

**Operational Guidelines for the Marine and Coastal Area-based Management Federal Advisory  
Committee  
Including Subcommittees and Working Groups**

**INTRODUCTION**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA or agency) Marine and Coastal Area-based Management Advisory Committee (MCAM) is a Federal Advisory Committee (FAC) subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), 5 U.S.C. App., and the FACA implementing regulations, 41 C.F.R. Part 102-3. It advises the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere (Under Secretary)/ NOAA Administrator (Administrator) on science-based approaches to area-based protection, conservation, restoration, and management in coastal and marine areas, including the Great Lakes.

Established in November 2022, the MCAM operates under a Charter that is reviewed and approved every two years. The Operational Guidelines for the MCAM is a living document that (i) outlines the operations of the MCAM, (ii) defines the roles and responsibilities of MCAM members and NOAA personnel that work with and support the MCAM, and (iii) provides guidance to ensure that the MCAM operates effectively and within the bounds of FACA. General procedures and requirements governing the operation of the MCAM are provided in FACA, its implementing regulations, the MCAM’s Charter, and additional FAC operating policies and procedures issued by NOAA or the Department of Commerce (DOC).

**ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The MCAM is comprised of up to 20 non-Federal voting members appointed by the Under Secretary for their diverse perspectives and expertise. Financial and administrative support for the MCAM is provided by NOAA . The Designated Federal Officer (DFO) and an Alternate Designated Federal Officer (ADFO) of the Committee will be appointed by the Under Secretary. The ADFO will serve as DFO when the DFO is not available.

An internal NOAA coordinating group will be established to guide and support the Committee, including (but not limited to) recommending members for appointment, providing NOAA guidance on topics to be discussed, and providing NOAA responses to recommendations. The coordinating group will meet monthly, or as needed.

Committee members will not be paid, but NOAA will cover travel expenses for in-person meetings.

**ADVICE**

Advice of the MCAM will be communicated to NOAA/the Administrator either at a meeting of the MCAM or through a report that will be made available for public inspection, as set forth in the FACA regulations. All advice transmitted from the MCAM to NOAA will be considered by the NOAA Administrator and appropriate leadership and line office personnel. If appropriate, NOAA will provide feedback to the MCAM on advice provided, either in writing or verbally at meetings.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES**

NOAA has charged the MCAM to advise NOAA on area-based management, including, “opportunities to enhance conservation of biodiversity, promote climate resilience, and expand access to nature for underserved communities.” Furthermore, the MCAM has been charged to focus on how NOAA can “improve area-based protection, conservation, restoration, and

**Operational Guidelines for the Marine and Coastal Area-based Management Federal Advisory  
Committee  
Including Subcommittees and Working Groups**

management outcomes” for existing trust resources (and specifically not on the identification of new areas for management).

During the first meeting, held in February 2024, the MCAM agreed that the following principles will guide its work:

- Recommendations produced by the MCAM should be informed by the best available science, including Indigenous and local knowledge;
- Work within and build upon existing partnerships across stakeholder groups;
- Focus on conservation outcomes. Meaningful outcomes should not be limited to only NOAA’s work;
- Focus on connectivity and networks to inform our work;
- Work should be performed through a lens of fostering healthy coastal communities.

The MCAM strives to operate in a manner that will:

- Result in transparency and provide opportunity for public participation (for example, allowing virtual public access);
- Reflect a sense of urgency regarding the issues related to its mandate;
- Promote open and honest communication to ensure all members’ perspectives are recognized and valued, especially during difficult conversations;
- Generate actionable and lasting recommendations;
- Foster regular engagement with NOAA leadership and timely sharing of information pertinent to the work of the MCAM; and
- Encourage its members to find common ground and achieve consensus, and where consensus is unachievable, provide opportunities for alternate views.

## **MEETINGS**

### **Meeting Frequency**

The Committee is expected to meet at least once annually, will try to meet twice, and may meet more frequently. Meetings may be conducted in-person, by video conference, or via teleconference.

### **Open Meetings**

Unless otherwise determined in advance for reasons outlined in the Government in the Sunshine Act, all meetings of the Marine and Coastal Area-based Management Federal Advisory Committee (MCAM FAC) will be open to the public and announced in the Federal Register 15 calendar days before the meeting. Meetings may be held in person, or via a virtual meeting platform. All materials brought before or presented to the MCAM during the conduct of an open meeting will be available to the public for review or copying at the time of the scheduled meeting.

