at the Northeast and Northwest Fisheries Science Centers."

- **Facilities:** "*NOAA Construction.*—The Committee provides $148,000,000 for NOAA's highest priority facilities repair and deferred maintenance requirements, which is $89,000,000 above the fiscal year 2022 enacted level. Thirty days before obligating any funds, NOAA shall submit a report detailing how the funds will be expended and an explanation of why these projects were prioritized. NOAA is also directed to immediately inform the Committee if there are any significant schedule delays or project cost increases. Within the funds provided for NOAA Construction, NOAA shall consolidate and realign the Northwest Fisheries Science Center facilities, as requested. The Committee also encourages NOAA to accelerate the competitive solicitation process for proposals from academic, university, and nonprofit partners to co-locate other NMFS laboratories and directs NOAA to prioritize funding for infrastructure projects related to marine operations, including facilities to accommodate NOAA research vessels."

In addition to the regular appropriations, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) became law in August 2022. This supplemental appropriation includes very significant, albeit one-time resources for NOAA, mostly in support of the climate agenda of the Administration. The following provisions are relevant for NWFSC:

- **Coastal Communities and Climate Resilience: $2.6B**—"for fiscal year 2022, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, $2,600,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2026, to provide funding through direct expenditure, contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, or technical assistance to coastal states (as defined in paragraph (4) of section 304 of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1453(4))), the District of Columbia, Tribal Governments, nonprofit organizations, local governments, and institutions of higher education (as defined in subsection (a) of section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a))), for the conservation, restoration, and protection of coastal and marine habitats, resources, Pacific salmon and other marine fisheries, to enable coastal communities to prepare for extreme storms and other changing climate conditions, and for projects that support natural resources that sustain coastal and marine resource dependent communities, marine fishery and marine mammal stock assessments, and for related administrative expenses."
- **Facilities: $150M**—"for the construction of new facilities, facilities in need of replacement, piers, marine operations facilities, and fisheries laboratories."
- **Cloud Computing: $190M**—"for the procurement of additional high-performance computing, data processing capacity, data management, and storage assets, to carry out section 204(a)(2) of the High-Performance Computing Act of 1991 (15 U.S.C. 5524(a)(2)), and for transaction agreements authorized under section 301(d)(1)(A) of the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017 (15 U.S.C. 8531(d)(1)(A)), and for related administrative expenses."

Staffing

Workforce Planning

Our Center colleagues are both the largest and most important investment in our mission. Approximately 60% of our base budget is labor. The Center's labor costs continue to rise higher than our annual base budget as we adjust annually for both performance and cost of living increases. In FY22, we experienced a net accession rate of –6.8%, compared to –1.1% in FY21. We will likely continue to see similar annual attrition rates as retirement eligibility continues to rise. It is more important than ever to ensure we have a robust succession plan and a proactive hiring plan to align our science activities and expertise with the strategic goals of the Agency and Center for organizational excellence (Vivid Description Strategy 1.A). The LT has undertaken or implemented several actions to support succession and hiring efforts at the Center:

1. We are committed to competing for both reassignment and detail opportunities.
2. We are promoting detail opportunities across other NMFS Offices in the Weekly.
3. We are investing in both Individual Development Plans and Center-wide training opportunities that enhance current and future-needed skills and capabilities.
4. We support employees participating in NOAA mentorship and leadership programs.
5. We review and weigh in on every hiring action at the Center.

While we need to ensure we are flexible enough to withstand budget uncertainties, we recognize we need to backfill key positions and also create new positions to support the success of the Center. A critical leadership position to be filled through the Temporary Recruitment authority in FY23 is the Fish Ecology Division Director. Other division leadership positions we look forward to filling are the Aquaculture and IT Program Managers. The LT will make decisions to hire or reassign critical positions based on identified priorities and resourcing. We will continue to use hiring authorities that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) to recruit and bring aboard professionals to diversify our workforce. We are collaborating with TIDE and our human capital colleagues to fully implement hiring practices that promote DEIA. We are committed to ensuring every employee has a DEIA element or activity in their FY23 performance plans. All of these investments in our current workforce will make us more adaptable to future changes.

Furthermore, we are committed to providing clarity and transparency on career paths within the Center. In FY22, we embarked on a vision for senior research scientists at the Center, culminating in a recommendation to the LT on how to move the Center to realize that vision. The Center's senior research scientists (SRS) developed a report which was shared for comment with the Center community, revised, and submitted to the Center LT for consideration. In June 2022, the LT considered the report and developed the following guidance for the NWFSC SRS program:

1. The Center should maintain an SRS program.
2. Center SRSs should be positioned within science divisions as needed. In general, they should not be housed within the Office of the Science Director.
3. Center SRS positions should be focused on research themes or topics that the LT identifies over time and that reflect Center priorities.

4. Center SRS positions should generally be filled using existing processes (e.g., Promotion Advisory Board and NOAA Fisheries Committee on Scientific Stature (NFCSS) or their successors) with internal candidates.
5. Center SRS positions should have minimal or no supervisory responsibility.
6. Every Center SRS position must include a service component oriented toward providing the LT and division directors with science advice, executive sponsor roles for Center initiatives, and/or other contributions to the Center community.
7. The Center should have a flexible ceiling of approximately five (5) SRS positions at any given time, pending availability of funding.

