

**Ocean resources policy committee**

Chair: Nate Pamplin (WA)

Vice-Chair: Dave Golden (NJ)

July 2

1:00 – 3:00 PM ET

Microsoft Teams

**Government Affairs Update - *Ali Schwaab, AFWA***

**Federal Budget**

* FY25 (HR1968)- CR through September 30
* FY26 President’s Budget- skinny budget released back on May 1; OMB passback memo leaked.
  + AFWA submitted a letter to the Secretary of Commerce documenting our priority programs within NOAA fisheries and communicating concerns about some of the potential changes discussed in the NOAA passback and skinny budget.
  + Slightly more details released when the budget appendix was released
  + NOAA Congressional Justification released two days ago
    - No funding for Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund
    - S6 species recovery grants termination
    - Interjurisdictional fisheries grants termination
    - Regional councils and fisheries commissions increase of 1.4M
    - Reduction of $10.25 M for salmon management activities
    - Protected Resources Science and Management- Marine Mammals, Sea Turtles, Other Species- reduction of $107.5M
    - Fisheries data collections, surveys, assessments reduction of 139K
  + President’s budget is essentially a signal to Congress of the Administration’s priorities, but Congress determines actual funding levels through its annual appropriations process
* FY26 appropriations bills in progress
  + AFWA submitted budget testimony on NMFS to the Appropriations subcommittee for Commerce Justice Science
  + AFWA NMFS budget priorities:
    - * Regional Councils and Commissions ($45M), Interjurisdictional Fisheries Grants ($3.38M)
      * Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys, and Assessments ($206M)
      * Protected Resources Science and Management- Marine Mammals, Sea Turtles, Other Species ($175M)
      * Species Recovery Grants to States ($7.25M)
      * Pacific Salmon Recovery Fund
      * Mitchell Act Funds
  + House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce Justice Science has a markup scheduled for Monday, July 7. Possible we could see bill text released on Sunday, July 6.