The MCAM may choose to invite non-members to make presentations or comments to the full Committee, Subcommittees or Working Groups, or to participate in group discussions.

**Operational Guidelines for the Marine and Coastal Area-based Management Federal Advisory  
Committee  
Including Subcommittees and Working Groups**

**Subcommittee and Working Group Meetings**

MCAM Subcommittee and Working Group meetings are not required to be open to the public because Subcommittees and Working Groups must forward their work and recommendations to the MCAM at an open meeting for deliberation and approval before the information is transmitted to federal agencies. However, Subcommittee and Working Group meetings will be open when practical (e.g. in person meetings held in conjunction with full MCAM meetings).

**Procedures**

The intent of the MCAM is to operate in a manner to foster open discussion, participation and civility. Robert's Rules of Order will only be used when needed to facilitate MCAM meetings.

**Voting**

The MCAM encourages members to find common ground and achieve consensus, and where consensus is unachievable, provide opportunities for alternate views. If votes are taken, procedures will be as prescribed in Robert's Rules, unless the MCAM decides to set different voting rules.

**Quorum**

As a best practice, NOAA will hold MCAM meetings only if a majority of Committee members can attend. If, during any point in the meeting, the number of members falls below half plus one (the number required in Robert's Rules for a quorum), the meeting may continue and remaining members may conduct all required business, including voting.

**MEMBERSHIP & SELECTION**

**Candidate Identification Process**

Candidate identification will come from various sources, including public notices; recommendations from current and former Federal advisory committee members; Department and NOAA contacts and meetings; recommendations from industry, stakeholder, and government sources; and outreach to relevant associations in order to ensure a robust and diverse pool of applicants. The process will result in consideration of a cross-section of those directly affected, interested, and qualified, and individuals with demonstrated professional or personal qualifications and experience relevant to the functions and tasks to be performed. The DFO and Under Secretary will ensure balance on the Committee. In the event of a vacancy, the Committee's DFO may initiate a process to identify new candidates as described above.

**Committee Membership and Representation**

The Committee's membership would represent a wide spectrum of perspectives and expertise on the future of America's ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes communities that rely on them. Interests and sectors represented include: commercial and recreational fishing, ocean industry, recreation and tourism; Indian Tribes, Alaska Native corporations, Alaska Native organizations, tribal organizations, Native Hawaiian organizations, and Indigenous communities involved in

**Operational Guidelines for the Marine and Coastal Area-based Management Federal Advisory  
Committee  
Including Subcommittees and Working Groups**

coastal and ocean resource issues; and conservationists, natural and cultural resource managers, youth serving organizations and/or educators. Expertise represented would include scientists and others representing disciplines that study the structure, function, human use, and management of coastal and ocean ecosystems. Committee members would work collaboratively to craft carefully considered, balanced, and actionable area-based management recommendations to address complex issues facing coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes users and managers. The membership of the Committee should assure perspectives and expertise reflecting the full breadth of the Committee's responsibilities. The membership balance of perspectives and expertise is not static and may change depending on the work of the Committee.

Subcommittees are composed solely of MCAM members. Working Groups include both MCAM members and individuals who are not members of the MCAM.

**Committee Chair Selection**

The MCAM has two elected officers among its members: Chair and Vice Chair. The Chairperson of MCAM shall be selected from the membership by a majority vote of the members present at a meeting of the full committee. In a separate election, a Vice-Chairperson of MCAM shall be selected from the membership by a majority vote of the members present. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson will each serve a two year term, which can be renewed. Nominations for the Chair and Vice Chair position will be accepted, and candidates will have an opportunity to present their views and qualifications to the Committee. Elections will be held by secret ballot, tallied and announced by the DFO or his/her designee.

Following member voting, NOAA staff will share the outcome of the nominations/voting with the NOAA Administrator for review. If in agreement, the NOAA Administrator will formally appoint these positions and notify the elected Chair and Vice Chair. If there are concerns with the outcome of the vote, the NOAA Administrator will have the opportunity to appoint a different Chair or Vice Chair of the Committee.

