

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON ECOSYSTEM BASED FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

As the Council and its advisory bodies proceed with the development of an ecosystem based fishery management plan, it will be important to establish a general framework in which the plan will operate. This framework should allow the Council to monitor ecosystem characteristics, and take actions to protect the California Current ecosystem or particular ecosystem components as necessary to achieve the goals of the plan. At the same time, the plan should pay particular attention to maintaining the desirable and successful aspects of the existing FMPs and single species management. Management based on the science of single species population dynamics is well developed. However, we still know little about ecosystem dynamics, and how ecosystem considerations would be used for management. For this reason, the current FMPs and single species management should provide the underlying support for an ecosystem based management plan.

As noted in the Council's Research and Data Needs document for 2008, the development and implementation of the ecosystem management plan should be an evolutionary process, rather than an revolutionary one. Development of an ecosystem fisheries management plan should start by identifying commonalities among the current FMPs. These common elements could form the basis of a document that would bring all individual FMPs under a single umbrella. Components of existing FMPs with potential application to ecosystem management would then form the basis for developing ecosystem-level elements of the new plan.

The plan should give the Council the ability to manage ecosystem components that are not specifically treated in the existing FMPs. This will help in developing regulations for species like krill that form the base of food webs that are important to a wide variety of managed species. This type of framework could likely be developed through a programmatic Environmental Impact Statement.

The science of ecosystem considerations in management, e.g., implementation of Marine Protected Area's in the Exclusive Economic Zone, should be reviewed using the same processes and standards the SSC currently uses to provide science advice to the Council.

The following is a list of topics or questions the Council may wish to assign the Ecosystem Plan Development Team to facilitate the development of the plan.

- Catalog aspects of ecosystem management that are already taking place under the current FMPs (e.g., habitat protection and protected species).
- Examine what gaps within or between the FMPs need to be filled by ecosystem based management.
- Analyze the goals and objective across the current FMPs and see if they can be more consistent.

- Analyze why it is important to augment single species management. What are the outcomes ecosystem based management may achieve that are not possible through single species management?
- Document the approaches to ecosystem management that have been used in other regions.

Clear and specific objectives will facilitate identification of relevant issues, data needs, potential solutions, and the ultimate success of the plan.

PFMC
10/31/09