

ECOSYSTEM ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON  
ANNUAL STATE OF THE CALIFORNIA CURRENT ECOSYSTEM REPORT

In conjunction with the Habitat Committee (HC) and Ecosystem Work Group (EWG), the Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel (EAS) received a presentation on the State of the California Current Report from Drs. Chris Harvey and Toby Garfield of the Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) Team on March 7, 2017. This statement to the Council comprises our review of the report, with observations on its utility to West Coast fisheries management.

The California Current Ecosystem (CCE) report does an excellent job presenting many of the complex changes being observed in the ecosystem and helps us understand how fisheries are affected by these ecosystem processes. The EAS appreciates the substantial analysis and presentation of data in the report. We congratulate the IEA team on the report, and the EAS is unanimous in its continued support for sustaining this effort as essential to the Council's interest in implementing Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management.

Recent events (e.g., transitioning from El Niño to environmentally neutral conditions and changes in forage availability) highlight the importance of these data and analyses—and tracking trends over time—to understand their importance and relevance to fisheries management. While the oceanographic indicators have returned to relatively neutral values, the biological responses to these changes remain uncertain.

We appreciate the addition of a section with research recommendations. Some of these recommendations are being worked on now, and those products could be further developed and integrated into the Council process. Recommendations 7.3 and 7.6 (short-term climate variability and ocean acidification), for example, could be further developed as part of the proposed climate-shifts ecosystem initiative. We support the IEA Team's interest in an ongoing scoping process to further align their work with the Council's ecosystem science needs (Recommendation 7.1). Beyond that, we encourage continued evolution of the socioeconomic indicators and believe it is important to engage fishing communities directly to better understand what determines their vulnerability, including the dynamics of market conditions and how fisheries respond.

We encourage the IEA Team to include an executive level summary about the implications of the report for Council management considerations. From the process perspective, it appears more work is needed to integrate this ecosystem information into Fishery Management Plan (FMP) related decision-making. To that end, we recommend the IEA Team continue to work with the Council and management bodies to identify the ecological factors most relevant to each FMP, and to improve the relevance of the document to determining optimum yield, annual catch levels, and fishery conservation and management measures. We recommend the IEA Team further its work with the Council to analyze and present this information so that it can be considered and integrated into Council decision making processes.