

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Media Guidelines
August 2022

About these Guidelines

The following guidelines provide guidance to staff and Council members who represent the Gulf Council when responding to media inquiries and coordinating other media relations efforts.

All Council members may freely represent their own interests on Council-related topics to the media but should make it clear that they are not representing the Council as a whole. Council members are not obligated to speak with the media and may refer questions to the Council's Public Information Officer (PIO). Under no circumstances should staff express personal opinions on fishery issues to the media.

Responding to Media Inquiries

Media coverage is a primary means of building understanding and increasing awareness of Council efforts and processes. The PIO is primarily responsible for coordinating responses to inquiries, issuing agency statements, and providing information to external news media about the work, responsibilities, and activities of the Council.

All media inquiries received by Council Staff should be directed to the PIO for a coordinated response. In many cases, media responses require added expertise and perspective of the Council Executive Director, Deputy Director, and/or technical staff. The PIO will develop responses using their expertise and seek review and approval from leadership and/or the appropriate technical staff.

However, many media requests require a response on an immediate or very abbreviated timeline. In cases when an immediate response is necessary, the PIO, Executive Director, Deputy Director, Council Chairman, or Council Vice Chairman may respond as spokespersons on behalf of the Council without review. Other staff and Council members may temporarily serve as spokespersons with permission from the Council Chair, Executive Director, or PIO.

While representing the Council, it is imperative that the spokesperson ensure that messaging is both accurate and reflects the unified Council voice. With Council members representing varying interests and holding different perspectives or opinions on Council issues, it is especially important for Council-based messaging to be consistent and reflective of Council votes. For issues that have not yet been finalized, messaging should reflect the nuance of the multiple perspectives housed on the Council.

Quotes

News outlets frequently ask for direct quotes from appropriate representatives. The Council Chairman will serve as the primary source for Council-related quotes. The PIO and appropriate Council staff members are available to help develop quotes and responses on behalf of the Chairman. In cases where the Council Chair is unavailable to provide a quote, the appropriate Council Committee Chair, Executive Director or Deputy Director can be used as a substitute. Generally, staff should try to avoid being quoted.

Photo/Video/Audio Recording

Publicly noticed meetings such as Council and Advisory Panel meetings are open to the public, and may be freely recorded and photographed if the method of recording is reasonable and non-disruptive to the orderly conduct of the meeting. People wishing to record a meeting, or parts of a meeting, should contact the Executive Director, Deputy Director, or Public Information Officer to explain the purpose of the work and to arrange appropriate accommodations to ensure that the meeting is not disrupted. Individuals or media doing the recording are responsible for obtaining the appropriate releases from participants at the meeting.