

Proposal to form a Climate Change CCC Workgroup

The SCS7 workshop highlighted the need for Councils to begin now to prepare for increasingly complex management decisions due to climate change. In addition to emphasizing the need for more investment by the agency in data collection and analysis tools, the report recommends that Councils should consider approaches to introduce additional flexibility into the management process, diversify fishing portfolios in light of anticipated significant changes in abundance, distribution and productivity, and educate members and stakeholders about how uncertainty and risk due to environmental variability will affect current fishery management decision making. The administration's Ocean Climate Action Plan also includes action items to establish goals and operational approaches for how RFMCs should consider climate resilience of fish stocks in management, under its objective to "advance and implement climate-ready management of fisheries and aquaculture."

A new CCC workgroup is proposed to develop a common understanding and voice among the Councils on current capacity, future needs, and fishery management designs that can respond to climate change, while assisting the regional councils in coordinating with NOAA on a response to the Ocean Climate Action Plan.

Products: The workgroup would provide the following products and services.

1. An overview to the CCC on respective capacity, needs, and lessons learned at the RFMCs to assess risks and take action to adapt to changing ocean conditions.
 - Develop survey questions to identify the ways that each Council is currently working on climate resilient management (e.g. scenario planning, harvest control rule adaptation, etc.), how these efforts work in synergy and build from existing capacity, and any techniques that have the likelihood to be adaptable across multiple Councils.
 - Identify tools for risk assessment and uncertainty in each region that Councils and stakeholders have confidence in, and emerging tools and areas where plain language explanation is needed
 - Identify preliminary Council needs for data collection to understand the risks of environmental variability to sectors and fishing communities, especially where concerns arise about equitable management adaptation.
 - Identify lessons learned from the above experiences, including ways to improve those processes, or different approaches that may be better suited to diagnosing climate challenges and designing measures to address them.
2. Provide an opportunity for information exchange and collaboration across regions: what techniques are and are not working, and how other Council regions can learn from incidents of disruption occurring in specific regions.
3. Assist the CCC in communicating with NMFS on development of goals, guidance, and operational approaches to enable RFMCs to incorporate climate-ready approaches and decision-making.
4. Work with the CCC Legislative Work Group to build out the CCC Working Paper's existing policy statement on climate change. The policy statement should address RFMC needs for investment in data collection and other climate-ready tools.

Membership: The workgroup membership would include one staff person from each council. Additional staff could provide assistance as needed.

Process: The workgroup will meet virtually at regular intervals as needed to develop the products in a timely fashion and report progress to the CCC. In-person meeting(s) may be called, if deemed necessary. The Workgroup updates to the CCC will be provided by the workgroup chair and/or the workgroup staff from the Council hosting the CCC annual meeting that year.

Proposed Timeline: The following is a tentative timeline to meet initial milestones.

- CCC Fall meeting 2023 – A workgroup report with an outline of survey questions for the report, and preliminary responses.
- Spring 2024 – based on survey responses, work with CCC Legislative Work Group on draft language for an expanded policy statement.
- CCC Spring meeting 2024 – A final report on respective capacity and scientific support needs presented to the CCC.