

Council of Great Lakes Fishery Agencies

Terms of Reference

The following terms of reference were adopted by the Council on 13 November 1997. They were presented to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission on 2 December 1997. Any revisions to the terms should be made only with the consent of the Council and approval of the Commission.

Committee Name

Council of Great Lakes Fishery Agencies

Area of Concern

Lake Ontario (including the St. Lawrence River from Lake Ontario to the 45th parallel of latitude), Lake Erie, Lake Huron (including Lake St. Clair), Lake Michigan, Lake Superior and their connecting waters. Tributaries of the above waters to the extent necessary to protect, manage, or investigate any stock of fish of common concern, the taking or habitat of which is confined predominantly to the above waters.

Committee Purpose

The Council of Great Lakes Fishery Agencies was created in A Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries. It replaced the Committee of the Whole, Operations Subcommittee, and consists of representatives to the Plan, i.e., signatories. The primary responsibility of this new committee is to guide and support the process of implementing the Plan. In doing so, the Council will consider issues pertinent to, or referred by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. Likewise, the Council will probably develop issues or recommendations for referral to other organizations, as well as the Commission. Resolutions of the Council may also be implemented under the authority of represented agencies. The Council is not to duplicate the tasks of other management committees, but rather to reinforce, add value, and support them.

- **To ensure mutual accountability of the Parties to the plan.** The mechanism for doing so will involve periodic review of the process of implementation of the strategies in the plan and the appropriateness of the plan as needed. This may also involve consultation with regard to management issues. As was done in 1978, 1985, and 1995, the Council will be responsible for initiating discussions that that could lead to further enhancement or refinement of the Plan.
- **To provide guidance and support to the Plan's institutional arrangements.** Parties to the Plan anticipate that other committees may encounter circumstances in executing the Plan that that would require the assistance of the Council. While not duplicating the efforts of other committees, the Council may provide assistance to them such as administrative guidance and advocacy.
- **To encourage and support timely and effective information exchange between fishery law enforcement agencies and fishery managers.** The Council can play an important role in facilitating meaningful dialogue between enforcement and fishery management entities, through facilitating a framework for information exchange and coordination to address the priorities and problems related to Great Lakes fishery management.
- **To ensure that environmental objectives are articulated and reciprocal strategies with environmental agencies are developed.** The Plan's strategic procedures #6 and #8 recognize the importance of the cooperation between fisheries and environmental agencies and charged the Council) to foster development of new cooperative arrangements. To that end, the Council will promote collaboration between fish and environmental management, and representatives of environmental agencies have been sought to serve on the Council as non-voting members.

- **To represent fishery interests to the most appropriate body or process on unresolved or emerging environmental issues which may be referred to the Council by Lake Committees or the Council of Lake Committees.** The Council recognizes that many of the environmental issues may span across individual lakes. It will be important for the Council to recognize such issues and work to focus the appropriate agency resources on them.
- **To inform and educate on a basin-wide perspective, including the development and implementation of a strategic communications framework that details the roles and responsibilities of the Parties and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.** There is great potential for the Council to enhance the individual efforts of the Great Lakes agencies to inform the public by communicating about the plan and supporting coordinated efforts to identify and communicate important messages that need to be presented consistently.

Council Operation Protocols

An essential feature of the plan is that decisions by the parties be arrived at by consensus. Definitions of consensus can be found in the plan's text and appendix. Consensus, therefore, is the mechanism for decision-making of the Council. If consensus cannot be achieved, the concerns of all members shall be described in minutes and in the Council report to the Commission.

The Council and the Commission will cooperatively determine the appropriate mechanisms for Commission support of the Council. Through 1999 the Council will function as a management committee of the Commission, at which time, the arrangement will be evaluated by the Council and the Commission and a decision made re the future Council relationship with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

The Council will decide protocol for operations, establish operational procedures for internal committees, develop meeting agenda, and guidelines for electing officers, if not covered in terms as reference as follows:

Meeting Schedule

The Council shall meet at least twice annually. One meeting shall be in conjunction with annual meetings of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (to be reviewed in 1999). Additional Council meetings may be convened by the Council Chair to address special items of concern.

Membership

Each Party to the Plan will have representation on the Council. Each Party will be asked to name one member, such as its fish chief or functional equivalent. Although a Party may send additional delegates to the meetings, the member will be the spokesperson for the Party in the development of a consensus decision. Members should be knowledgeable about issues under discussion, or bring staff that can assist. The Council will provide for non-Party participation by Environment Canada, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the International Joint Commission, and other agencies as appropriate. Non-Party participants or members are expected to participate in discussion, bring relevant information, speak for their agencies, and to play an active role in the development of consensus. However, non-Party participant assent is not a prerequisite for and non-Party dissent may not block the Parties' consensus.

Officers

The Council will, at meetings occurring in odd-numbered years, elect a Chair and Vice-Chair for 2-year terms from among signatory members. One of the officers is to be from the United States and the other from Canada.

Role of Secretariat

The Commission's secretariat provides liaison between Council and Commission, by assisting the Council in the development and distribution of meeting agenda and minutes, and the preparation of briefing materials, reports, and communications as required. The secretariat also assists in making (local) meeting arrangements.

Subcommittees and Advisors

The Council may, as it deems necessary, establish subcommittees or seek advisors to inform or to undertake Council business.

Reporting

Consensus decisions will be recorded appropriately, e.g. meeting minutes. The Council will report during the Commission's annual meetings and as appropriate.

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