

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN INITIATIVES

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a report from Council Staff Officer, Dr. Kit Dahl, on the Review of Fishery Ecosystem Plan Initiatives. The GAP offers the following comments and recommendations.

As an overarching comment, the GAP is concerned that Council workload continues to expand, and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has not proved able to complete critical management priorities in a timely manner. For example, in this last year the harvest specifications were over a month late, widow reallocation has been delayed, the electronic monitoring (EM) regulations for fixed gear and whiting have been delayed, the trawl gear regulation package has been delayed indefinitely, the trawl gear exempted fishing permit (EFP) was authorized significantly later than anticipated and is still not complete, permits for the long leader yellowtail commercial EFP still have not been issued, and final approval of the long leader recreational gear has been delayed again. While the GAP believes that several of the priorities identified by the Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) are important – namely the combined initiative on the socio-economic effects of fisheries management on fishing communities (A.2.7) and on human recruitment to the fisheries (A.2.6), and the initiative on the effects of near-term climate shift and long-term climate change on fish, fisheries, and fishing communities (A.2.8) – the GAP cautions that adding anything additional to the workload and pipeline could create further delays and add to an already burdensome process.

In addition, the GAP does not have a clear picture of the resources and workload required to complete the initiatives identified by the EWG. It could be helpful for the EWG to outline how much each of the initiatives would cost, how long they would take to complete, who might be involved, and what impacts undertaking one of these initiatives might have on completing other priorities.

If for the sake of efficiency, one of the EWG's initiatives moves forward, the GAP recommends pursuing the *Cross-Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Effects of Climate Shift (A.2.8)*. We echo the recommendations of the excellent Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) Report (Agenda Item F.3.a, Supplemental CPSAS Report, March 2017):

- The Council's role in this initiative could be in part to facilitate discussion with a particular focus on the physical effects of a changing ocean environment on Council-managed species and the resulting economic impacts on communities that depend on those resources.
- The Council should leverage ongoing work and focus attention on this issue by fostering discussion through the Council process.
- Standardized data collection is imperative, and a coast-wide network of near-shore monitoring stations in each region also is critically important to collect both biogeochemical and biological data in a systematic way to assess regional differences.
- Partnering with industry provides an enormous opportunity to expand data collection and add to the knowledge base.

- The Council should designate an ad hoc Climate Change working group, including a subset of the EWG and also involving members of the other advisory bodies, including the GAP, to communicate and interact with the research community and other relevant groups as part of this initiative.
- Any additional funding for this initiative should be allocated for the “climate” mission without taking it away from stock assessment surveys, or other critical science and management measures.

PFMC
03/08/17