

Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council)

Habitat Committee – Operational Guidelines

The Habitat Committee (HC) is an advisory committee to the Pacific Fishery Management Council. The HC provides advice to the Council on habitat issues, concerns, policy, and actions that may impact habitat important to Council-managed fisheries. [Council Operating Procedure \(COP\) 6](#) describes the HC's function and composition.

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) includes essential fish habitat (EFH) provisions to ensure that fisheries habitats are identified, described, and protected to the extent practicable. These provisions (MSA Section 305(b)(3)) state that Council may comment on and make recommendations to any Federal or State agency on activities that may affect fisheries habitat, including essential fish habitat, and shall comment on and make recommendations on any activity that is likely to substantially affect the habitat of an anadromous fishery resource under its authority. The HC is charged with tracking such issues.

Typically, the HC brings issues to the attention of the Council during the Habitat Issues agenda item at each Council meeting. When issues arise that require the attention of the Council between meetings, the HC may utilize the Quick Response Procedure, in which the Council Executive Director circulates a comment letter or other product to Council members for approval.

Habitat Committee Composition

The HC includes one member each (unless otherwise noted) from:

- One member from NMFS Northwest or Southwest Fisheries Science Center.
- One member from National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) West Coast Region.
- One member from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).
- One member from Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC).
- Four members from among the four state fishery agencies (Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and California).
- Two tribal representatives (one Klamath, one Northwest or Columbia River).
- Two members representing the fishing industry - one commercial and one sport.
- One member representing a conservation group.
- One member from National Marine Sanctuaries (NMS).
- Two members at-large.

HC members representing U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission serve indefinite terms. Other HC members serve three-year terms.

Habitat Committee Roles and Operations

- Chair and Vice Chair:
 - Chair is responsible for running the meeting and is assisted by the Vice Chair and Staff Officer as needed.
 - The Vice Chair fills in when the Chair is absent or otherwise unavailable.
 - Chair and Vice Chair work with the Staff Officer on scheduling meetings, developing agendas, and making writing and facilitator assignments.
 - Chair and Vice Chair are elected annually by the full HC.
- Staff Officer:

- Work with Chairs on agendas and meeting planning
- Compile HC reports, letters, agendas, etc. and route as appropriate (briefing book, comment letters, etc)

Meeting Logistics

HC agendas will note the agenda title, the estimated duration, the presenter, and a note taker. The note taker is responsible for drafting a supplemental report that captures the HC's opinions and advice. The draft report is reviewed by the entire HC, and then handed off to the Staff Officer who will finalize formatting and submit to the Secretariat for posting to the Briefing Book for that particular meeting. The HC often uses Google docs to share materials, draft reports, and other pertinent information. In rare cases, one or more HC members may disagree with the majority. In such cases, the report should characterize the views of those members and explain the rationale. Detailed operational procedures are provided in the Habitat Committee Members Handbook.

All HC meetings are open to the public, and a public comment opportunity will be scheduled for each day the HC is in session.

Respectful Workplace and Meeting Expectations

All participants in HC meetings, whether remote or in person, are expected to treat others respectfully. Reports of inappropriate behavior will be taken seriously and followed through to resolution per the Council's Council Operating Procedures and Harassment Procedures Policy. Council ground rules apply to all committee and Council meetings, including breaks, meals, and "off" hours for those attending Council meetings in person. Ground rules include:

- Treat everyone with respect.
- Listen and seek to understand differing views or opinions.
- Wait to be recognized by the moderator before speaking.
- Do not interrupt or engage in side-conversations when others have the floor.
- Represent information honestly and openly.
- Refrain from using offensive, disrespectful, or derogatory language. Personal or organizational attacks or insults will not be tolerated.
- Allow for a balance of speaking time

Additional Information and Resources

The following links provide background information on the Council process and the Habitat Committee in particular.

- Schedule of [future Council meetings](#)
- [Travel and reimbursement](#)
- Guide to the [Council process](#)
- Council [fact sheets](#) (especially see "acronyms," "essential fish habitat" and "Council meetings 101")
- Council Operating [Procedures](#) for the Habitat Committee
- HC [correspondence and resolutions](#)
- HC [roster](#)