

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE STRATEGY

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) discussed the draft report on Existing Council Activities Responsive to Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) Concerns (Agenda Item F.1, Attachment 1) and the topic of EEJ in the Council in general and the SSC specifically, and offers the following comments.

The SSC supports the Council's goals and objectives outlined in the draft report and agrees with the assessment that an appropriate response to this initiative by the Council will require more resources and professionally-facilitated training. The SSC also concurs with the National Marine Fisheries Service draft policy regarding the need for new research and data to support this initiative including collection of demographic information to identify and understand the needs of underserved communities and, once identified, engage those communities to identify, develop, and potentially co-produce research relevant to their needs and interests.

Very little information is currently available to the Council regarding the population of underserved communities who are affected by Council decision-making and how members of those communities participate in fishing and seafood industries. Identifying these communities should be a near-term priority. The SSC draws the Council's attention to a survey the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) hopes to field this summer, which will collect information from commercial vessel owners to aid in identifying underserved populations and communities. However, this survey will not provide information about fishery stakeholders who are not commercial vessel owners. Information on crew members and participants in West Coast fisheries other than vessel owners and processors is essential in identifying and responding to underserved populations and communities. The SSC also notes a need to better understand the demographic composition of the various Council bodies, which can be compared to recent census data and fishery stakeholders as a way of identifying underserved communities in the Council process (e.g., underrepresentation by race and/or gender.)

There is a large body of knowledge about the topic of EEJ. Experts on the topic should be contracted to examine how EEJ is accounted for in current Council activities, and how the Council can better achieve its EEJ objectives. The Council should expand expertise on EEJ issues on its staff and advisory bodies. The SSC proposes that experts in EEJ be involved in SSC development of research and data needs this cycle, so that we can make progress on these issues as soon as possible. While the SSC can highlight high priority research and data needs topics, the SSC does not have control over who does the research nor how underserved communities are engaged or included in the research itself.

Areas of the draft report where more expertise may help better shape the issue include the section on hiring, which does not examine whether there is bias in the advertising and recruitment for Council employment positions, and the section that mentions, "Council policies often take into consideration community fishing dependence, resilience, and vulnerability",

which is not the same as conducting an environmental justice analysis. While Council and advisory body openings are publicly advertised, many people who apply are already involved in the Council process or know people who are involved in the Council process. This means that recruiting and the applicant pool may be more homogenous than intended. To increase diversity, there likely needs to be proactive efforts to engage people not currently involved (rather than simply stating that under-represented groups are encouraged to apply). Examples of active recruitment efforts include advertising with historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), minority-serving professional societies (e.g., SACNAS¹, AISES²), and Tribal entities.

The SSC also encourages considerations of representation in addition to specific areas of expertise when reviewing nominations for vacancies on Council advisory bodies and committees. Moreover, being a single representative from a particular underrepresented group can have its own challenges and best practices in this area suggest aiming for at least two representatives from underserved communities. The SSC recognizes that this is a long-term task for everyone in the Council family and strongly supports the effort.

PFMC
04/03/23

¹ [Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics & Native Americans in Science](#)

² [Advancing Indigenous People in STEM](#)