



Background: Getting Involved

Why Get Involved?

Different people have different reasons for getting involved in the fisheries management process. Many groups are concerned about fisheries, including commercial fishermen, fishing families, recreational fishers, processors and suppliers, environmentalists, tribal members, consumers, scientists, the tourism industry, and local communities. Whatever their background or motivations, these groups share the common desire to ensure the health of fish populations and the marine ecosystems they depend on.

If you are a member of the commercial fishing community or if your business serves recreational fishers, the best reason to get involved is because this is the process that controls your livelihood. You may not have control over the weather, ocean conditions, or market prices; but if you get involved in the Council process you can have some input into the decisions that affect your business.

Getting involved means commitment and hard work. It may mean reading documents, talking to people you don't know, going to meetings, speaking in public, writing letters or emails, joining or forming an association, or joining an advisory subpanel.

Ten Ways to Get Involved

Many members of the fishing community and the public do not have the time or resources to attend Council meetings. Luckily, there are ways to get involved in management without having to leave the comfort of your home or boat. Many of the suggestions below come from the publication *Fish or Cut Bait*, a guide to fisheries management written by anthropologists Bonnie McCay and Carolyn Creed (1999).

1. Learn

The first step to getting involved in the Council process is to learn about it. Learn how the Council system operates; learn about the context of the problem you are interested in. Learn how Council members see things, and why. Learn what terms and acronyms like "CPUE" and "optimum yield" mean (an acronym and definition list is available on the Council website, and as an information sheet). That way you will be more comfortable providing input, and your input will be more valuable. Some ways to learn:

- Browse the Council website (www.pcouncil.org)
- Get on a mailing list. The Council maintains extensive mailing lists of organizations and individuals who wish to receive meeting notices, agendas, newsletters, statistical documents, fishery management plans and proposed regulations. If you would like to be on one or more lists, email carrie.compton@noaa.gov or call the Council.

- Visit the Council office
- Read the Council newsletter to learn about recent issues and decisions.
- Read other resources about how fisheries management works. Fisheries Management for Fishermen (<http://www.olemiss.edu/orgs/masglp/fishman.PDF>) and Fish or Cut Bait (<http://www.mafmc.org/mid-atlantic/publications/brochures/fishbait.pdf>) are two excellent sources targeted to the fishing community.
- Attend a Council, team or advisory group meeting. Upcoming meetings are listed on the Council website.

2. Join a group

There are groups organized around environmental issues, fishing gear types, fisheries, communities, and other interests. There are also groups that cut across interests and gear types. Join a group that represents your interests. If you can't find a group, create one. Joining a group will give you a greater voice, more motivation, and a larger pool of knowledge to draw from.

3. Make informed comments

Your comments will be most effective if they show that you know about the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the "National Standards" used to evaluate fishery management plans (FMPs). Try to frame your comments and objections in these terms. Whether writing or testifying, make sure that your comments are relevant to whatever the Council is discussing at the moment. Know what stage of the process the Council is in. For example, are there important deadlines approaching? What political pressures are influencing this decision? (See the information sheet "Sample Letter & Testimony" for more information on testifying).

4. Get to know someone

Getting to know someone is one of the best ways to make sure your voice is heard. Get to know your Council representative, other Council members, Committee members, and staff. If possible, get to know your fish and game department's local port biologists and discuss issues with them. (See the Roster for lists of Council members and advisory subpanel members).

5. Talk informally

One of the best ways to interact with the Council is simply to call up a Council member or staff. This provides a more personal way to discuss issues that concern or interest you. When calling, explain who you are, what your question or problem is, and ask for help in understanding what's going on. Ask for a list of the committees and key council members responsible for your fishery, and ask whom you should call to get more background or advice. You can also talk at meetings and hearings, in the halls during meetings, or at the Council offices. Be sure to attend informal events associated with Council meetings. You may also want to talk with state agency staff and your federal and state representatives.

6. Attend a meeting

All regular Council meetings and subcommittee or advisory meetings are open to the public. Subcommittee meetings are generally more informal than full Council meetings, and may be a better opportunity to express your opinions and ideas. Council meetings are generally held in Portland, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco or Seattle, because these larger cities have airports and plenty of hotel and meeting space. Because Council meetings are not convenient for many who live in coastal areas, state agencies and other entities sometimes hold public hearings, meetings and workshops in local areas to inform the public and obtain input on proposed

fishing regulations. Local residents may contact the head of their state fish and game department to request that a meeting be held in their community. Summaries of the comments made at Council-sponsored hearings are provided to Council members. Dates and locations of upcoming meetings are available on the Council website or at the phone number below.

7. Testify

Members of the commercial and recreational fishery, the environmental community, and the public are encouraged to testify at Council meetings and hearings. This involves speaking in a formal public forum. At Council meetings, the Council members and staff generally sit in a “U” formation and everyone else sits in chairs at one end of the room. You will have to walk up to a microphone to make your comments. Because of time constraints, public comment is limited to five minutes for individuals and ten minutes for representatives of groups. If comments are supplied to the Council two weeks before the meeting date, they are included in the packet of information (called a Briefing Book) that is distributed to each Council member at least a week before the Council meeting.

