

Fishery Management Council Process Overview


**MREP Management Workshop
St. Petersburg, Florida**

November 2023

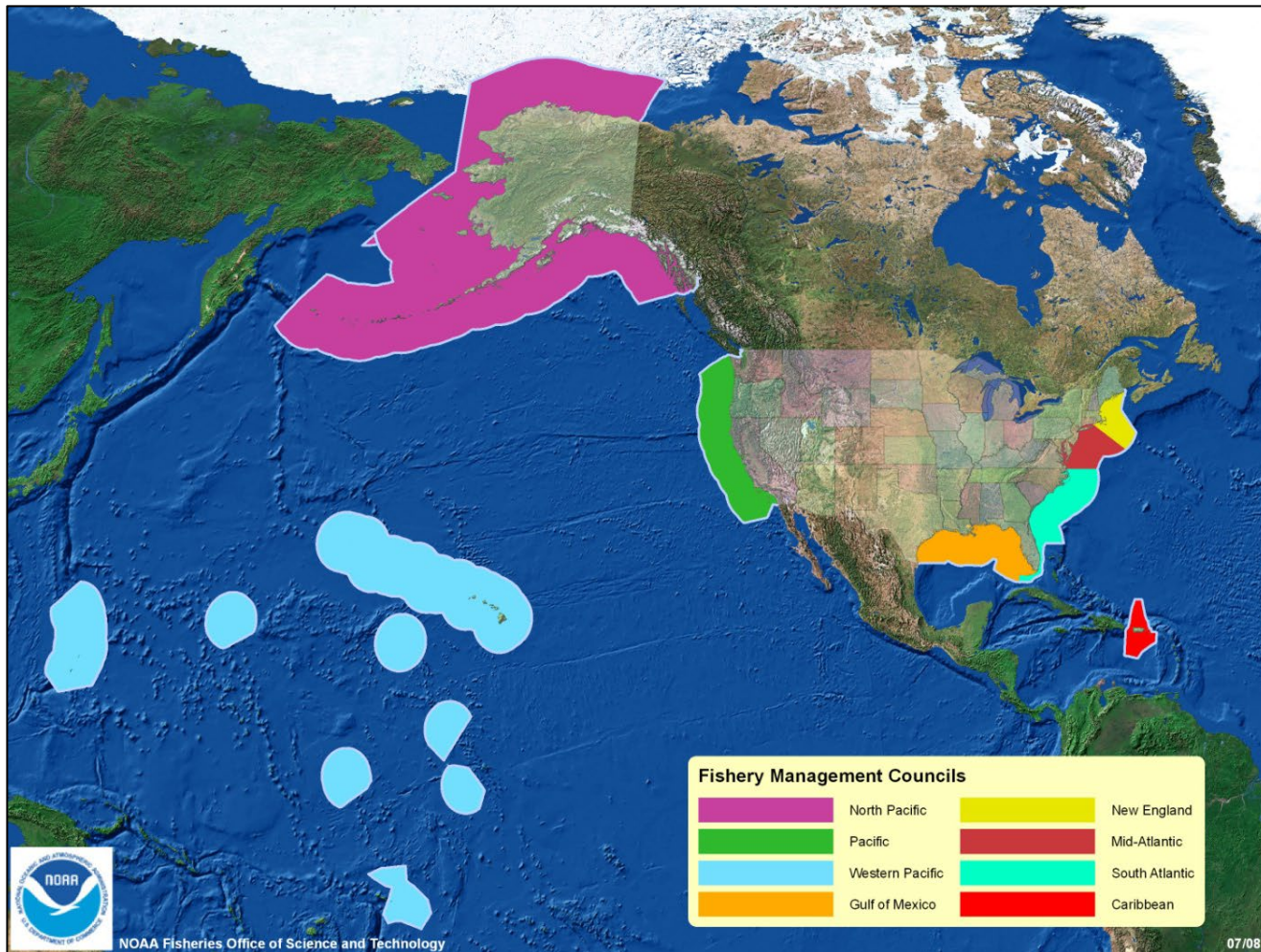
***Dr. Carrie Simmons, Executive Director
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council***



Outline

- Regional Management Councils' Purpose
 - South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico
- Who Makes Up the Councils and Role?
- What Do the Councils Manage?
- Federal Fisheries Regulatory Process
 - Fisheries Issues  Changes in Management

U.S. Regional Management Councils



Regional Councils' Purpose

- Established in 1976 by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
- Councils make management **recommendations** for federal fisheries in need of conservation and management
- The Council process facilitates decision-making using local representation and participation
- Role is to “Conserve and Manage” - through development of fishery management plans and amendments



Who is on the Council?