**Subcommittee Chair Selection**

Subcommittees are encouraged to select both a chair and vice chair to provide additional support and coverage for meetings when one is unable to attend. It may choose to select co-chairs. Chairs and Vice Chairs of each Subcommittee will be selected by Subcommittee members, by majority vote if there is more than one candidate. Only subcommittee members cast votes for the subcommittee chair role(s). Chair selection is finalized based on the subcommittee member vote - these roles are not appointed by the NOAA Administrator.

**ROLES OF OFFICIALS, MEMBERS AND STAFF**

**Committee Chair and Vice Chair**

The Chair and Vice Chair of the MCAM will work with the DFO and ADFO to establish priorities and a strategic direction for the Committee, identify issues to be addressed, plan meeting agendas, and facilitate Committee meetings. The Executive Committee will support the Chair

**Operational Guidelines for the Marine and Coastal Area-based Management Federal Advisory  
Committee  
Including Subcommittees and Working Groups**

and Vice Chair in carrying out these tasks. In addition, the Chair and Vice Chair are responsible for certifying the accuracy of minutes developed by NOAA to document MCAM meetings.

**Subcommittee Chairs**

Subcommittee Chair is a MCAM member who works with subcommittee members and NOAA staff to chart a strategic direction for the subcommittee, facilitate subcommittee meetings, and serve as part of the MCAM leadership team as a member of the MCAM Executive Committee. The subcommittee chair helps develop subcommittee meeting agendas, facilitates and participates in subcommittee meetings, reviews meeting notes for accuracy, and drives the efforts of the subcommittee (including the development of a work plan).

**Working Group Chairs**

Working Group Chair is a MCAM member who works with Working Group members and NOAA staff to chart a strategic direction for the Working Group and facilitate Working Group meetings, and may serve as part of the MCAM leadership team as a member of the MCAM Executive Committee. The Working Group chair helps develop meeting agendas, facilitates and participates in Working Group meetings, reviews meeting notes for accuracy, and drives the efforts of the Working Group (including the development of a work plan).

**Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee of the MCAM is composed of the Chair, Vice Chair, and the Chairs and Vice Chairs of each of the Subcommittees or Working Groups. The Executive Committee assists the Chair in establishing priorities, identifying issues to be addressed, and planning meeting agendas.

**Members**

Members are expected to make every effort to attend meetings, to participate in Committee, Subcommittee and Working Group discussions and to assist in developing Committee, Subcommittee and Working Group work products. Members should inform NOAA staff if they are unable to attend part or all of a MCAM meeting, including meetings via conference call or webex. A member may not designate a substitute to attend the meeting in his or her place. A person designated by the member may attend the meeting as a member of the public, but may not participate as a member or vote. Subcommittees are composed solely of MCAM members. Working Groups include members who are not members of the MCAM.

**Designated Federal Officer (DFO)**

The DFO of the MCAM serves as the federal government's agent for all matters related to the MCAM's activities. By Law, the DFO (or alternate DFO) must: (1) approve of or call the meetings of the MCAM; (2) approve agendas; (3) attend all meetings; (4) adjourn the meetings when such adjournment is in the public interest; and (5) chair the meeting when so directed by the agency head.

In addition, the DFO, or designee, is responsible for providing adequate staff support to the FAC, including the performance of the following functions: (1) notifying members of the time and place for each meeting; (2) maintaining the roll; (3) maintaining minutes of the FAC's

**Operational Guidelines for the Marine and Coastal Area-based Management Federal Advisory  
Committee  
Including Subcommittees and Working Groups**

deliberations; (4) attending to official correspondence; (5) maintaining official FAC records and filing all papers and submissions prepared for or by the FAC, including those items generated by Subcommittees; (6) collect, validate and pay all vouchers for pre-approved expenditures; and (7) preparing and handling all reports, including the annual report as required by the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

**Ex Officio Members**

Ex Officio members represent federal agencies on the MCAM FAC. They participate in the discussions and deliberations of the MCAM, its Subcommittees and Working Groups, as do regular members, except that they do not vote on the FAC, its Subcommittees or Working Groups. Ex officio members may have an alternate attend meetings when they are unable to attend.

One official from each of the following Federal departments and agencies serves (or may serve) on the Committee: the Department of the Interior, the Department of Defense, the Department of State, the Department of Homeland Security, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Agriculture, the Marine Mammal Commission, and the National Science Foundation. Such membership may be granted to other pertinent Federal agencies by the Under Secretary.