



MAFAC Recommendation on Flexible Work Policies

December 1, 2022

The Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) recommends that the Department of Commerce and NOAA adopt a more flexible work policy to allow NOAA Fisheries employees to telework and remote work for the following reasons:

- The seafood industry is often located in remote, rural, and underserved areas. Agency employees who live in seafood producing communities will improve exchange of information, knowledge, trust, and social capital with its stakeholders, and can help support those communities.
- Allowing employees greater flexibility for telework and remote work will improve retention and morale, which increases the agency's capacity to address its priority issues.
- NOAA Fisheries offices and federal buildings are frequently located in urban and other areas with a high cost of living. Allowing employees more telework and remote work options provides them an opportunity to live in more affordable areas, which is more inclusive and can increase diversity of the workforce as well as improve work-life balance and employee retention.
- Allowing employees more flexible telework and remote work can reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with commuting and may support reduced facility footprints.

While not all of the work of NOAA Fisheries can be conducted remotely, staff demonstrated over the years of the COVID-19 pandemic that substantial amounts of the mission could be achieved under remote working conditions.

MAFAC is sensitive to the importance of strong workplace culture, cross-functional informal collaborations, and training opportunities that an in-person work environment often enables. MAFAC encourages more intentionally building these opportunities into a long-term flexible model, drawing from best-practices as they evolve.