- Individuals who, by occupation, or other experience are knowledgeable about the fishery:
 - Recreational, for-hire, and commercial fishermen, seafood dealers, fish house owners/operators, academics.
- Marine resource management agency representatives from each state
- Federal Partners
 - Voting: NOAA Regional Administrator of Fisheries
 - Non-Voting: U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fishery Commission, Department of State

Who is on the Council?



17 voting members

5 State Agency Reps

11 Obligatory/At-Large

1 NOAA Fisheries



Chair: Kevin Anson



Vice Chair: JD Dugas



13 voting members

4 State Agency Reps

8 Obligatory/At-Large

1 NOAA Fisheries



Chair: Dr. Carolyn Belcher



Vice Chair: Trish Murphey

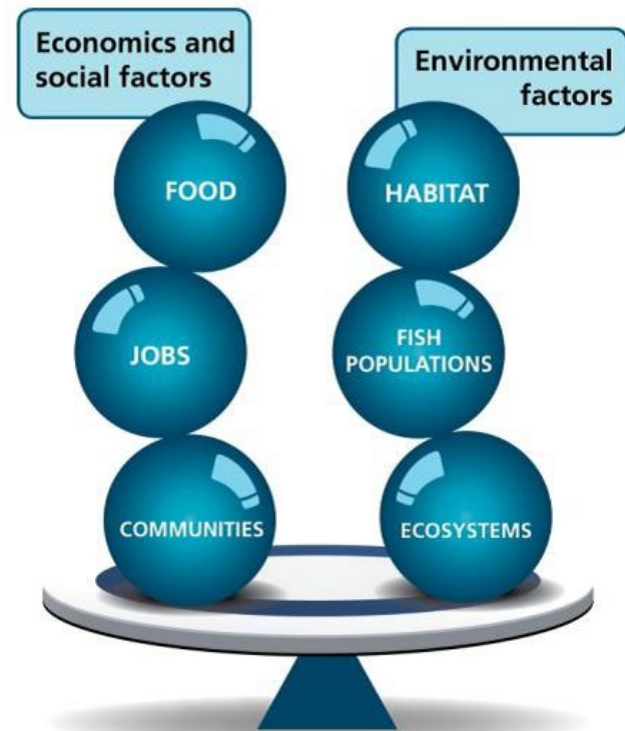
Council Member Appointments

- Obligatory and At-large members:
 - *nominated by each state's governor*
 - *appointed by the Secretary of Commerce*
- Members serve three year terms
 - maximum three consecutive terms



Role of Council Members

To protect the public interest by balancing competing interests in the fisheries, and to make decisions for the greatest overall benefit to the nation

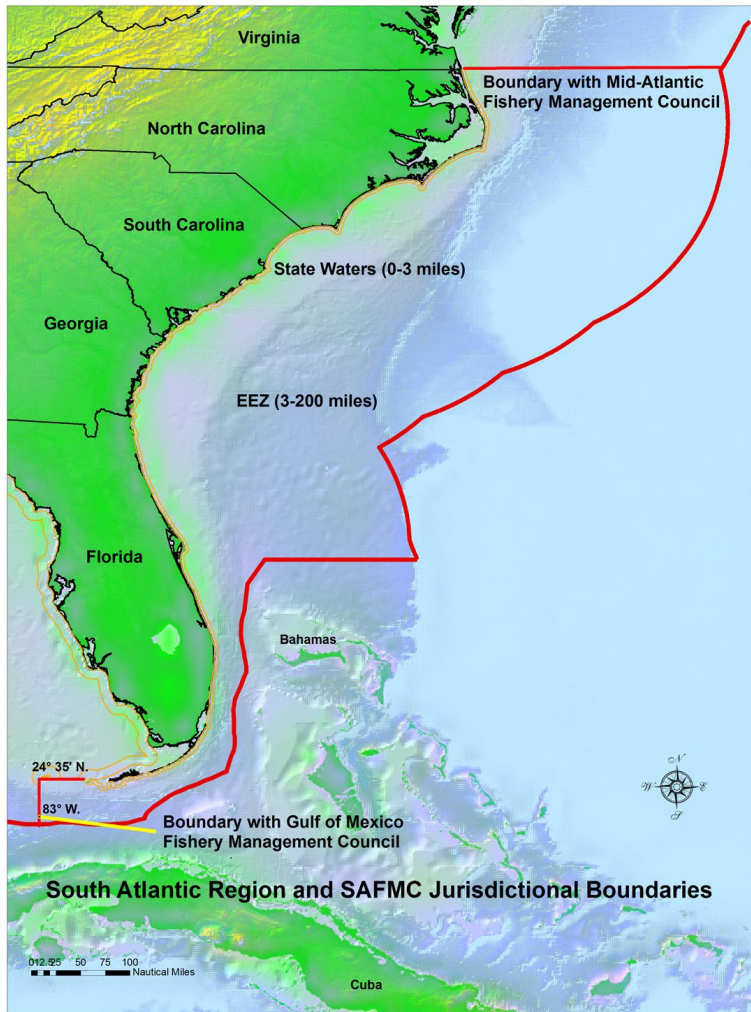


Role of Councils

Act as an advisory body to the National Marine Fishery Service (NMFS)

