

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON  
THE CALIFORNIA CURRENT ECOSYSTEM REPORT INCLUDING INTEGRATED  
ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the Annual State of the California Current Ecosystem Report and Supplement (Agenda Item C.1.a, Attachments 1 and 2) and the California Current Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) Phase II Report (Agenda Item C.1.a, Attachments 3 and 4). Dr. Chris Harvey from the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) and Dr. Brian Wells from the Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) presented on the State of the California Current report. Dr. Phil Levin (NWFSC) presented on the Phase II report.

The Annual State of the California Current Ecosystem Report is a succinct source of information on trends in climate indicators, fish abundance, sea lion abundance and condition, non-fishing human activities, and major fisheries. The report is an important first step in providing the Council family with an ecosystem perspective on West Coast fish stocks, fisheries, and coastal communities. The SSC appreciates the authors' responsiveness to suggestions offered by the Council and SSC on the previous year's report. Useful background information and additional details are provided in the supplemental attachment 2 and journal articles linked therein.

The SSC recommends incorporating information on measurement/sampling uncertainty for indices whenever they are available.

The SSC also notes that that some ecosystem attributes are so intrinsically variable that short-term trends are unlikely to be statistically distinguishable even if present. The SSC also recommends attempting to identify threshold values of indicators, with these proposed thresholds subsequently reviewed by the SSC.

The SSC is concerned that the data presented on coastal pelagic species (CPS) and forage species abundance (Figures 3.3 and 3.4) are drawn from surveys that used different gear, were limited in spatial extent, and were not designed to sample forage fish, and may therefore be misleading.

The SSC suggests that Chapter 4 (human activities) and 5 (human wellbeing) be reorganized to characterize all of the mentioned activities as sources of wellbeing, with the level of each activity suggestive of both the extent of wellbeing and adverse effects on the ecosystem. Activity levels should in turn be distinguished from indicators that are more directly relevant to ecosystem effects (e.g., nutrient input, ship strikes).

The State of the California Current Ecosystem Report is currently limited to 20 pages at the Council's request, which necessarily limits what can be included. The SSC recommends inclusion of information on additional upper trophic level predators (e.g., sea birds and marine mammals other than sea lions) and abundance estimates for CPS derived from stock assessments when available. IEA team members expressed interest in presenting habitat information as well as more economic analyses. To make room for this information, forage fish abundance,

information on vessels fishing in Alaska, and human well-being data from Puget Sound could be dropped.

One hour of Committee time is not sufficient to provide a meaningful review of all aspects of the Annual State of the California Current Ecosystem Report. The SSC recommends a meeting of the Ecosystem Based Management Subcommittee of the SSC toward the end of the year to conduct a more thorough review of the Annual State of the California Current Ecosystem Report and some elements of the IEA, in addition to the planned review of Atlantis. The SSC recommends establishing a routine process for feedback between the IEA team and the Council.

PFMC  
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