

UNMANAGED FORAGE FISH INITIATIVE

In April 2013, the Council adopted a Pacific Coast Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) for the U.S. Portion of the California Current Large Marine Ecosystem as a vehicle for bringing ecosystem-based principles into the Council decision-making process under its existing Fishery Management Plans (FMPs). At the same time, the Council adopted an Ecosystem Initiatives Appendix, which provides examples of how the Council could address issues that affect two or more Council FMPs or coordinate major Council policies across the FMPs to fulfill identified FEP needs.

Initiative 1 is intended to recognize the importance of forage fish to the marine ecosystem off of the U.S. West Coast, and to provide adequate protection for forage fish. The Council is not pursuing a permanent moratorium on fishing for forage fish. Instead, the Council's objective is to prohibit the development of new directed fisheries on forage species that are not currently managed by the Council, or the States, until the Council has had an adequate opportunity to assess the science relating to any proposed fishery and any potential impacts to existing fisheries and communities.

At its April 2014 meeting, the Council chose a preliminary preferred alternative, Alternative 2, which would result in all four of the Council's FMPs being amended to bring unfished and unmanaged forage fish species into the FMPs as ecosystem component species. This multi-FMP amendment will be known as Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 1 (CEBA 1) and will include these FMP amendments: Amendment 15 to the Coastal Pelagic Species FMP, Amendment 25 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish FMP, Amendment 3 to the Highly Migratory Species FMP, and Amendment 19 to the Pacific Coast Salmon FMP.

In response to Council guidance in April, the *ad hoc* Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) has prepared a summary report (Agenda Item H.1.a, EWG Summary Report) and a draft Environmental Assessment for CEBA-1 (Agenda Item H.1.a, Attachment 1) that updates the list of forage fish species, revises the alternatives to address incidental take, provides draft FMP amendment language for each of the four FMPs, and proposes a new Council Operating Procedure regarding exempted fishing permits for forage fish species. At this meeting, the Council is scheduled to affirm a preliminary preferred alternative, adopt public review draft amendment language, and consider a new Council Operating Procedure. The Council is scheduled to take final action and adopt a final preferred alternative for this initiative at its March 2015 meeting in Vancouver, WA.

Council Action:

- 1. Adopt a Preliminary Preferred Alternative.**
- 2. Adopt public review draft FMP amendment language.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item H.1.a, Attachment 1; Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 1: Protecting Unfished and Unmanaged Forage Fish Species.
2. Agenda Item H.1.b, Ecosystem Workgroup Report; Ecosystem Workgroup Summary Report on the Unmanaged Forage Fish Protection Initiative.
3. Agenda Item H.1.b, Supplemental Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel Report.
4. Agenda Item H.1.c, Public Comment.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview Mike Burner
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Adopt Preliminary Preferred Alternative and Public Review Draft Amendment Language for Incorporating Protection to Unmanaged Forage Fish in Council Fishery Management Plans

PFMC
8/21/14