- Propose new or modified regulations through an open and transparent federal fisheries regulatory process
- Develop fishery management plans and amendments
- Maintain the administrative record for the process

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council



Jurisdiction:

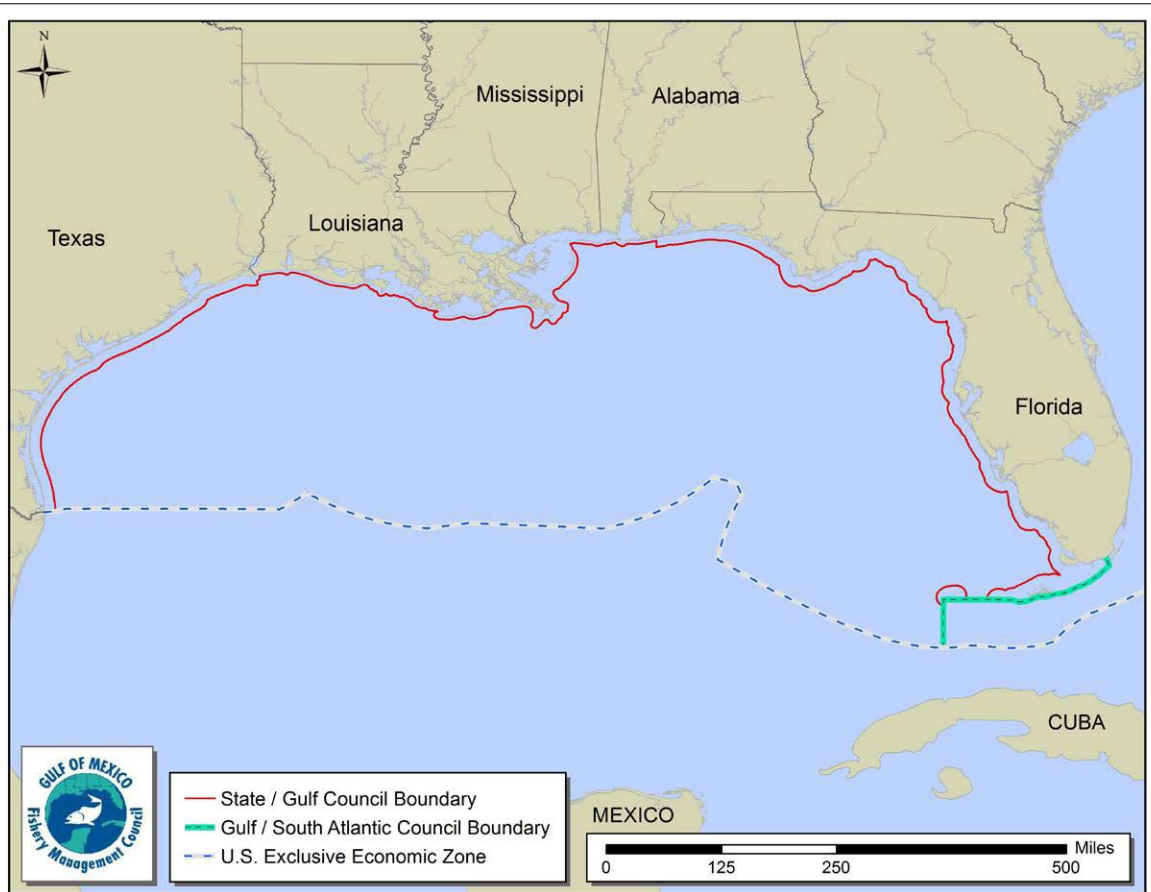
- 3 to 200 nautical miles off the coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and East Florida to Key West.

What does the South Atlantic Council Manage?

- **Coastal Migratory Pelagics** (*Joint FMP*)
- **Spiny Lobster** (*Joint FMP*)
- **Coral**
- **Dolphin Wahoo**
- **Golden Crab**
- **Habitat**
- **Sargassum**
- **Shrimp**
- **Snapper-Grouper**



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council



Jurisdiction:

- 3 to 200 miles off the coasts of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. But 9 to 200 miles for reef fish
- 9 to 200 miles off Texas and the west coast of Florida.

What does the Gulf of Mexico Council manage?

