



## Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Brad Pettinger, Chair | Merrick J. Burden, Executive Director

May 23, 2025

RE: A.4 Executive Director's Report

Dear Council Members:

The Executive Director's report to the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council, PFMC) typically provides information on Informational Reports, changes to Council membership, Advisory Body and Committee alternates that are in place for the current meeting, select activities that have occurred since the last meeting, and other updates not announced elsewhere that may warrant summarization.

### Council Roster

- Ms. Maggie Sommer (NMFS WCR) recently announced her resignation from NOAA, effective June 3rd, and is therefore no longer a Council member designee.
- Mr. Michael Clark (USFWS) has left the US Fish and Wildlife Service and is therefore no longer a Council member designee.

### Informational Items

Informational Reports are included in your Briefing Book. These include:

- Informational Report 1: FY24 National Marine Fisheries Service Annual Enforcement Report
- Informational Report 2: Northwest Fisheries Science Center Fishing Effort Report (with accompanying MS Excel tables)
- Informational Report 3: Northwest Fisheries Science Center ESA report (with accompanying MS Excel tables)
- Informational Report 4: California Department of Fish and Wildlife Report regarding the development and use of remotely operated vehicle data in groundfish stock assessments

### Advisory Body Alternates

At the time of drafting this memo, we will have a few alternates at this meeting as indicated in the table below.

Advisory Body	Member	Seat	Alternate
SSC	Tim Copeland	IDFG Seat	Carly Somerset
GMT	Vacant	WCR Seat	Lynn Massey
GAP	Shems Judd	Conservation Seat	Seth Atkinson
GAP	Dan Platt	Open Access South of Cape Mendocino	Clint Perrone
GAP	Vacant	Tribal	Steve Hines

### **Changes to Personnel**

Ms. Robin Ehlke retired from the PFMC following the April Council meeting and Ms. Angela Forristall has assumed all Staff Officer responsibilities related to salmon and Pacific halibut management. In addition to this transition, we continue to have a vacant Staff Officer position at the PFMC that has been open since Dr. Kit Dahl's retirement. I have elected to pause on filling this position until clarity is gained regarding the Council's fiscal status for the year. In the meantime, we have secured some contracting assistance to supplement the efforts of Council staff, however, workload concerns remain. Should our fiscal status not allow for the backfilling of this position, the Council may need to prioritize efforts or shift workload. The Council's committee-of-the-whole (COTW) process, and subsequent decisions in June 2024 regarding the streamlining of operations, will serve as a guide should further workload prioritization become necessary.

### **Activities of the Presidential Administration and Congress**

At the time of drafting this report, Council funding for 2025 remains in question. Earlier this year the Council received funding that amounts to slightly less than half of our "base funding" for the year. Remaining funds are tied up in the Congressional reconciliation process that is ongoing as of the date of this report. NOAA has not been able to provide any of the Councils with insight regarding funding levels for the remainder of the year. My hope is that questions regarding our base funding are resolved by the time of our June meeting. I'm grateful for the sound fiscal stewardship of my predecessors, which have helped to put the PFMC in a reasonable fiscal state during this time of uncertainty, and I'm glad to have the guidance from last year's COTW process to help with these fiscal uncertainties.

In addition to questions regarding the Council's fiscal status, the President has signed multiple Executive Orders (EO) that are likely to affect Federal fisheries management. The effect of these EOs, and our response to them, was one topic of discussion at our recent Council Coordination Committee (CCC) meeting. These conversations are captured in my CCC meeting report under Agenda Item C.1 and will also be captured in the official meeting summary to be posted to the CCC webpage. Of immediate interest is the effect of EO 14276 – Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness. How we choose to best respond to this EO is one topic for this meeting that we will address in a two-part agenda item (Agenda Items D.1 and D.2).

### **Select Activities of Staff and Council Representatives**

- We have engaged the Lynker Corporation as the contractor for our stock assessment review project. Lynker staff will be observing our groundfish stock assessment process over the coming months and will be reaching out to several individuals in order to conduct related interviews. A final report is due from them at the end of the year and an agenda item covering this matter has been tentatively scheduled for the March 2026 meeting.
- We have engaged Northern Economics, Inc as the contractor to lead our special project with the short title of "Socioeconomic Framework". This project will be ongoing for the next 1.5 years, and possibly longer. I expect that it will have some synergies with the trawl program review they are currently working on, and whatever Council actions are motivated by that review.
- Ms. Katie Westfall has been engaged to support Council staff and the HMS Fisheries Innovation Workgroup with the HMS roadmap project. Ms. Westfall and I have worked closely together before on topics related to HMS—including the development of an Atlantic HMS roadmap that envisioned the heavy utilization of EFPs.
- The second Council Member Ongoing Development (CMOD) session took place on April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 1<sup>st</sup> and was hosted by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

Attendees from the PFMC included Ms. Aja Szumylo, Ms. Lynn Mattes, Ms. Sharon Kiefer, Ms. Gilly Lyons, and Mr. Chris Free.

- The CCC's Area Based Management subcommittee recently published a report on spatial management and conservation in US fisheries. This report can be found at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X2500048X>

### **Update on Special Projects – Adaptive Management**

You'll recall that in March and April we spent a fair bit of time discussing how to execute the Council's special project on Adaptive Management. A motion was passed in April providing guidance for how to move forward. Since that time, we (Council staff) have been putting a plan together on how best to follow that guidance. At this time, our plan would constitute two general parts:

- 1) An overarching review of Council rules, procedures, practices, and norms with an eye toward identifying and altering those matters which hinder the adaptation and flexibility of Council decision making. The Council is tentatively scheduled to consider these matters at their September meeting.
- 2) An investigation into groundfish management and where additional flexibility may be necessary to help alleviate constraints on groundfish fisheries that are of our own making. The Council will provide further guidance on the scope of this action at this meeting.

While the details of these projects are still coming into focus (and will require additional Council input at this meeting) we believe that this work can be done in a way that meets the original intent as traced through the Council's Fishery Ecosystem Plan process, as well as being responsive to recent Executive Orders intended to promote and advance the US seafood industry.

### **Extra-Curricular Activities during the June Meeting**

As of the date of drafting this report, there is likely to be at least one evening event taking place after the Council adjourns for the day that may be of interest. Extra-curricular meetings are not hosted by the PFMC.

- Evening session on Oregon offshore wind energy: the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development has been tasked with the development of a [offshore wind energy roadmap](#). As part of this roadmap development, representatives are seeking greater input from the fishing industry. The day and time of this meeting is still being determined as of the date of this report.

### **General Information**

The declared COVID health emergency is over; however, we are continuing to provide illness protocols within the "General Information" materials in your Briefing Book. We encourage everyone to bring masks and tests to the meeting in case they are needed. We will have a limited supply available within the ballroom and Secretariat.

Sincerely,



Merrick J. Burden  
Executive Director

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