This year, the LT will work with our NOAA Human Capital Office (OHCS) to identify methods to achieve this guidance. Once methods have been identified, the LT will share the outcomes, and the revised guidance will be communicated together with the SRS report to the Center and NMFS Office of Science and Technology. We anticipate completing this in FY23.

The Fisheries Promotion Advisory Board (PAB) was issued in May 2022 and is currently being updated again with clarifying language from OHCS. The PAB replaces the Center's Position Management Advisory Committee. The PAB provides guidance to Center candidates for noncompetitive promotions. It establishes minimum requirements for and ensures consistent criteria within NMFS to evaluate professional and scientific standing. Career ladder positions are required to be reviewed via the new PAB process. In FY23, the Center will fully implement the new requirements of the PAB in Q2. We will provide resources and training to support the success of the PAB.

Center Cross-Teams

We support both standing and ad-hoc teams at the Center and look forward to the organizational design supporting mechanism pilot outcomes to expand and enhance our use of cross-teams as a way of advancing our work at the Center. We strive to ensure these teams are diverse and inclusive in the way of division participation, staff experience, and perspectives, and we encourage appropriate employee participation that aligns with expertise, interests, and availability. Employees and supervisors should agree on the level and type of employee participation in committees and cross-teams. Participation in these committees should be captured in individual performance plans (see this Google folder for suggested language). The LT is committed to providing executive sponsorship for each team that:

- Links the team's work and supports communication between the team and the LT.
- Is engaged and attends meetings, as appropriate.
- Holds the team accountable, approves team work products, and helps the team vet products through the LT.
- Supports communication with supervisors.

Each team, standing and ad-hoc, shall have, at a minimum: 1) an LT-approved charter that is reviewed annually, 2) a workplan approved annually by the LT, and 3) an annual accomplishments report to the LT. These documents should all be made available to the Center.

We support the following standing Center employee committees:

- **Facilities Working Group (FWG)**.
- **Team for Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (TIDE)**. View the Center-approved TIDE annual action plan.
- **Workplace Engagement and Collaboration Team (WECT)**. View the Center-approved WECT annual action plan.
- **Northwest Regional Data Governance (RDG) Team**.
- **Division Coordinators (DC) Team**. (Charter coming soon.)

We also support the following ad-hoc Center employee committees in FY23:

- **The Ocean Surveys Working Group (OSWG):** The OSWG report delivery was delayed in 2022. It will be completed and shared with the LT for review, and then shared with the Center for comments in FY23 Q1. View the OSWG charter.
- **West Coast Wind Energy Team:** Center employees from each science division are part of a standing West Coast NMFS wind energy team (the OWEC) led by WCR.
- **Supervisors' Team:** This team provides peer resources and support and recommendations to the LT on reimagining the work and work life with COVID (under Vivid Description Goal 2).
- **Salmon Teams:** Consistent with this AGM, we anticipate several salmon science teams supporting the LT and the Center in advancing the salmon science strategy and organizational design supporting mechanisms.

APP Process

Process Description

The LT executed its sixth full-fledged APP for FY23 to prioritize 119 projects identified by staff. All the projects are available for all Center staff to review in the Project Planning Database (without specific funding information). The projects were evaluated by the DD of the division the project originated from, using a revised set of criteria as well as a decision matrix. The matrix was used in lieu of scoring each project, in order to prioritize projects into four categories (must do, should do, could do, consider phasing out) instead of the top-to-bottom ranking system used in previous years.

Each DD presented their division's priorities to the rest of the LT, along with representatives from SWFSC and WCR, during a one-day retreat on 29 June. The two-day APP retreat was held on 6–7 July, providing a few days for LT members to address questions that arose during the first retreat.

A large number of projects fell under the must-do and should-do categories, reflecting the fact that a great deal of our science is not only outstanding but also strongly supports our agency mandates and Center priorities. Of particular interest this year were projects in the could-do category, because they lend themselves to further conversations on alignment and outcome. This category is quite diverse, in that some projects are "could-do" because they

are less well aligned with Center priorities, while others are "could-do" because the LT sees that, e.g., other entities could potentially do the work. When providing feedback to staff, the DDs will pay particular attention to projects that fall in the could-do category so they can best advise the project's lead on the future direction for those projects.

Changes in the Process

The intent behind this new process was:

- To communicate the level of priority of each project more clearly. The quantitative ranking process was somewhat misleading, because projects are funded by different funding lines that are not interchangeable, so listing all projects by individual scores did not always adequately represent their relative priority levels across the Center.
- To enable each DD to dive deeper into evaluating projects from their respective divisions, for which they have more understanding, by reducing the overall number of projects evaluated by each DD. This resulted in a more in-depth evaluation combined with an opportunity for each DD to "educate" the rest of the LT on their divisions' collective work.

All those changes were made with the intent to meet the recommendations outlined in the 2019 Vivid Description Implementation Plan, specifically Strategy 3.A: "Provide transparency in the Center's budget process."

U.S. Secretary of Commerce
Gina M. Raimondo

Under Secretary of Commerce for
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