

COUNCIL AND NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE WORKLOAD - CAPACITY ALIGNMENT

Over the past year, Council and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) leadership have engaged in discussions regarding opportunities to better align available workload capacity across NOAA Fisheries and the Council process. These discussions have been motivated by the need to ensure that Council priorities, schedules, and work expectations remain commensurate with available staffing and resources. As workload demands continue to evolve and agency capacity constraints affect multiple components of the management process, these discussions have increasingly focused on identifying priorities and considering how work can be structured and sequenced to maintain progress on core Council responsibilities and priorities while acknowledging resource limitations.

A supplemental report for this agenda item will be made available describing options identified through these discussions for Council consideration. The options are organized by Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and include preliminary information regarding their rationale, potential value, and possible implications associated with implementation. The report is intended to support a discussion of potential ways in which capacity can be aligned with priorities and provide a basis for prioritization and analysis of possible FMP and/or regulatory amendments or changes to Council operations.

Staff have envisioned integrating outcomes from this discussion into three different possible next steps, each of which is ongoing or is familiar to the Council. These include:

- Incorporation into future "Council efficiencies" agenda items. Changes considered relatively minor operational change would be incorporated under future consideration of council efficiencies and would likely be brought forth later in 2026 and beyond.
- Incorporation into future "scoping" agenda items. Potential changes that are best considered an FMP and/or regulatory amendment would be brought back for further consideration under a to-be-scheduled scoping item, with timing and depth dependent upon the discussion occurring at this meeting.
- Committee-of-the-whole meeting. Large changes to Council programs or operations may best be taken up as a focused discussion by Council members in a committee format, called a committee-of-the-whole (COTW). Such discussions are productive for forming strategic plans, making fundamental changes to operations, or working through other high-level organizational management and governance issues. Such a meeting would likely result in a report that would then be offered to Council advisory bodies and others for comment before anything is adopted by the Council.

Based on the interests of the Council for resolving alignment between available resources and priorities, it is possible that each of the three types of future agenda items/meetings could be relevant: 1) items which are relatively straight-forward to implement and considered operational can be taken up under future "council efficiencies" agenda items, while 2) items which would require modifications to FMPs and/or regulations would be taken up under to-be-scheduled scoping agenda items, and 3) large programmatic changes to organizational management or governance may require a dedicated discussion and justify a second COTW meeting. Each of these

pathways incorporates a different timeline with Council efficiencies being taken up again in September 2026, future FMP and regulatory amendments scheduled based on FMP workload priorities, and a future COTW meeting being taken up at a time to be determined (potentially in January of 2028).

The Council task for this agenda item is to consider the processes for future consideration and implementation, review the concepts and options outlined in the supplemental report, and provide guidance regarding topics that warrant additional consideration. Such guidance may include direction to Council staff, advisory bodies, and requests to NMFS for additional information or analysis regarding selected topics. This guidance will then be considered by the Executive Director as part of future meeting planning and agenda topics therein. In identifying priorities for future work, the Council should also consider the relative effects of various options on workload and capacity across the West Coast Science Centers, West Coast Region, Council staff, and advisory bodies, recognizing that different approaches may provide varying opportunities to alleviate capacity constraints across these components of the Council process. How these ideas related to capacity constraints within each of these offices/categories is described within the supplemental report.

Council Tasks:

- 1. Consider the report of Council and NMFS leadership regarding capacity challenges and potential ways to ameliorate constraints.**
- 2. Provide guidance regarding the type of capacity alignment ideas that the Council wishes to consider further.**
- 3. Identify any specific requests for additional information pertinent to the further exploration of capacity alignment ideas.**

Reference Materials:

1. If received, Public Comments are electronic only ([see e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

- D.4 Council and NMFS Workload Capacity Alignment Merrick Burden
- a. National Marine Fisheries Service Report Jennifer Quan, Kristin Koch, Jeremy Rusin
 - b. Reports and Comments of Management Entities
 - c. Public Comment
 - d. **Council Action:** Discussion and Guidance on Next Steps

PFMC
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