**Administrative Updates**

* Appointments
  + Secretary of Commerce- Howard Lutnick
  + NOAA
    - Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator- currently duties being performed by Laura Grimm (NOAA chief of staff)
    - Neil Jacobs is the nominee for administrator of NOAA
    - NMFS Assistant Administrator- Eugenio Piñeiro Soler
* Federal Workforce Reductions
  + Through a combination of layoffs, buyouts and early retirements, NOAA Fisheries has lost something on the order of 2000 employees, representing about 20% of workforce. Have heard in some regions the percentage is greater (Alaska, NE). Fluid situation. Concerns for anadromous hatcheries, salmon hatcheries in PNW.
  + AFWA continues to document impacts to state operations. Please send any specific examples of impacts to AFWA.
* Advisory Committees
  + Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee terminated effective February 28, 2025 by the Secretary of Commerce
  + SFBPC- FACA to FWS and NMFS, charter has expired. Hoping to see renewal soon.
* EO’s
  + E.O. 14154- Unleashing American Energy
    - U.S. policy to encourage energy exploration and production on Federal lands and waters
    - Pauses release of funding appropriated through IRA and IIJA (BIL)
    - rescinds CEQ’s authority for the NEPA regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality and directs revision of all agency NEPA procedures based on guidance on implementing NEPA, with a goal of expediting permitting approvals
    - On February 19, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) issued a pre-publication notice for an interim final rule to remove its regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The rule will remove all iterations of CEQ’s NEPA implementing regulations.
  + EO Offshore Wind
    - President Trump issued a Memorandum temporarily withdrawing all areas on the outer continental shelf from offshore wind leasing and directed the Secretaries of interior, Agriculture and Energy, as well as the Administrator of the EPA, to review the federal government’s leasing and permitting practices for wind projects.
    - Temporarily prevents consideration of any area in the OCS for any new or renewed wind energy leasing
    - Does not affect rights under existing leases
    - But does direct Sec of Interior to review necessity of terminating/amending existing wind energy leases…and submitting recommendations to the President
    - Orders review of federal wind leasing and permitting practices, led by Secretary of Interior
      * Applies to onshore and offshore,
      * Federal agencies shall not issue new or renewed approvals, rights of way, permits, leases, or loans for onshore or offshore wind projects until this assessment is complete
      * Assessment to consider- environmental impacts on wildlife and economic costs associated with intermittent generation of electricity plus effects of subsidies on viability of wind industry
    - Temporary moratorium on all activities and rights relating to Lava Ridge Wind project, directs Secretary of Interior to review the record of decision WRT to the EIS for the project approved by DOI in December
  + [Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/restoring-american-seafood-competitiveness/)
  + NOAA
    - Withdraws Vessel Speed Rule
      * On January 16, the National Marine Fisheries Service [**withdrew its proposed rule**](https://url.us.m.mimecastprotect.com/s/FWsHCERpqAhYlJPi5hZT7_K0i?domain=vr4zo6cab.cc.rs6.net) to amend the North Atlantic Right Whale (NARW) vessel speed regulations intended to further reduce the likelihood of vessel strikes to endangered NARWs.
      * First published back on August 1, 2022, the rule would have extended existing NARW vessel speed rule regulations to vessels greater than 35 ft in length, enlarged the boundaries and timing of seasonal speed zones, and introduced mandatory dynamic speed zones in areas where NARWs were known to be present outside of active seasonal zones.
      * The proposed rule met with strong opposition in Congress and from many groups representing coastal and marine users (fishermen, recreational boaters, ports and marinas, etc.).
      * We will continue to monitor and remain engaged as new rules and policies regarding the NARW are developed.
  + BOEM
    - Rescinded its Notice to Lessees and Operators (NTL) [2023-G01](https://www.boem.gov/about-boem/regulations-guidance/boem-ntl-2023-g01), *Expanded Rice’s Whale Protection Efforts During Reinitiated Consultation with NMFS*. The NTL contained recommendations for suggested precautionary measures by lessees and operators during the reinitiated consultation.
    - NOAA’s proposed rule to designate critical habitat for Rice’s whale was not finalized before the transition in administrations; it has not yet been withdrawn.
* Grant Status
  + RBFF NOCP grant rescinded
    - FWS released a notice of funding opportunity  seeking applications from eligible applicants to implement the **National Outreach and Communications Program (NOCP)** ([**Click Here**](https://url.us.m.mimecastprotect.com/s/UtqGCxkx6PsEz7MTWuPhyAPNs?domain=vr4zo6cab.cc.rs6.net)) through innovative programs that may be conducted at various geographic scales, ranging from local or state to regional or national levels. Applications must address one or more of the five purposes of an outreach and communications program, which are defined in the Sportfishing and Boating Safety Act of 1998 (16 U.S.C.777c-777g) as programs that:
      * improve communications with anglers, boaters, and the general public regarding angling and boating opportunities;
      * reduce barriers to access and participation in angling and boating activities;
      * advance the adoption of sound angling and boating practices in the U.S.;
      * promote conservation and the responsible use of the nation’s aquatic resources; and
      * further safety in angling and boating.
    - Grant historically awarded to the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation to market and promote and encourage fishing and boating participation at that national level.
    - USFWS OCI announced that there will be a virtual information session on the NOFO on Wednesday July 16 from 2 pm-4 pm ET. Link to register:  [**Register here**](https://url.us.m.mimecastprotect.com/s/fzVJCM8AZMIBm8OiAsmh8FbtP?domain=vr4zo6cab.cc.rs6.net)
  + Multistate Conservation Grant Program
    - No new news to share on the MSCG program. Our intel is still that DOI leadership and DOGE have signed off on the package, and that the NOFO is awaiting to transmittal to OMB for their review and approval.
    - We hope to get an update on its status by the 4th. We are ready to proceed with guidance and outreach once we get the approval.
  + PR/DJ grants
    - no functional changes to how grants are reviewed/processed have been made by FWS yet; however, the situation is fluid.
    - States are starting to express concern regarding the timelines with respect to PR/DJ apportionments. There has been a lack of communication from DOI on this subject and the restructuring at Office of Conservation Investment is causing disruption. Anyone on this call experiencing delays?
    - NJ notes that the process has been much slower, but that it has not affected work yet (because NJ fronts the federal aid money and then gets reimbursed).
    - AFWA will continue to keep tabs on these grant processes and keep you informed of any changes. Please continue to share what you are hearing with us as well.
  + SWG/SWAP deadlines are in September- how will these fit with FY26 SWG funding timeline (if there is funding for FY26, noting President’s budget request).

