

***New England Fishery Management Council
Guidelines for Public Comments***

Council Meetings

Public comments will be accepted at Council meetings on all major agenda items to the extent practicable, and on those items requiring final action. The Chairman or presiding officer will schedule comments at an appropriate time during the meeting that is consistent with the orderly conduct of business. This opportunity may occur after the Council has discussed the action items and once motions have been made and are under consideration. Council members may ask questions of individuals offering comments.

Individuals offering oral comments must provide their name, affiliation and background. Each person will be asked to speak for or against the motion under consideration and provide rationale with his or her comments. In addition, it would be very helpful for speakers to comment on whether, in their view, the action will achieve the necessary conservation objectives, whether the proposal is fair and equitable, how communities might be affected, how best to avoid undesirable bycatch and discuss whether there are any safety issues involved.

Additional Time for Public Comments at Council Meetings

An additional opportunity for public comments will be made available at each Council meeting at a designated time listed on the agenda. Any interested party may address the Council during this period concerning future direction, issues or initiatives that are relevant to Council business. The Chairman, on a case-by-case basis, will determine time available.

Limits on Comments

The Chairman may limit or defer public comment on Council meeting agenda items on which no final action is being taken to future oversight committee meetings, public hearings and/or to the Council meeting at which final action will be taken. Where constrained by the available time, the Chairman or the presiding officer may limit public testimony in a reasonable manner by: a) requesting that individuals avoid duplication of prior testimony; b) requiring persons with similar concerns to select a spokesman; and/or c) setting a time limit on individual comments.

Framework Adjustments

The New England Council will consider public comments at a minimum of two Council meetings before making its recommendations to the National Marine Fisheries Service Regional Administrator on any framework adjustment to a fishery management plan. Options will be developed at the first framework meeting, analyses will be conducted between the meetings to determine if the options meet the conservation objectives of the action, and the results of the analyses will be available in a document 7 days prior to the final meeting. At the final meeting the

Council will vote on and approve one of the options which meets the conservation objectives for which the measure was developed.

Public comments will be accepted at the first or initial framework meeting on the development and selection of various management options. Comments will be accepted at the final meeting (and there may be interim meetings) only on the range of options already selected at the first meeting. The Council will not consider new options at this time.

Submission of Written Material

Written comments received at the Council office 72 hours before the Council meeting date will be copied and distributed to the Council prior to the meeting. For some purposes, comments may be accepted after the 72-hour deadline (for example, to accommodate Environmental Impact Statement comment periods). In these instances specific instructions will be provided in a public notice.

Under normal circumstances, anyone who is unable to provide their material 72 hours in advance of the meeting should provide 35 copies to the staff for distribution to Council members. If distribution to the Council is not essential, submission of a single copy is sufficient for the record. All written information submitted to the Council must include a statement of the source and date of such information. Written statements must also include the author's name, affiliation and background.

Public Input at Other Meetings

At meetings of the Council's oversight committees or other working groups, the extent of public comment taken will be at the discretion of the Chairman or presiding officer.