

PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL STAFF REPORT ON SPECIAL PROJECTS:
PROJECT PLANNING, UPDATES, AND CLARIFICATIONS – SPECIAL PROJECT 2,
DECISION MAKING FOR STRONGER FISHING COMMUNITIES

The objective of Special Project 2 (*Decision Making for Stronger Fishing Communities*) is to improve the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) ability to measure and understand the impact of its decisions on West Coast fishing communities, especially in the face of changing environmental conditions. The Council has contracted with Northern Economics, Inc. (NEI) to develop a decision support framework that will assist the Council in evaluating how its management actions and recommendations affect the resilience of fishing-dependent and fishing-engaged communities. When complete, it is intended that the framework will inform Council decision-making by supporting impact analyses and expanding the Council's ability to meet the objectives of National Standard 8 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, while also helping the Council identify ways to bolster community resilience to both acute shocks and longer-term change. The NEI project team is currently implementing a multi-phased approach to developing the framework and an associated case study.

At its June 2026 meeting, the Council considered a [synthesis report](#) and [draft methodology](#), developed and presented by the NEI project team. The synthesis report (and an accompanying gap analysis) focuses on a summary of available research on fishing community resilience, vulnerability, and adaptive capacity, as well as identification of available indicators and tools. The draft methodology describes an approach to evaluating community resilience that will in turn inform the development of the decision support framework in the coming months. The Council also discussed the selection of a case study to which the framework will be applied. The project team will present both the framework and draft results from the case study at the Council's June 2027 meeting.

Council Feedback on Special Project 2

As part of its June 2026 discussion, Council Members provided a range of comments and feedback to be taken into account by Council staff and the project team in developing the framework and related next steps. Given the breadth and depth of this input, Council Members recognized that it likely wouldn't be feasible to address all of it and made clear that staff and the project team should use their best judgement in determining how to incorporate the recommendations while also remaining within the scope, budget, and timeline of the project contract.

In discussions between Council staff and the NEI project team following the June meeting, the project team stated that it is considering all feedback and recommendations provided by Advisory Bodies (ABs) and the Council and is working to respond to or incorporate those pieces which are feasible within the current scope of work and project timeline. The project team also noted that if multiple recommendations are determined to be feasible within the current scope of work and project timeline but provide conflicting advice, deference will be given to Council Member input and/or the best professional judgement of the project team and Council staff. Because of this, not all AB or Council recommendations will be incorporated or acted upon, but the project team will

be prepared to explain if and how they addressed each recommendation during the review of the draft framework when it comes back to the Council in June 2027.

Coming out of the June Council meeting, Council consensus was reached on a number of project elements, including:

- The Council expressed support for the proposed methods described in the draft methodology as a solid foundation for the framework.
- The Council clarified that the decision support framework should serve as an informative tool rather than a prescriptive one; it should not determine management outcomes, but rather inform and bolster decision-making.
- The Council voiced support for the use of qualitative or narrative information alongside quantitative data in developing the framework, as well as consideration of how the framework will intersect with other analytical documents and processes.
- The Council suggested that a rebuilding plan would be an appropriate and useful case study to help assess the performance of the framework and discussed a few potential ideas that the project team could select from.

For recommendations where clear consensus was not achieved, the NEI project team will work with Council staff to identify the best path forward given the project's scope and timeline, as described above.

Finally, a few recommendations emerged in Council discussion and AB reports that may be more appropriately situated in the Council's purview. These include:

- Clarification regarding the use of the decision support framework once it is completed.
- Consideration of development of FMP goals and objectives that would support use of the framework, or more explicit linkages to existing FMP goals and objectives.
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities regarding who will update and maintain the framework over time.

If the Council would like to further consider the above items, staff could prepare supporting materials for a future Council meeting.

Special Project 2 Next Steps

Since the June Council meeting, the NEI project team has:

- Reviewed all feedback and recommendations received from the Council and ABs in June and is proceeding to incorporate where feasible, in collaboration with Council staff.
- Completed a draft outline of the framework.
- Started revising the methodology and incorporating into the draft framework outline.
- Begun work to generate initial indicators for a baseline assessment of West Coast fishing community resilience.

For the remainder of 2026, the NEI project team will conduct a baseline assessment of West Coast fishing community resilience, continue to develop the draft framework, and select a case study. Planning is also underway for a potential late winter/early spring meeting between the project team and the SSC Economics Subcommittee to discuss and provide feedback on the development of the framework.

Appendix A Special Project 2: Decision Making for Stronger Fishing Communities – Project Summary and Overview (September 2026)

Project Description

This project's objective is to improve the Council's ability to measure and understand the impact of its decisions on West Coast fishing communities, especially in the face of changing environmental conditions. The Council has contracted with NEI to develop a decision support framework that will assist the Council in evaluating how its management actions and recommendations affect the resilience of fishing-dependent and fishing-engaged communities. When complete, the framework will inform Council decision-making by supporting impact analyses and expanding the Council's ability to meet the objectives of National Standard 8 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, while also helping the Council identify ways to bolster community resilience to both acute shocks and longer-term change.

Progress Updates

- The Council last discussed Special Project 2 at its June 2026 meeting, where it received a detailed update from the NEI project team and provided feedback and recommendations on next steps.
- Prior to the June meeting, the NEI team completed a synthesis report and gap analysis as well as a draft methodology in support of the community resilience decision framework; these products were reviewed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee's Economics Subcommittee in advance of the June Council meeting.
- The Special Project 2 Advisory Team met in July to discuss feedback and recommendations from the June Council meeting and to provide input on case study selection.
- The NEI team has begun work on a baseline assessment of West Coast fishing community resilience, a draft decision framework, and selection of a case study.

Project Timeline

2024

- Sept – Council provides guidance on initial project planning
- Dec – Kick-off webinar held with Council Advisory Bodies

2025

- Feb – Request for proposals issued
- March/April – Proposals reviewed and contractor selected
- July – Project advisory team formed
- Aug – Begin quarterly meetings of project advisory team
- Summer/Fall – Review of relevant processes and research (including literature review), expert interviews

- Dec – Synthesis report and gap analysis complete

2026

- Jan-May – NEI team develops draft methodology for community resilience decision framework
- June – Council considers synthesis report, gap analysis, and draft methodology; provides feedback to NEI team
- July-Dec – NEI team conducts baseline assessment of West Coast fishing community resilience, develops draft community resilience decision framework, and selects and begins application to case study

2027

- Jan-May – NEI team continues baseline assessment of West Coast fishing community resilience, development of draft community resilience decision framework, and application to case study
- Feb/March – NEI team meets with SSC Economics Subcommittee for early review of framework [tentative]
- June – Council considers completed baseline assessment, draft framework, and results of case study
- July/Aug – NEI team finalizes methodology and framework
- Sept – Council considers final methodology and framework

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