- **Coastal Migratory Pelagics** (*Joint FMP*)
- **Spiny Lobster** (*Joint FMP*)
- **Coral**
- **Essential Fish Habitat**
- **Reef Fish**
- **Shrimp**
- **Red Drum**

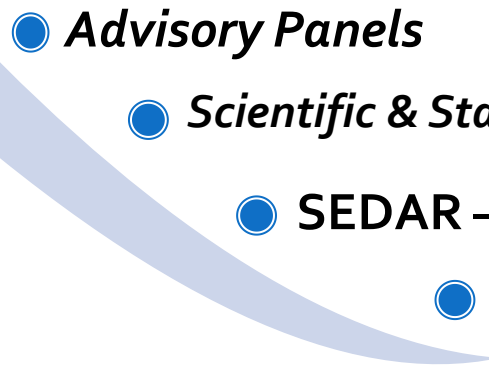


What about?

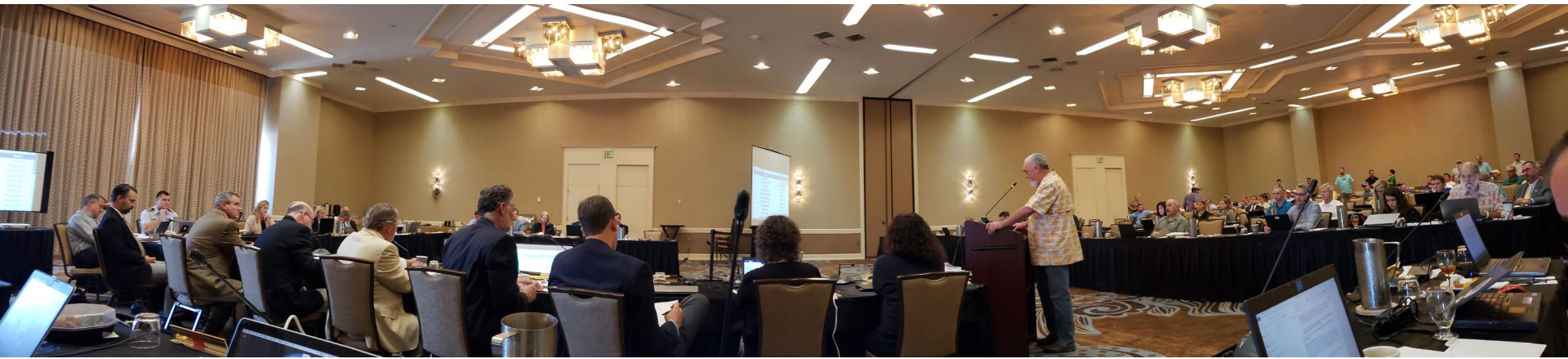


Federal Fisheries Regulatory Process

Initiation of Regulatory Action

- 
- *Advisory Panels*
 - *Scientific & Statistical Committee*
 - *SEDAR – Stock Assessments*
 - *Public Input throughout process*
 - *Council Motion*

