

ECOSYSTEM WORKGROUP SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT ON COUNCIL MEETING AND PROCESS EFFICIENCIES

The Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) discussed Council meeting process efficiencies and effectiveness at its meeting on March 6, 2023, and subsequently reviewed the situation summary and Council staff white paper submitted for the April 2023 meeting.

The April 2023 Council staff white paper (Agenda Item F.2.a, Attachment 1) mainly addresses the technical challenges and efficiencies of in-person, online, and hybrid meeting formats. The EWG has minor comments on that white paper:

- While the investment in hybrid meeting equipment may be substantial up front, the savings to the Council in travel costs from even a few advisory body members would probably pay for that investment within 1-2 meetings.
- Hybrid meetings make the Council process more accessible to all advisory body members in the event that a member is unable to travel due to health reasons, caretaking responsibilities, etc. Hybrid meetings also have been shown to increase equity in attendance, and with the advancements in technology on many fishing vessels, may allow for at least some industry representatives to participate even while at sea during the fishing season(s).
- The EWG members who attended the Council's March 2023 meeting in person were impressed with the sound quality of the equipment used to allow advisory bodies to report remotely on Council agenda items.

If the Council decides to embark on a strategic planning process as suggested in the [situation summary](#) for this agenda item, the EWG refers the Council and any committee of the whole to the [September 2022 EWG report](#) on Council meeting efficiencies and effectiveness. Our September 2022 report includes both our recommendations for future EWG meeting operations and recommendations for the proposed strategic planning exercise.

A strategic planning process should, at a minimum, include hard looks at:

- Modernizing and improving the Council's use of the advance briefing book and advance briefing period (2 weeks prior to Council meeting). EWG advance briefings are regularly attended by 40-100 people, while EWG in-person meetings are regularly attended by fewer than 5 members of the public. Council staff makes recordings of our advance briefings available to the public before the start of in-person meetings, which helps Council process participants better understand our written materials.
- Improving the efficiencies in the annual or biennial management processes in the fishery management plans (all of which are summarized in the appendix to the [EWG's Report 1 for March 2023 Agenda Item H.2.a](#)). Are our existing management processes and schedules based on the most efficient and effective use of science, analyses, and public input in the management process, or are they designed to fit into the Council's traditional March-April-June-September-November meeting schedule? Could online briefings or Council meetings be added to the annual calendar in a way that would allow the Council to reduce its in-person meeting time?

- The amount of Council floor time and advisory body time spent on agenda items where no decision is needed. We are uncertain whether the Pacific Council is more gracious and welcoming of a wide-range of ocean-related briefings than other fishery management councils, but suspect that at least some of the non-decision items could be moved to advance briefing webinars.

The EWG again reminds the Council that they recently completed a scenario planning exercise around adapting fish stocks and fisheries to climate change, and refers the Council to the results of the workshops associated with the Climate and Communities Initiative, which included many suggestions for improving Council decision making flexibility and nimbleness. It would be unfortunate if the Council were to engage in a new strategic planning process and then emerge from that process without making noticeable changes to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council process.

PFMC
03/31/23