

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON COUNCIL AND PROCESS EFFICIENCIES

The Habitat Committee (HC) was briefed by staff on the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) process efficiencies document, with an emphasis on the amount of Council meeting floor time spent on different topics and agenda item components during a four-year period, and provided insights and useful information for looking at needs and determining potential efficiencies.

It would be compelling to frame this discussion in terms of efficiency. Additional time and work are needed, with the same amount of resources, to prioritize and address complex and emerging needs for West Coast fisheries. Effectively, how do we reduce inefficiencies to ensure that time and resources remain available to tackle difficult issues such as climate change resilience, gear switching, and marine planning?

It would also be useful for additional clarification in table and figure titles so there is no misunderstanding of the floor time analysis presented. For example, Table 4 summarizes Council floor time by percentages. From a process efficiency standpoint, absolute duration would be a more accurate summary of inefficiencies than relative time (i.e., the percentages). This issue becomes obvious when comparing Table 6 with Table 4. Table 4 suggests a huge proportion of time is spent on habitat reports, but Table 6 shows that habitat is a small duration compared to most other agenda items. Likewise, the large difference in proportions of report time versus Council action time reflects that the HC completes Council actions (e.g., letter writing) without the need for extensive Council discussion. Both points highlight that color-coding percentages to improve efficiencies without thinking about absolute duration might be misleading. To better clarify these issues, we suggest better descriptions in table captions, as well as consideration of an additional table summarizing absolute duration.

The HC notes that this report only considers Council actions that occur on the floor but should also acknowledge that Council action includes “off-floor” actions that have fisheries conservation implications, such as Council letters to action agencies regarding impacts to EFH and marine planning.

The HC notes that essential fish habitat (EFH) reviews, which take a considerable amount of Council time, are not included in Table 8. This is likely because it was not subject to a specific text search. It is probably part of the “All other items” category or possibly included under the respective fishery management plans. Given the Council’s extensive engagement in EFH reviews, particularly groundfish, it might be instructive to at least note this in a footnote. It also might be useful to rename the table “Duration of selected issues during Council floor discussion”.

While there is an advantage to having advisory body input during the process, having an outside person with business management and process efficiency expertise come in to assist later in the process may be useful.