**Legislative Updates**

* HR 1 does include recissions of some unspent IRA monies for NOAA’s climate related projects.
* At AFWA, our main focus has been on the reauthorization of the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund:
  + Recall that the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund (SFRBTF) must be reauthorized every five years and the current authorization expires at the end of FY26.
  + AFWA worked with the Angling and Boating Alliance, an informal coalition of organizations representing those who pay into the fund and those who administer and benefit from the fund, to develop legislation to reauthorize the SFRBTF.
  + Changes- reduce tax on aerated bait buckets, switch interstate fisheries commissions to percentage (that amounts to small increase), add alternative fuels criterion for boating infrastructure grants
    - Removed: State Boating Act, Federal Excise Tax Slippage fix
    - State Boating Act would allow states to collect fees related to recreational boating, boating safety, and aquatic invasive species management as a condition of boat registration. While this remains a priority for AFWA, it is clear from our conversations on the Hill that continuing to include the SBA could jeopardize reauthorization of the SFRBTF. We are proposing to remove the SBA from the draft text and make another attempt at an administrative fix.
  + Rep. Dingell (D-MI) introduced [**H.R. 3858**](https://url.us.m.mimecastprotect.com/s/PQO4CyPyw0IOVWXhyFLhxBoHz?domain=vr4zo6cab.cc.rs6.net), *the Sport Fish Restoration, Recreational Boating Safety and Wildlife Restoration Act of 2025.* Rep. Wittman (R-VA) co-sponsored
  + The bill was discussed at a hearing of the HNR Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries held last week (Tuesday, June 24th).
* S1649 Sporting Good Excise Tax Modernization Act
  + close a significant gap in the collection of taxes for the Wildlife Restoration and Sport Fish Restoration Trust Funds. The bipartisan legislation was introduced by Representatives Panetta (D-CA) and Moore (R-UT) to make online marketplaces accountable for collection of the excise tax on archery and angling equipment sold directly to consumers from outside of the U.S. by online vendors.
  + We had hoped this would be included in Reconciliation bill, but it did not make it in. Now we are looking into other vehicles.
* A number of other marine resource-related bills have also been introduced that may be of interest to the ORPC:
* HR 207 SHARKED Act of 2025
  + - On January 21, the House passed the Supporting the Health of Aquatic Systems through Research, Knowledge, and Enhanced Dialogue Act (SHARKED Act, H.R. 207). bill with overwhelming support. This is the same bill that AFWA endorsed last year. The SHARKED Act seeks to address the issue of shark depredation, whereby a shark eats or damages a hooked fish before the angler can reel in their catch. Anecdotally, depredation is increasing, affecting angler satisfaction as well as posing risks to angler and shark safety.
    - The bill directs the Secretary of Commerce to establish a task force of fisheries managers and scientists to coordinate efforts to address shark depredation. The task force would develop research priorities and identify funding opportunities to better understand depredation and develop suitable interventions.
    - Received in Senate and referred to Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
* S93/ HR 644- Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Amendments Act of 2025
  + Introduced by Senator Sullivan (R-AK), this bill seeks to reauthorize the original HABHRCA of 1998 and strengthen the HABHRCA program to improve monitoring, forecasting, and responses to harmful algal blooms and hypoxia, which can significantly impact the health of marine ecosystems, fisheries, human health, and local economies.
  + The bill text includes provisions to improve coordination with states and tribes.
  + Reported favorably out of committee on Feb 5
  + The House companion bill ([HR644](https://url.us.m.mimecastprotect.com/s/9pvDCPNEjPIPZBEi6tGTxHJ2v?domain=vr4zo6cab.cc.rs6.net)) was introduced January 23 and has been referred to committee.
* S 283 Illegal Red Snapper and Tuna Enforcement Act (S283)
  + Sponsored by Senators Cruz (R-TX), Schatz (D-HI), Britt (R-AL) and Tuberville (R-AL)
  + Aims to develop a field test kit that can be used to identify the country of origin of red snapper and certain species of tuna imported into the United States.
  + This will allow federal and state law enforcement officers to identify and intercept illegally caught or falsely labelled red snapper and tuna before it enters the U.S. market. In doing so, the bill seeks to protect seafood consumers and domestic fishermen and seafood markets.
  + Reported favorably out of committee on February 5
* HR 3714 Forage Fish Conservation Act of 2025
  + Introduced by Rep. Dingell, co-sponsored by Rep Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Rep. Huffman (D-CA) and Rep. Mast (R-FL)
  + Directs Secretary of Commerce to define forage fish and Councils manage species and account for predator use
  + May dilute interstate fisheries commission authorities
  + Referred to HNR committee
* HR 3718 Sustaining America’s Fisheries for the Future Act of 2025
  + A bill to reauthorize and amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
  + Introduced June 4 by Rep. Huffman, Rep. Moylan, Rep Case
  + Text just became available
  + Referred to HNR and Ag committees

