

Representative Roles and Activities of a Sanctuary Advisory Council

Councils may be initially established for a designation or management plan review process, but will generally evolve into a permanent body to provide advice on the general management of a sanctuary. There is a wide range of activities in which councils are involved and an equally diverse way in which councils conduct their business:

- Meet with constituent groups to survey their concerns.
- Request to have issues of concern placed on the agenda.
- Discuss issues or projects during a meeting.
- Ask for presentations from experts and sanctuary staff.
- Make a motion or pass a resolution by a voting action during a meeting.
- Develop advice and recommendations by consensus.
- Ask that a position be reflected in meeting minutes.
- Write a letter, report or other written statement expressing advice, views and/or information to the sanctuary superintendent or other appropriate body.
- Form a working group or subcommittee to define issues and craft proposals for which the council may take action.
- Hold a retreat or special meeting to address personnel, administrative or logistical issues.

Below are the most important roles that councils should fulfill, and some thoughts about implementation requirements that should be considered in helping a council realize these roles, which are to:

1. Serve as a liaison between the sanctuary and its community, disseminating information about the sanctuary to the various constituencies of members and bringing the concerns of constituents and the public to sanctuary staff.

There are numerous ways that a council as a body or those individual members can help maintain communications with the constituents and communities of a sanctuary (and fulfill its primary purpose of advising the sanctuary superintendent). One option for the council as a body is to host a public meeting to raise awareness of the sanctuary and its issues, perhaps something along the lines of a town meeting. Members, as individuals, can host similar meetings with their constituents, to bring concerns to the council and relay council positions. If members have other means at their disposal (e-mail, web sites, newsletters, etc.), these mechanisms may also be used to relay information back and forth between constituents and the member. The sanctuary should encourage the members to take such steps, by providing support as available and/or asking the members to report on their efforts during normal council meetings. Public interaction with council members during council meetings should be limited to public comment periods, breaks and before and after meetings. This is intended to limit interruptions and distractions.

2. Identify potential partners and constituent groups with which the sanctuary should be working and forge relationships.

Sanctuaries depend upon good working relationships with partners such as agencies, organizations, and individuals to accomplish their mission of protecting sanctuary resources. The first step is to ask the council to help identify what kind of partnership a sanctuary needs or should pursue (e.g., advocacy, revenue enhancement, research, education, etc.) and then help identify the group or individual who can help the sanctuary carry out that function, perhaps because that group or individual has the resources or authority to accomplish something the sanctuary alone cannot. Investments of time, planning, and information should be made to develop that partnership.

3. Help identify and resolve issues and conflicts, including emerging issues of which the sanctuary might not be aware.

Councils, being crosscutting bodies and representing many diverse interests, are in a unique position to bring emerging and potential issues to the attention of the sanctuary and assist the sanctuary in:

- (a) Determining if the sanctuary/council should address the issue, and
- (b) Determining its priority in relation to existing issues. Councils are able to raise issues in numerous ways, including bringing them up during a normal council meeting, speaking with the council chair prior to a meeting, or speaking to

the sanctuary superintendent. If the chair and the sanctuary superintendent believe the issue is something the council should address, there are numerous ways to do so, including staff presentations, discussions during council meetings, creation of a subcommittee or working group to focus on the issue, or preparation of a white paper or other document.

4. Review and provide input on sanctuary plans, proposals, and products, including prioritizing issues.

Sanctuaries produce copious amounts of written products, many of which, such as management plans, research and education plans, issue papers, etc., generate strong public interest and should be as accurate and well written as possible. Councils can help achieve the best possible product by providing accurate information (including technical or specialized knowledge), drafting, reviewing, and/or approving those products. These tasks can be achieved in a number of ways, including individual efforts, working groups/subcommittee efforts, and identification of external reviewers/contributors. Efforts should start early relative to a due date, and there should be very clear guidance on exactly what is expected from the council.

5. Participate in sanctuary events, activities and programs.

Council members are encouraged to participate in sanctuary events, activities and programs to broaden their knowledge, as well as to supplement sanctuary staff when appropriate. In addition, participating in events will increase the opportunity for council members to interact with the public and their constituents.

6. Support sanctuary friends groups and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

Council members are encouraged to provide information to individuals or groups interested in establishing a friends' group or the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation to support the sanctuary.

7. Provide technical and background information on issues facing the sanctuary.

Council members may have access to information and situations that sanctuary staff do not. For instance, research representatives may have access to experts and studies that are not available to the general public, or stakeholder representatives may be aware of user conflicts that have not been brought to the attention of sanctuary staff. By asking members to provide such information to the sanctuary via reports at council meetings or other means, the sanctuary can take advantage of all the expertise and experience represented on the council.

8. Validate the accuracy and quality of information that the sanctuary uses for decision-making purposes.

Again, one of the prime advantages presented by a council is having a diverse array of experts available to the sanctuary. That expertise can be used in a variety of ways, including those discussed earlier, but it can also be used to validate the grounds or information that are being used to make decisions about protecting sanctuary resources. This validation can be obtained in a variety of ways, including reviewing documentation about an issue, verifying the conclusions of external experts, presenting findings or answering questions during a council or subcommittee/working group meeting or discussions with the chair and sanctuary superintendent. Any substantive discussions that occur outside the meeting will be brought to the council during its next regular meeting.