

Advisory Panels to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Public participation is a key component of any fisheries management decision. The South Atlantic Council depends heavily upon the knowledge and experience of advisory panel members when considering options for a new plan or plan amendment. These diverse panels include recreational and commercial fishermen, head-boat and charter operators, seafood buyers and sellers, conservationists, consumers, and federal and state agency representatives who are knowledgeable about a particular fishery. The Council currently has 15 separate advisory panels, comprised of 207 members.

Members of the Council's advisory panels provide grass roots input. The APs offer continuing advice on fishery management plans (FMPs), amendments, and other regulatory actions for each fishery. They frequently comment on how their personal experience (i.e., what they see on the water, at the docks, or in the market) agrees or disagrees with data being used to develop management alternatives. Often, AP members raise specific concerns about a fishery and offer suggestions for management options to address them.

Advisory panels offer the Council continuing advice on:

- The capacity and the extent to which U.S. commercial fishing vessels and recreational anglers will harvest the resources considered in the management plans
- The effect of such plans on local economies, social structures, essential fish habitats and the environment
- Potential conflicts between user groups of a given fishery resource
- Enforcement problems specific to each fishery with emphasis on the expected need for enforcement
- Current trends and developments in fishery issues

Some frequently asked questions:

- *What does it cost to be an advisory panel member?*
Only your time. When called to a meeting, advisory panel members are reimbursed for food, travel and lodging expenses. Members of APs serve without compensation.
- *Will this take up a lot of my time?*
No. Generally, advisory panels meet no more than once or twice a year. Attendance at meetings is required. An advisory panel member will be replaced, at the Council's discretion, if absent from two consecutive meetings without giving adequate notice. It is also at the Council's discretion to remove panel members for violation of marine resource law or felony conviction.

- *How do I find out about vacancies?*
Vacancies are advertised in the Council news releases, newsletters, and website at www.safmc.net.
- *How long do advisory panel members serve?*
Advisory panel members are appointed by the Council for a three-year term and may be reappointed at the discretion of the Council.
- *How do I become an advisory panel member?*
Interested persons who wish to apply should contact the Council office for an application or visit the Council website. Applications are reviewed by the Advisory Panel Selection Committee, which recommends appointments for the Council to consider. Nominees are not eligible for appointment if they have had a marine resource violation in the past three years.
- *Can I really have an impact on management decisions?*
Yes. Many management measures currently in place were proposed by advisory panel members or their fishing constituency.
- *Where can I get more information?*

For further information, contact the Council office:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201
North Charleston, SC 29405
Phone: 843/571-4366; Fax: 843/769-4520