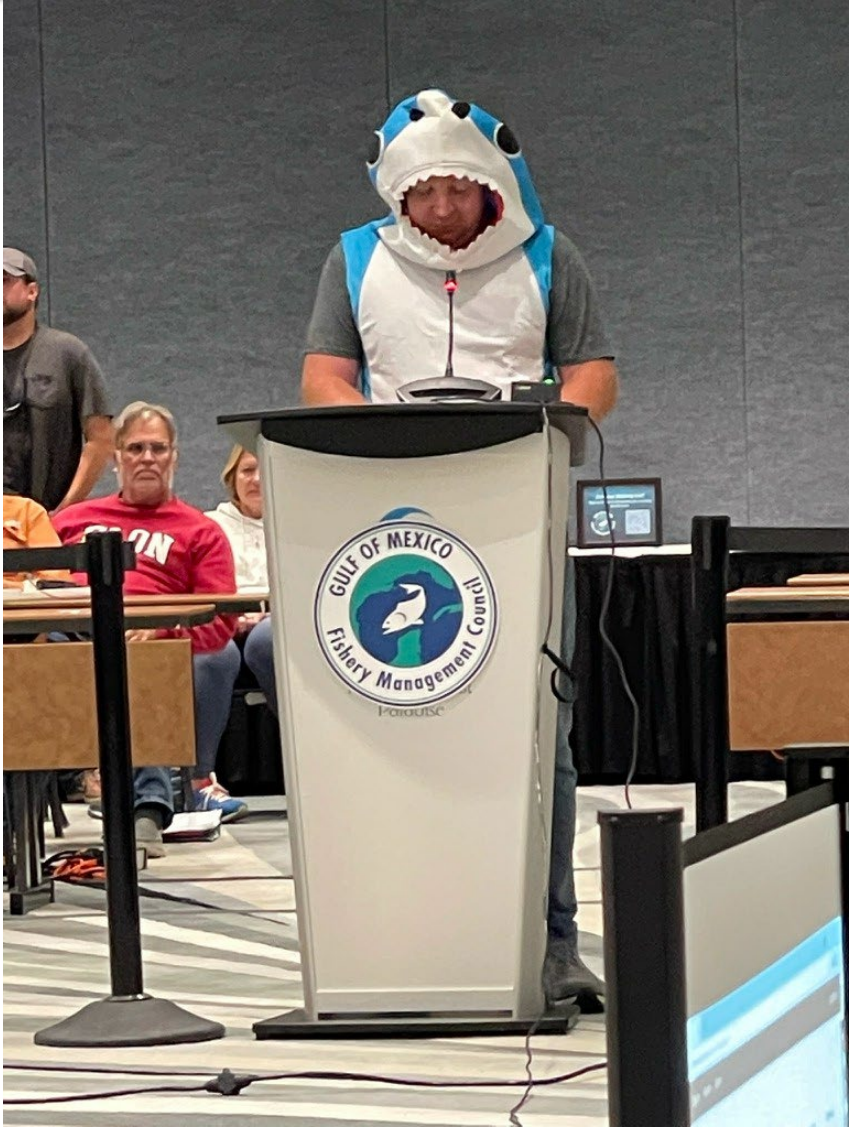
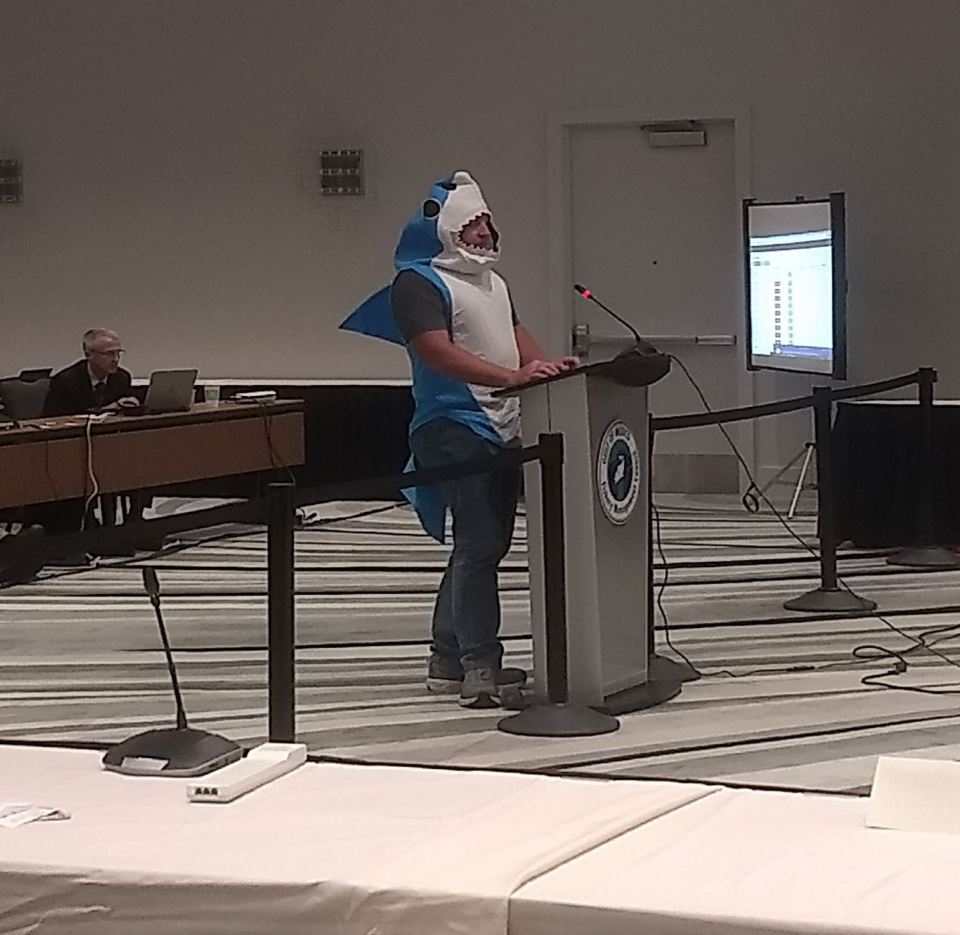
Public Input



Members of the Public can Bring Issues to the Council during:

- Council Meetings
- Scoping Meetings or Workshops
- Public Hearings
- Written Comments – *website, email, or mail*

Public Input Continued.....



