

ECOSYSTEM BASED FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) first voted to move forward with incorporating ecosystem-based fishery management principles through an Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management Plan (E-FMP) in November 2006. The plan envisioned by the Council would not replace the existing Fishery Management Plans (FMPs), but would advance fishery management under these FMPs by introducing new theories, new scientific findings, and new authorities to the current Council process. The E-FMP is intended to serve as an “umbrella” plan over the four existing fishery management plans, helping with coastwide inter-FMP scientific information, policy guidance, and research planning; creating a framework for status reports on the health of west coast ecosystems; and dealing with comprehensive area-based measures in a full ecosystem context.

The Council visited the E-FMP matter further in April 2007 and reviewed a Council staff white paper regarding issues related to the development of an E-FMP (Agenda Item D.1.a, Attachment 1). This paper draws on the recommendations in a recent article by John Field and Robert Francis, *Considering ecosystem-based fisheries management in the California Current (2006)*, and posed the following discussion topics:

- Development of an E-FMP should be phased in over time and based on a strategic planning document.
- A Plan Development Team with a broad range of expertise should be convened and existing efforts by NMFS and other regional fishery management councils to implement ecosystem-based fishery management should be explored.
- The scope of the E-FMP needs to be determined in terms of policies and principals, geographic coverage, and management unit species.
- Development of an ecosystem information program to provide on a regular basis an ecosystem status document.

The Council passed a motion regarding the next steps in development of an Ecosystem FMP including an initial assignment a future plan development team to provide the Council with a concise statement that includes (1) description of the purpose and need, and (2) a list of goals and objectives of an E-FMP, consistent with the record of dialogue at the November 2006 and April 2007 Council meetings.

Lack of funds to initiate E-FMP development is the primary reason the Council has not, until recently, convened a Plan Development Team to continue this work. Growing national interest in ecosystem-based management and the ongoing pursuit of financial support for this Council effort resulted in dedicated funding in the summer of 2009 and at its September meeting, the Council solicited nominations for an Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management Plan Development Team and an Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel. The Council is expected to appoint members to both of these new Advisory Bodies at its November meeting (see Agenda Item J.3).

The National Marine Fisheries Service has offered its assistance to the Council in the development of an E-FMP. The Northwest and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers have been advancing ecosystem research, monitoring, and modeling and are prepared to present their findings to Council Advisory Bodies as appropriate. Additionally, to facilitate discussions in November, the NMFS Northwest Regional Office has provided a brief overview of the national

perspective on ecosystem-based fishery management, a summary of ecosystem-based initiatives by regional fishery management councils, and some recommendations as to how the Council might proceed (Agenda Item D.1.a, NMFS Report).

The Council is scheduled to hear initial scoping comments from its Advisory Bodies and the public before making recommendations on a schedule and major tasks for the initial effort to develop an E-FMP.

Council Action:

Conduct Initial Scoping and Planning for the Fishery Management Plan and provide guidance on a schedule and initial tasks for the Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management Plan Development Team and the Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item D.1.a, Attachment 1, Council Staff White Paper: Development of an Ecosystem Fishery Management Plan.
2. Agenda Item D.1.b, NMFS Report.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview Mike Burner
- b. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Conduct Initial Scoping and Planning for the Fishery Management Plan

PFMC
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