It is best to be well prepared and as calm as possible when providing testimony. Read up on Council decisions related to your topic of interest and make sure that your comments are organized and relevant. Sign-up cards are provided at the entrance of the meeting room for people who wish to address the Council. For more tips, see the information sheet titled “Sample Letter & Testimony.”

8. Write

The Council reads and considers all letters and emails that arrive before the briefing book deadline, two weeks before a Council meeting. Generally, most letters are addressed to the Council Chair or Executive Director. However, depending on the situation and the stage of the decision-making process, you may write letters or emails to a specific Council member, the Regional Director of National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), or others.

Make sure your letter is legible, either by typing or writing very clearly. When writing, be sure to identify the FMP, amendment, proposed rule, or other measure you are commenting on. Then state your position or opinion. Explain who you are and why the reader should pay attention to what you are saying. (For example, talk about your fishing experience or the group that you represent). Use short, clear sentences to state your position and explain why you feel the way you do. Whenever you can, be specific about how a proposed rule would affect you. Try to show how your personal interests relate to public or national interests. For an example, see the information sheet “Sample Letter & Testimony.” Letters must arrive prior to two weeks in advance of a Council meeting in order to be included in the Council members’ briefing books.

You can also write letters to trade magazines like *National Fisherman* or *Pacific Fishing*, which many managers read. Since NMFS reviews all Council decisions, it is also effective to write or call the Northwest or Southwest Region of NMFS.

9. Serve

Interested citizens may serve on an advisory subpanel. If you are interested in serving, talk to the Executive Director and the key staff person for the fishery.

10. Get involved in research efforts

Often, calls go out for vessel owners to charter their vessels for research efforts. While this is not a direct way to

get involved in the Council process, it does help create connections with scientists and managers, and it allows vessel owners and scientists to learn more about each others' methods. It can also provide some extra income. These efforts are publicized on the Northwest Fisheries Science Center website (<http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/fram/>) and the Heads Up! website (<http://www.heads-up.net>).

Will It Really Make a Difference?

Your influence on Council decisions is related to the amount of energy you put into being involved. Involvement can range from writing an email or letter to serving on an advisory subpanel or team. No matter what level of involvement you choose, your views will have more weight and influence if you learn about the context of the decisions being made, the timeline for the decision making process, and the best ways to communicate with Council members and advisory subpanel members. As a member of a fisheries association said, "If you want to get involved in fisheries management, you should be willing to go to meetings and become an active participant, be willing to listen to others' views, and communicate clearly your own ideas."

Who to Contact

The Council rosters provide contact information for all members of the Council's advisory subpanels (which include industry representatives), management teams (which are generally made up of scientists), the Council staff, and the actual voting Council members. A list of contacts is provided on the next page.

All Council staff can be contacted at 866-806-7204 (toll free) or 503-820-2280.

PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL STAFF CONTACTS

All staff can be reached at (503) 820-2280 or toll free (866) 806-7204

TOPIC	COUNCIL STAFF/ADVISORY BODY
Bycatch	Kit Dahl (kit.dahl@noaa.gov)
Coastal pelagic species (sardines, anchovies, mackerel, market squid)	Mike Burner (mike.burner@noaa.gov) <i>CPS Advisory Subpanel</i>
Computer systems/information technology	Sandra Krause (sandra.krause@noaa.gov)
Economics	Jim Seger (jim.seger@noaa.gov)
Expense claims & per diems	Mary Wilson (mary.wilson@noaa.gov), Carolyn Porter (carolyn.porter@noaa.gov)
Fiscal matters	Mary Wilson (mary.wilson@noaa.gov)
Groundfish	John Devore (john.devore@noaa.gov), Merrick Burden (merrick.burden@noaa.gov), Heather Brandon (heather.brandon@noaa.gov) <i>Groundfish Advisory Subpanel</i>
Habitat	Jennifer Gilden (jennifer.gilden@noaa.gov) <i>Habitat Committee</i>
Halibut	Chuck Tracy (chuck.tracy@noaa.gov)
Highly migratory species (tunas, sharks, billfish)	Kit Dahl (kit.dahl@noaa.gov) <i>HMS Advisory Subpanel</i>
Hotels, travel, and meeting arrangements	Carolyn Porter (carolyn.porter@noaa.gov) Renee Dorval (renee.dorval@noaa.gov)
Individual fishing quotas	Jim Seger (jim.seger@noaa.gov) Merrick Burden (merrick.burden@noaa.gov)
Mailing lists	Kimberly Merydith (kimberly.merydith@noaa.gov)
Marine reserves	Mike Burner (mike.burner@noaa.gov)
Media inquiries	Jennifer Gilden (jennifer.gilden@noaa.gov)
NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act)	Kit Dahl (kit.dahl@noaa.gov)
Newsletters and press releases	Jennifer Gilden (jennifer.gilden@noaa.gov)
Open Access limitation	LB Boydston (lbboydstun@comcast.net)
Outreach and communications	Jennifer Gilden (jennifer.gilden@noaa.gov)
Publication and document requests	Kimberly Merydith (kimberly.merydith@noaa.gov)
Salmon	Chuck Tracy (chuck.tracy@noaa.gov) <i>Salmon Advisory Subpanel</i>
Travel	Carolyn Porter (carolyn.porter@noaa.gov)
Vessel monitoring systems	Mike Burner (mike.burner@noaa.gov)

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