Stock Assessments

Stock Assessments can trigger Regulatory Action:

- Updated stock status
 - Overfished/ Overfishing determination requires Council action within 2 years
- Updated yield streams
- Changes to stock range
- Major changes in fishery-dependent indices

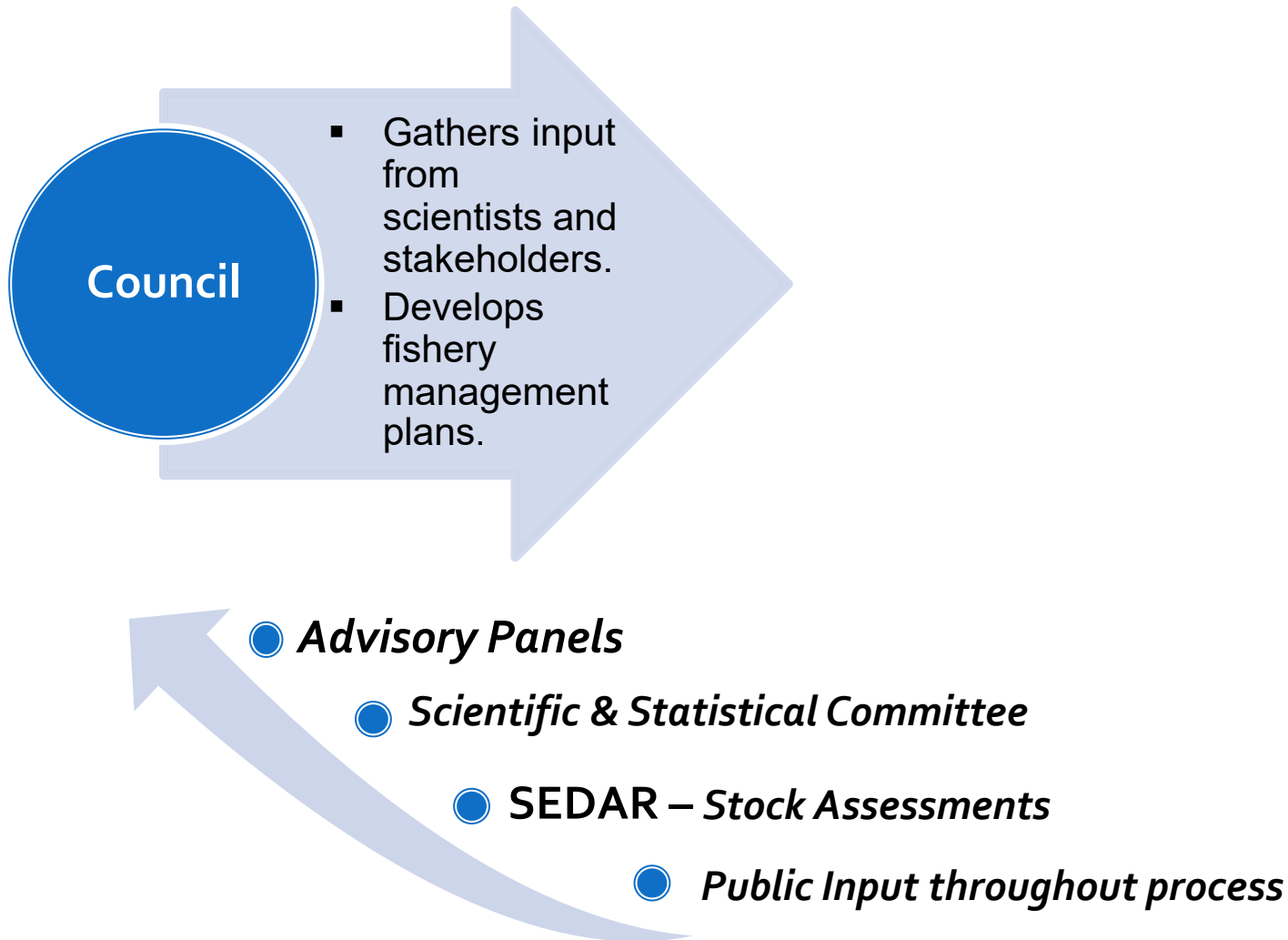


SSCs, APs, and Technical Committees

Council advisory bodies can bring issues to the Council:

- Data reporting changes
- Area closures
- Concerns about the stock
- Concerns about the ecosystem

Federal Fisheries Regulatory Process



How Do the Councils Change Regulations?

- Councils need public input to help them determine what changes are needed
- Deliberative, open, and transparent process
- Develop Fishery Management Plans or Amendments to the Plans
- Have professional staff to develop these documents with NMFS staff

Council Committee Structure

- **Council members serve on various committees which change annually with the Council chair**
- Administrative and Management Committees
 - Administrative/Budget
 - Gulf SEDAR
 - Mackerel
 - Shrimp
 - Reef Fish
- Development of management alternatives for amendments is done primarily at the *committee* level
- **Full Council - responsible for final decisions**

What's in a Fishery Management Plan?

