



## New England Fishery Management Council

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Eric Reid, *Chair* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

### MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** January 13, 2023  
**TO:** Executive Committee  
**FROM:** Tom Nies, Executive Director  
**SUBJECT:** Distribution of key documents in advance of Council and committee/AP meetings.

This memo explains the Council staff standards for distributing key documents/presentations in advance of Council and committee meeting and the results of tracking those distributed to Council and Committee meetings for 2022.

Key documents are those that contain information directly relevant to the Council and committee decisions and which have not been distributed at an earlier meeting. Examples of these, include but are not limited to committee /AP motions, PDT memos, SSC reports, revisions to draft submission documents, decision documents, etc. They do not include final meeting summaries or correspondence received after the distribution target dates.

#### **Standards for distribution of key documents and presentations in advance of Council, committee/AP meetings**

##### **Number of calendar days before the first day of a Council, or a committee/AP meeting:**

###### **Council meetings:**

- a. Key documents – 10 days before for a Council meeting
- b. Presentations - 4 days

###### **Committee/AP meetings:**

- a. Key documents - 7 calendar days (one week) before the first day of the meeting
- b. Presentations - 4 days

##### **Common reasons why documents are delayed:**

1. **Delay in receiving document or presentation from external source:** This includes documents prepared by NMFS, contractors or any other individuals on the Council staff or working as part of a PDT. Usually there are not many of the documents, mostly some presentations except for the large amount of contract work done for EBFM that has been late in the past year.
2. **PDT work took longer than anticipated / delays in receiving assessment information and data:** This is particularly a problem for the Groundfish PDT because it relies on so many assessment documents produced in the fall when deadlines are tight and the Council very little influence on the timing of fall assessments. Also, sometimes the Groundfish PDT finds errors in assessments that cause long delays in being able to use the results. Additionally, a great majority of PDT members are

not employed by the Council and have other priorities, making it difficult for PDT chairs to schedule PDT work.

3. **Staff needed more time to complete document:** This pertains to delays in staff completion of work for a variety of reasons, the most frequent being other intervening priorities, unanticipated difficulties, additional work requested by committees or the Council, but possibly also unanticipated loss of worktime due to illness of staff member or family.
4. **Related meetings scheduled for distribution week:** This has been an issue for the lead habitat staff person who must attend or participate in many meetings of external groups to get information on development projects impacting habitat or to coordinate with others working on habitat-related projects and analyses.
5. **Committee meeting requiring new analyses was within 3 weeks of a Council or the next committee meeting or AP meeting:** If because of a committee meeting, a PDT has to provide analyses that is not normally done or that the PDT did not anticipate, it is very difficult for the PDT to do the analyses in the three-week interval. Under ideal circumstances a three-week interval is 21 calendar days minus seven, or 14 calendar days to meet the target distribution date. Even if there is an existing model and method and all the data is ready to be used in the analysis, the work still must be added onto several people's full work schedule and a PDT meeting must be organized to discuss the results. Data preparation and analysis usually is very time-consuming, so if a different type of data is needed than the PDT normally uses for analysis, it is virtually impossible to complete the analytical task in so short a time.
6. **Distributed at committee meeting held close to a Council meeting:** Due to very tight deadlines, especially in the fall, committee and AP meetings are scheduled to occur relatively late before practically all Council meetings with final actions. This requires additional staff time and communications to organize and attend extra meetings instead of focusing on preparing documents for only the Council meeting. Also, the earlier committee and AP deadlines for essentially the same documents means that the staff or PDT must complete them on a tighter schedule and often the solution is to distribute the same documents for the Council and committee meeting with the result that the distribution for the committee meeting is delayed a few days.

## Results

The Council receives hundreds of different documents and document packages in a year. Table 1 below shows the timing of key documents - as defined above - for meetings of the Council and committees responsible for developing Council actions.

**Table 1**

Table of Documents or Document Packages Distributed for Select Council and Committee Meetings - 2022

| <b>FMP</b> | Total Number of All Documents or Packages Distributed | Number of Key Documents or Packages Distributed | Number of Key Documents or Packages Distributed after Target Date | Average Days for Late Key Documents Only | Average Days Late for All Key Documents |
|------------|---|---|---|--|---|
|            |   |   |   |  |   |
| Scallops   | 54  | 50  | 8   | 0.9                                      | 0.29                                    |
|            |   |   |   |  |   |
| Groundfish | 282   | 108   | 48  | 1.5                                      | 0.17                                    |
|            |   |   |   |  |   |
| Herring    | 53  | 24  | 9   | 1.2                                      | 0.17                                    |
|            |   |   |   |  |   |
| Monkfish   | 97  | 48  | 9   | 1.7                                      | 0.30                                    |
|            |   |   |   |  |   |
| Skates     | 40  | 19  | 5   | 2.0                                      | 0.25                                    |
|            |   |   |   |  |   |
| Habitat    | 24  | 24  | 9   | 2.6                                      | 0.96                                    |
|            |   |   |   |  |   |
| Whiting    | 10  | 8   | 0   | 0.0                                      | 0.00                                    |
|            |   |   |   |  |   |
| EBFM       | 41  | 41  | 14  | 3.2                                      | 0.34                                    |
|            |   |   |   |  |   |
| Total      | 601   | 322   | 102   | NA                                       | NA                                      |

**Note** - A combined average for Council and committee meetings was used for simplicity and this might have created a slight bias in the results; however, there were more committee meetings than Council meetings and timely document distribution is more problematic for committee meetings. Also, presentations have greater leeway to be on time, but they were relatively few and mostly on time, so they did not bias results.

Some of these results are counter intuitive because the larger number of key documents distributed on time relative to the delayed documents for groundfish lowered the average lateness of the total. The average lateness for Habitat documents is higher because the Habitat PDT chair thought it made more sense to distribute the documents as a package. The high average lateness for late EBFM documents was due solely to the number of documents that were received directly from a contractor.

In looking at the last column, also it is important to remember that the average days late for key documents means that for documents that are one day late means that committee members received them six days before a committee meeting and Council members received them of nine days before a Council meeting.

The reasons for late document or document package distributions are shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2. Reasons for Late Distribution to Council, Committees or AP's**

| <b>Reasons for Late Distribution to Council, Committees or AP's</b>                              | <b>Scallops</b> | <b>Ground-fish</b> | <b>Herring</b> | <b>Monkfish</b> | <b>Skates</b> | <b>Habitat</b> | <b>Whiting</b> | <b>EBFM</b> | <b>TOTAL</b> |
|--|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|
| Delay in receiving document or presentation from external source                                 | 2               |                    |                |                 |               |                |                | 10          | 2            |
| PDT work took longer than anticipated / delays in receiving assessment info and data             |                 | 22                 | 2              |                 |               |                |                |             | 24           |
| Staff needed more time to complete document  | 3               | 13                 | 7              | 2               | 3             | 5              |                | 2           | 33           |
| Related meetings scheduled for distribution week   |                 |                    |                |                 | 2             | 4              |                |             | 6            |
| Committee meeting requiring new analyses was within 3 weeks of Council or next committee meeting | 1               | 13                 |                |                 |               |                |                | 2           | 14           |
| Distributed at a committee meeting held close before a Council meeting                           | 2               |                    |                | 7               |               |                |                |             | 8            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>8</b>        | <b>48</b>          | <b>9</b>       | <b>6</b>        | <b>5</b>      | <b>9</b>       | <b>0</b>       | <b>14</b>   | <b>8</b>     |