

# CORRESPONDENCE



New England Fishery Management Council

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John F. Quinn, J.D., Ph.D., *Chairman* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

January 3, 2018

Dr. Cisco Werner  
Director of Scientific Programs  
& Chief Science Advisor  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
1315 East-West Highway, Room 14659  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Dr. Werner:

The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires the Councils to develop five-year research priority plans and submit them to the Secretary of Commerce. In New England, ideas for research topics have trickled up through technical teams, advisory panels, and committees prior to Council approval, resulting in a lengthy catalogue of needs. Our Scientific and Statistical Committee and Research Steering Committee have both advised that the Council and research community would benefit from efforts to create a more targeted, prioritized list. We are currently improving our process for identifying research priorities and data needs.

In developing ideas for process improvements, we learned that Councils appear to vary greatly in the effort dedicated to creating and updating research priorities. Some Councils have simple lists with no internal prioritization, while others have an on-line searchable database. No matter the degree of effort, a common theme is that there has been little feedback from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) about what happens with research priority documents once submitted. There does not seem to be a clear understanding of how the priorities are used to set the national and regional priorities of NMFS.

Clarification from NMFS about the end use of these priority lists will help determine the degree of effort that should be devoted to the task. Please also let me know if there are any suggestions for how the Council's priorities may be better articulated. Please contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Nies  
Executive Director

cc: RFMC Executive Directors  
Brian Fredieu

June 5, 2018

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Miguel Rolon  
Executive Director  
Carlos Farchette  
Chair

**Gulf of Mexico**

Dr. Carrie Simmons  
Executive Director  
Leann Bosarge  
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Dr. Christopher Moore  
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Executive Director  
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**Western Pacific**

Kitty Simonds  
Executive Director  
Edwin Ebisui  
Chair

Mr. Chris Oliver  
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
1315 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
Via email: [CHRIS.OLIVER@NOAA.GOV](mailto:CHRIS.OLIVER@NOAA.GOV)

Dear Mr. Oliver,

At its recent meeting, the Council Coordination Committee (CCC) made several requests regarding the use of research priorities developed by the councils pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA). Under MSA Section 302 (h), each Council shall develop, in conjunction with the scientific and statistical committee, multi-year research priorities for fisheries, fishery interactions, habitats, and other areas of research that are necessary for management purposes that shall – establish priorities for 5-year periods; be updated as necessary; and be submitted to the Secretary and the regional science centers of the National Marine Fisheries Service for their consideration in developing research priorities and budgets for the region of the Council.

The CCC recommends that Council research priorities be fully-integrated into research planning by NOAA Fisheries. In regions where this does not occur, Regional Offices, Science Centers, and Councils should improve this coordination.

The CCC also recommends that the review of applications to national-level grant programs administered by NOAA Fisheries should consider whether the proposal addresses a specific Council research priority. RFPs should encourage applicants to review Council's R&D needs documents for relevant topics and objectives for research proposals.

The CCC further requests that NOAA Fisheries clarify how the Council's five-year research priority reports are used. NOAA Fisheries is asked to provide an update on these recommendations at the next CCC meeting.

Thank you, and I look forward to continued communication on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Dan Hull  
NPFMC Chairman, on behalf of the Council Coordination Committee

cc: Regional Fishery Management Councils



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
1315 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
THE DIRECTOR

JUN 29 2018

Mr. Dan Hull  
Chairman  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
Council Coordination Committee  
1007 W 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Suite 100  
Anchorage, AK 99501

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Dear Mr. Hull: *Dan*

Thank you for your letter regarding council research priorities and integration of those priorities in the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) science planning.

As discussed during the most recent Council Coordination Committee (CCC) meeting, NMFS does recognize council research priorities, and they are integrated into and affect our planning processes in a variety of ways. In all regions, staff serve on council committees, such as the Scientific and Statistical Committees. In this capacity, staff discuss and review council priorities, which increases awareness of these research priorities in NMFS. Then, as part of our priority-based science planning process, one of the criteria we use to prioritize certain activities and investments is whether the activity/investment is a priority to the councils. In addition, despite these regional connections to council priorities, there may be opportunity for more explicit consolidation, synthesis, and use of council research priorities at the national level, to inform planning and funding decisions, including decisions regarding requests for proposals.

We will review this issue, both nationally and regionally, through discussion with the six science center directors, with an aim that these priorities can be more formally included in annual and long-term science planning for the centers, and also inform priorities in grant funding decisions. The discussion will also touch on the best methods for the science centers to respond to the documents after the councils submit them. The regional fishery management councils are important partners, and we recognize that producing science that is responsive to management needs is critical.

I appreciate your interest in this issue and look forward to further discussion at the next CCC meeting.

Sincerely,

Chris Oliver



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THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR  
FOR FISHERIES