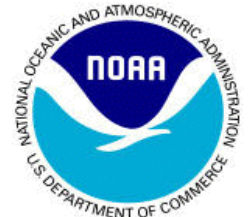
- Range of actions with a series of management alternatives
- Actions must have at least two alternatives:
 - One alternative must be the status quo
- Council must consider a range of alternatives to address any particular issue
- Council chooses an alternative as its preferred course of action

Outline of a Fishery Management Plan

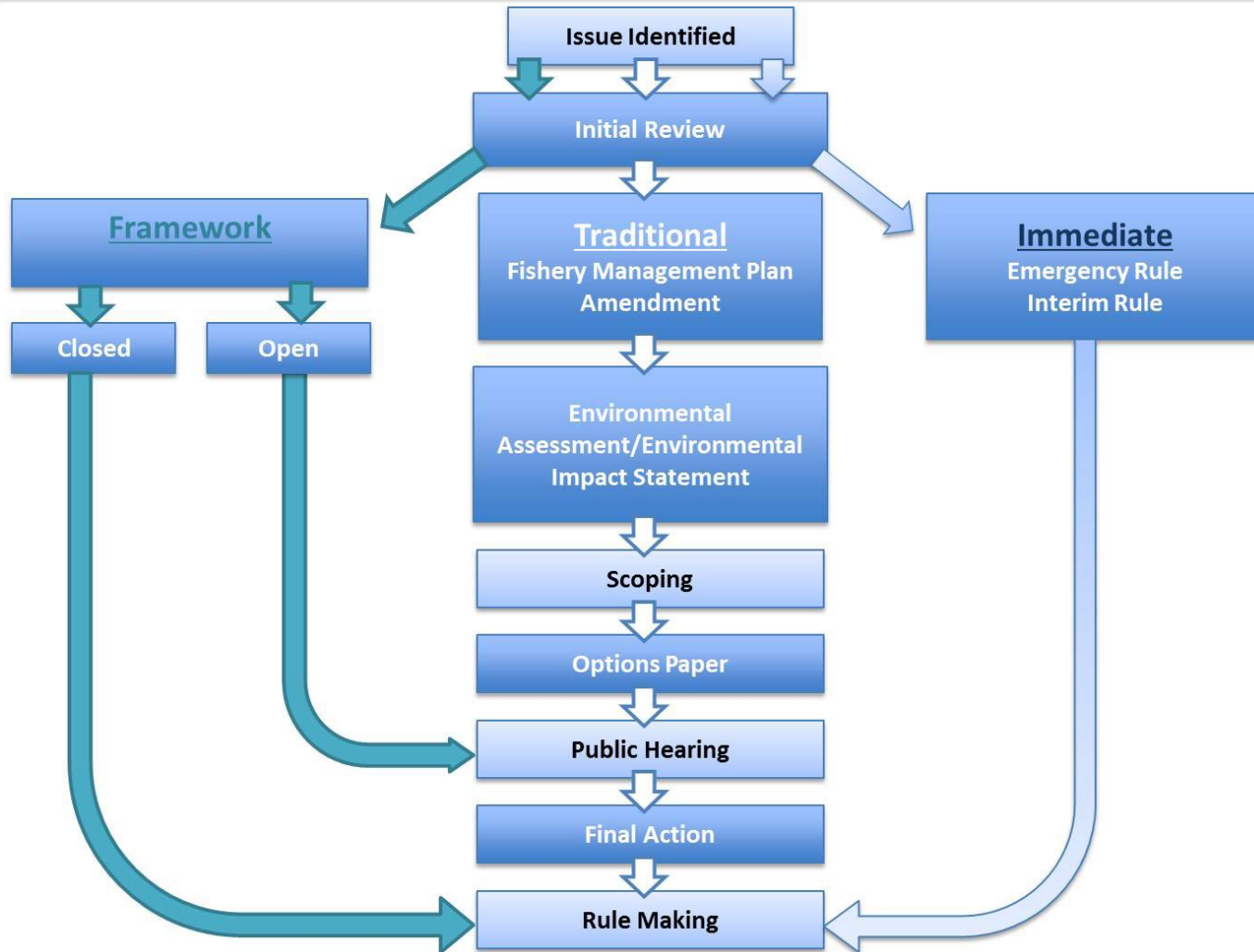
- Introduction of Issue and Background
- Purpose and Need Statement
- History of Management
- Actions and Alternatives
- Description of the Fishery
- Biological Effects of Alternatives
- Economic Effects of Alternatives
- Social Effects of Alternatives
- Administrative Effects of Alternatives

Who develops the FMPs?

