Groundfish Monitoring Amendment 23: Here’s How to Prep for the July and August Public Hearings

The New England Fishery Management Council will be taking final action on Groundfish Monitoring Amendment 23 during its September meeting. The amendment is intended to improve catch monitoring and reporting in the commercial groundfish fishery.

Now is the time to tell us what you think!

The Council has scheduled a series of public hearings in July and August that will be held by webinar. In order to help fishermen and other stakeholders prepare for these hearings, the Council has lined up a number of outreach efforts to make it easier for everyone to participate in the webinar hearings and become more familiar with the Amendment 23 proposed alternatives in advance of the actual hearings.

“We encourage everyone to take advantage of these outreach opportunities,” said Council Executive Director Tom Nies. “Join the practice webinar. Call our groundfish staff during the Amendment 23 office hours. Ask questions. Watch the narrated video of the presentation, which we’ll be posting online soon. We’re doing everything we can to make sure the public is aware of all the alternatives in the document and that everyone feels comfortable giving us their comments.”

Here’s what’s in the queue to help you out.

Public Training Webinar – Tuesday, July 14th at 2:00 p.m.

The Council has set up a public training webinar to walk through the steps participants need to know to successfully join the webinar and provide oral comments. Essentially, it’s a dry run of what will happen during the actual public hearings, and it’s a good way to test out muting and unmuting your microphone to make sure you can be heard. Use the orange link directly below to register for this practice run.

Register for the Practice Webinar > HERE

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Amendment 23 includes a complete analysis of the alternatives and associated impacts. Download a copy at A23 DEIS. Visit the Amendment 23 library to access all documents and public hearing materials.
After registering, you’ll receive a confirmation email. Save the email. Then, on Tuesday, July 14th shortly before 2:00 p.m., call up the email and click on Join Webinar.

**IMPORTANT:** Anyone who wants to speak during the webinar must register for and join the webinar. That’s because you’ll need to click on a “raise hand” button on the webinar screen to let the organizer know you want to talk. Additionally, you can call in by phone if you’d like, but be sure to join the webinar first.

- The call-in number is +1 (415) 655-0052
- The access code is 611-262-320

The Council will schedule additional public training webinars if needed.

### Amendment 23 Outreach Office Hours – Connect With Our Staff and Ask Questions

The Council’s groundfish team will be holding pre-scheduled office hours. While all stakeholders are welcome to take advantage of this opportunity, the Council is especially encouraging those who are new to the process to participate in these sessions. Staffers will be able to address questions about:

- the Council’s preferred alternatives in Amendment 23;
- any of the other alternatives;
- the analyses behind the alternatives; and
- the process for providing public comments.

**QUESTION:** What if I’m busy and can’t make any of the pre-scheduled office hours?

**ANSWER:** You can make an appointment for a time that’s convenient for you, as long as it’s before Friday, August 28th. Contact:

- Robin Frede at (978) 462-0492 ext. 124, email rfrede@nefmc.org; or
- Melissa Errend at (978) 462-0492 ext. 107, email merrend@nefmc.org.

### Save These Dates! Reach us by Phone or Webinar

The Council’s groundfish staff will hold office hours to talk about Amendment 23 on the following days:

- **Wednesday, July 15, 2020 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.**
- **Tuesday, July 21, 2020 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.**
- **Thursday, July 23, 2020 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

These office hours will be held using GoToMeeting, which is different from what the Council is using for most of the public hearings. By logging onto the webinar, you’ll be able to view presentations and documents plus see our staff through a camera. You’ll also be able to turn on your own computer’s camera – *but only if you want to* – so that our staffers can talk with you directly face-to-face.

Anyone who’s not comfortable with this format can simply dial-in by telephone without joining the webinar.

- No pre-registration is needed. At the designated times above for all three sessions, simply join [HERE](#). Or,
- Call in by telephone. Dial +1 (571) 317-3122 and, when prompted, enter the access code 952-066-277.
What’s Next in the Lineup?
A Public Hearing on Thursday, July 16th at 4:00 p.m.

This is the Council’s fourth public hearing on Groundfish Monitoring Amendment 23. The Council previously held webinar hearings on April 15, followed by May 12 and May 21. Several more are coming up.

Q: How do I participate in this next hearing on July 16th?
A: First you need to register for the webinar at the orange link below and follow the instructions on the hearing webpage. Additional information is available in the meeting notice.

Register for the Webinar > HERE

Q: How can I find the public hearing document?
A: All related materials are in the Amendment 23 library. Here are the key documents.

- Amendment 23 Public Hearing Document
- Amendment 23 Presentation
- Amendment 23 Executive Summary
- Amendment 23 document with the Draft Environmental Impact Statement

More Hearings in the Lineup
July 29, July 30, August 6, and August 10

The Council has scheduled four other public hearings, three of which have geographical focuses. Check out the dates below for more information plus links to join each webinar:

- **Wednesday, July 29 at 4:00 p.m.** – geographical focus on Rhode Island and Connecticut/Mid-Atlantic states;
- **Thursday, July 30 at 4:00 p.m.** – geographical focus on Massachusetts;
- **Thursday, August 6 at 4:00 p.m.** – general webinar hearing with conference call option (easiest for people who are uncomfortable with webinars and want to only call in by telephone without another device); and
- **Monday, August 10 at 6:00 p.m.** – geographic focus on New Hampshire and Maine (check the calendar).

More Outreach - Watch the Video!
The Council will be producing a video of the Amendment 23 presentation during the July 16 webinar hearing. This narrated slideshow, which describes what’s in the amendment and walks through the Council’s preferred alternatives, will be posted on the Council’s website.

- Look for a link to the video HERE shortly after the July 16 hearing is over.
- View the presentation at your convenience to become familiar with the alternatives and help you formulate your public comments.
- Use the video to help you develop questions to ask the staff during the Amendment 23 office hours.

IMPORTANT UPDATE!
The public comment deadline for Amendment 23 has been extended to August 31, 2020

The Council is continuing to explore options for holding at least one, centrally located in-person public hearing before August 21. If an in-person hearing isn’t feasible, the Council will schedule another webinar hearing before August 21.