

ECOSYSTEM WORKGROUP ON COUNCIL OPERATIONS AND PRIORITIES

The Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) met via webinar on May 24, 2024, to discuss Agenda Item C.2, Council Operations and Priorities and other issues. During that meeting, the EWG discussed the Executive Director’s Recommendations for Organizational and Process Refinements ([Attachment 1](#)), and the Council Staff Report on Agenda Topic Prioritization Methods ([Attachment 2](#)). The EWG’s comments on these documents and this agenda item reflect the action scheduled for this meeting, which is Council review and discussion and not final action.

The EWG appreciates that the Executive Director incorporated the suggestions contained in the April EWG [Supplemental Report 1](#) when crafting the recommendations for organizational and process refinements contained in Attachment 1. The EWG continues to support the approach of the Council starting this process by implementing steps focused on logistics (i.e., recommendations A.1 through A.4) rather than eliminating agenda topics and/or advisory bodies (ABs). Regarding Attachment 1, section 4.1.3.1, while the EWG agrees that the Marine Planning Committee (MPC) has been effective and informative, we disagree that the Council’s experience with marine planning issues and the MPC have made the Council process “more time efficient.” The Council has increased its floor discussions of marine planning issues in recent years and it is unclear whether the existence of the MPC has made those discussions longer or shorter than they might have been without an MPC. The Council itself is a cross-fishery management plan (FMP) AB. Forming a junior cross-FMP AB that requires multiple AB members to serve on multiple ABs leads to rapid advisor burnout and can be particularly burdensome for non-government (a.k.a. “unpaid”) AB members.

An alternative to developing a new cross-FMP working group, while still achieving similar objectives, is for the Council to incorporate FMP-specific AB input into relevant reports and/or situation summaries for Cross FMP agenda items. For each topic, a pre-Council webinar could be held during which relevant information would be provided for consideration and discussion. ABs wishing (or required by Council) to provide input would attend (or designate representative(s) to attend) these webinars and provide input either directly to the associated working group (MPC, EWG) or to the Council staff leading the agenda topic. Input and recommendations received from ABs at these open public webinars could then be incorporated into the working group or staff reports and presented to the Council. Since the review of time spent during Council meetings indicates that AB reports constitute the largest portion of Council meeting time, this would reduce the number of reports presented to the Council but still allow the opportunity for ABs to provide input to the Council on cross FMP topics. The EWG encourages the Council to consider this or other innovative methods to receive AB input while increasing efficiencies.

Regarding Attachment 2, the EWG recommends that Council staff develop a more clear and detailed definition of “core” activities. Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), FMPs are distinct documents subject to multiple requirements. For example, Pacific halibut is managed under the Northern Pacific Halibut Act, is not an MSA species, does not need to be subject to the same Council oversight as MSA species, and is not managed via an FMP. The EWG commends Council staff for suggesting limitations on their travel expenses related to international fisheries management and suggests that Council floor time might also be reduced with less attention to international fisheries management issues outside of the

Council's purview. If the Council does decide to take a more deliberate approach in developing a list of tasks to prioritize, the EWG will provide recommendations for consideration of "core" activities.

PFMC
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