

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON ECOSYSTEM-BASED FISHERY MANAGEMENT ROADMAP

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the August 17, 2016 draft of the NOAA NMFS Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) Road Map (Agenda Item D.2, Attachment 2) and received a presentation from Ms. Heather Sagar (Senior Policy Advisor, NOAA Fisheries). Many of the initiatives in the Road Map are reasonable, tractable, and worthwhile. The Council and the California Current Integrated Ecosystem Assessment Team have made substantial progress in developing or implementing many of these activities, such as developing a Fisheries Ecosystem Plan (FEP) and implementing an annual process to produce an ecosystem status report.

It is important that the Road Map clearly define how NOAA will identify and engage with partners such as states, tribes, industry, and non-Governmental organizations. Engagement should include participation in planning, determining objectives, sharing data, knowledge, and other aspects of implementation.

Some of the road map initiatives do not directly involve the Council except as a recipient of the work. Others would require implementation of management measures under Magnuson-Stevens Act authority, which would necessarily involve the Council and its advisory bodies. This may substantially increase workload on some committees. There may also be a need to add additional members with expertise in ecosystem science to Council advisory bodies including the SSC.

The concept of “risk” needs to be more clearly defined and differentiated from impacts.

Identification of appropriate tools for EBFM is overly prescriptive in the Road Map. For example, the establishment of ecological reference points and thresholds may not be warranted for all ecosystems or needed to achieve EBFM objectives.

Several of the Road Map initiatives are likely to involve complex analytical techniques that have not yet been well documented in the scientific literature. It would be valuable to prepare a Technical Memorandum in conjunction with the Road Map that provides guidance on how to 1) implement an ecosystem level risk assessment, 2) establish ecosystem level reference points, and 3) conduct a tradeoff analysis, which presumably would involve an ecosystem-level management strategy evaluation.