**Federal Partner Updates- Heidi *NMFS***

* Requesting input from regional fishery management councils on how to reduce regulations per Seafood Competitiveness E.O. Also will be asking for input from the public through the Federal Register.
* Another seafood strategy coming- America First Seafood Strategy
* NMFS conducting review of Marine National Monuments (shorter timeline than one given in E.O.)
* NMFS conducting review of international commitments and agreements (i.e., International Pacific Halibut, Pacific Salmon Treaty, etc.)

**Proposed transfer of NMFS OPR to USFWS**

* Concerns around decoupling science and management authorities.
* States concerned that FWS will not have the necessary expertise and this will impact hatchery permits, Hatchery Genetic Management Plans, etc.
* FWS does not have experience actually managing species other than migratory birds.
* Concern that this will actually make permitting more inefficient.
* AFWA has not taken a position but has noted concerns about potential impacts.

**National Fish Habitat Partnership Update – *Ryan Roberts, AFWA***

* First board meeting under leadership of new board chair, Tim Schaeffer, on June 10th.
* Discussions revolved around approval of FY2026 habitat conservation projects 107 w request of $7.38 million and approved by board, projects were sent to dept of interior for approval from secretary by July 1st, operations funding for fish habitat partnerships, Sarah Schuman to represent commercial fishery board, progress made w 501c3 nonprofit to support NIFHAP called “beyond the pond”
* The 2025 project for FWA announces EPA that $23.4 million is going out the door to support 53 in 29 states.
* 2 new federal reps on our board, Dave Miko (board rep for USFWS), Paul Wagner.

**State Roundtable** – *All*

* OR:
  + Heads up on OR salmon river hatchery not being funded, moved over to different hatchery which will be a 5-year process.
  + Growing concern around California testing release of unmarked salmon. This could affect fisheries management in OR, necessitate creation of a tagging program that we don't have funding or infrastructure for.
* WA:
  + Funding for councils being meted out $1M at a time. Council making meetings virtual because no predictability of funding and only able to plan 3 months out.
  + Different state fisheries marine commissions are working w NOAA to set up an executive fish leadership meeting in November.
* NJ:
  + Wind power offshore development came to a halt, Empire Wind the only project moving forward right now.
  + Currently in the middle of a lawsuit on lack of incidental take permit for sturgeon, multi state lawsuit (DE, NJ, NY).
  + Federal funding source that is moving forward is Delaware River Conservation Fund, offering funding for watershed recreation and resource services, NOFO came out and grants are moving onto secretary of interior for approval.
  + CARES funding issue in NJ- audit revealed that some awards made to commercial fishing sector in NJ should not have been made. Now NJ having to claw back money from some awardees.