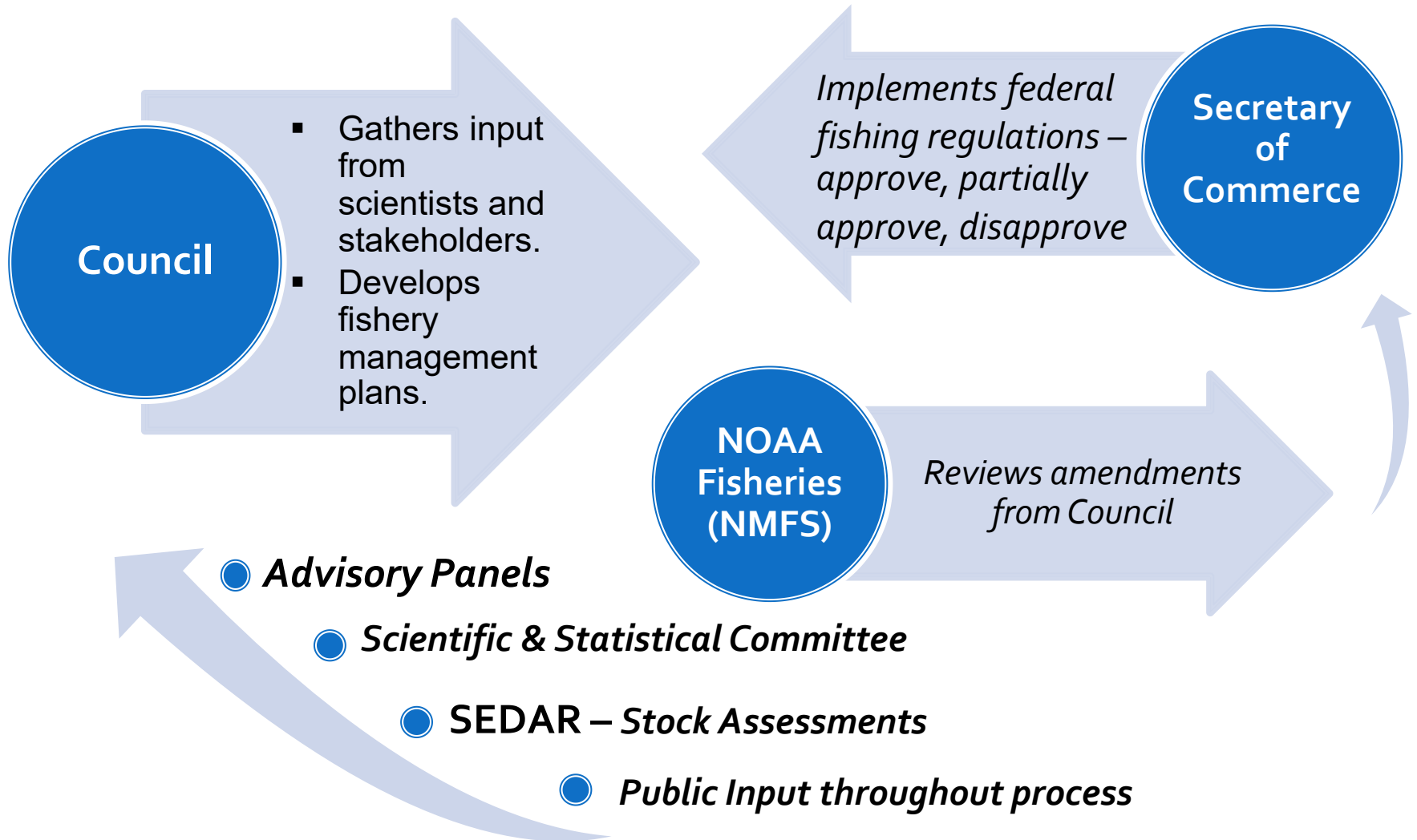
- Council Staff and NMFS staff
- Interdisciplinary Planning Team approach
 - Biologist / Habitat Specialist
 - Economist
 - Anthropologist
 - NOAA General Counsel
 - Science Center Representative
 - Protected Resources / Law Enforcement



Example of Management Development Process



Federal Fisheries Regulatory Process



Challenges of the Process

- Process of developing and deciding fisheries regulations is rarely easy and straightforward
- Council relies on federal and state agency partners to monitor the fisheries and conduct stock assessments
- Existing scientific information may not be available
- Existing resources may not be adequate to get the needed information
- Regardless, decisions must often be made

Conflict and Discourse

- Sometimes decisions don't go smoothly
- Disagreement occurs within the Council on the right course of action
- Votes are taken and the majority decides
- Sometimes fishermen don't like the decisions that are made
- Sometimes Council members are conflicted about how to choose the best alternatives for stakeholders

Successes in Management

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act is the primary law bringing the management process together

- Council process is stakeholder driven
- Assessing fish stocks, establishing catch limits, and reducing bycatch
- Regional expertise with experience in various fisheries and conservation groups make it successful
- Allowing flexibility in management while still maintaining sustainability
- Science-based approaches with input from national and regional experts

Questions?

