

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON THE FINAL FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN

The Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) reviewed the draft Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) and its Ecosystems Initiatives Appendix A. The CPSMT commends the Ecosystem Plan Development Team (EPDT) and the Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel (EAS) for their efforts to make the FEP a valuable contribution to ecosystem-based management planning. The plan is very informative and a good synthesis of available information.

At the November 2012 meeting, the Council revised the Purpose and Needs section of the FEP to reflect the Council's intent to use the FEP as an informative rather than a prescriptive document. However, although the initiatives in the appendix lay out an action plan, neither they nor the research and data needs are prioritized. It is also unclear how the Council expects to "use" ecosystem information from the FEP and how the advisory bodies engage in this process.

Overall, the CPSMT offers the following observations and recommendations:

- The Council approve final adoption of the FEP.
- Development of a more detailed description of how the plan will be used in the Council's decision-making process and the roles of its advisory bodies and the public.
- The completion of the revision to the Federal List of Allowable Fisheries and Gear as a separate action item, because it addresses all fisheries and gears, not just forage fish.

Pages two and three of this report contain the CPSMT's detailed comments and recommendations for revisions to the FEP.

In addition to the general comments above, the CPSMT provides the following specific comments and recommendations, organized by Chapter and Appendix:

Chapter 3

To distinguish fisheries from the description of the CCE, it would be helpful to create a new chapter titled Fisheries and Fisheries Management derived from Sections 3.4, and 3.5.

Chapter 4

The CPSMT recommends including other fisheries with longline gear (e.g., spot shrimp) in Section 4.3.2.1 Sablefish and Halibut Longline Fisheries. In Section 4.3.3 Recreational Fisheries, razor clam harvest is described as rather innocuous. However, in Washington the beach is a state highway. Typically beach traffic is minimal; during razor clam openers, it is substantial.

Chapter 5

The CPSMT suggests also providing the material in this chapter as a stand-alone document, in a more user-friendly form. Also, perhaps Sections 5.1.4 and 5.3.2 should be combined into a "Tribal Considerations" section.

Chapter 6

In Section 6.1 Bringing Ecosystem Information into Stock Assessments, three means are identified to bring ecosystem considerations into near-future stock assessments and the CPSMT has the following comments on these:

- 1) The CPSMT notes that ecosystem science information already included in stock assessments does not appear to be utilized. So, it is unclear how expansion of this information will actually be used to improve management. Also, the CPSMT is concerned about the additional workload for stock assessment authors, if the information is little used. The main source of ecosystem information for Council decision-making appears to be from the FEP and annual State of the CCE reports.
- 2) Including explicit ecosystem indicators in stock assessments should be a Council consideration in terms of providing direction and allocating resources.
- 3) It is unclear what is meant by the term “alternative states of nature” as the basis of decision tables within current single species stock assessments.

Appendix

There are no details on how the Council determines whether an initiative deserves moving forward. The CPSMT recommends a process be outlined and set of standards developed to evaluate proposed initiatives for implementation. This process could prioritize candidate initiatives by timeline (whether there is an immediate need, or expected time to conduct background analyses and implementation), relevancy to Council issues, degree of impact, or other considerations. A number of possible initiatives are already identified, and there should be a way to decide which one(s) are to be moved onto the next step.

A.1 FEP Initiative 1, Protection for Unfished Forage Fish

As this section is currently written, it is unclear why there is a risk for new fisheries to develop before analysis of the fisher’s proposal could be accomplished. It would help if this risk was explicitly described. In addition, the CPSMT would like to request being involved with future development of A.1, specifically with assessing the science and potential impact on existing fisheries. Minimally the ad hoc committee should include members from the CPSMT, HMSMT, STT and GMT to ensure sufficient fishery-species interaction expertise.

Section A.1.2, Council Process for Implementing FEP Initiative 1

Section A.1.2.1 Amending the Federal List of Allowable Fisheries and Gear

The CPSMT recommends completing the revision to the federal List of Allowable Fisheries and Gear as separate action, under its own initiative, because it addresses all fisheries, not just forage fish. This appears to be a housekeeping issue, not a task that requires involvement of the ad hoc committee for Initiative 1.

Section A.1.2.2 Protecting Unfished Lower Trophic Level (Forage) Species

A two-stage process is described for adding new species to a council FMP. First, the species are identified for FMP management and second, the appropriate FMP is identified to include them. The CPSMT recommends establishing criteria for adding species/groups to FMPs first. This would then inform how any potential addition to any FMP would be evaluated and could inform future additions of species other than forage fish. The ad hoc committee should be tasked with

developing these criteria without regard to the specific issue of adding lower trophic level species under Initiative 1.

A.2.8 Cross-FMP Effects of Climate Shift Initiative

So much of our understanding and modeling of current fisheries derives from past patterns of climate change and resource responses. However, current and future changes in climate may differ and could render these understandings useless, or at least not useful to inform management at present. For example, at the recent Sardine Harvest Policy Workshop, the periodicity of large changes in sardine abundance was described over a large time scale, and the past indices of climate trends were unaffected by modern human-driven effects. However, such effects on future climate trends may be critical to our understanding going forward. We need to know how fast things are changing in order to know how much to rely on past events/patterns to inform our thinking.

A.2.9 Indicators for Analyses of Council Actions Initiative

The CPSMT supports the FEP in addressing the cumulative extraction of fish throughout all fisheries and account for all removals.

PFMC
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