

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
ECOSYSTEM FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

Ms. Yvonne de Reynier presented an overview of the Ecosystem Plan Development Team's (EPDT) draft planning document (Plan), emphasizing that it is primarily policy-oriented at this stage. While the current draft contains little science for the SSC to comment on, the Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) questions and recommendations for ecosystem-based fishery management (EBFM) planning have been considered by the EPDT. The draft document provides a good review of literature on ecosystem management objectives, and examples of the application of ecosystem based management by other Councils. Several alternatives for the scope and regulatory authority of the Plan are laid out. The draft does not include a detailed analysis of the specific impacts of these alternatives on existing Council operations.

The current lack of consensus on the purpose and application of the Plan to fishery management inhibits scientific evaluation of its benefits. The EPDT needs Council guidance on the preferred Plan type and scope to develop a complete Plan. As suggested in the report, the Plan could be focused on needs that are not well represented by existing fishery management plans, to help the Council address management issues that are not directly related to assessing fish stocks and regulating fisheries. The Purpose and Needs Statement should complement the goals and objectives of the Plan.

As the primary reviewers of the science used by the Council for management, the SSC should review and evaluate the data, methods, results and recommendations generated by ecosystem-based models applied to management questions. This review already includes evaluation of environmental data used in stock assessments, and should also include ecosystem modeling efforts.

The SSC supports a recommendation by the EPDT to provide the Council and advisory bodies with regular updates of ecosystem conditions in the California Current. The reports should include potential or known impacts to fisheries under Council jurisdiction, and should be reviewed by the SSC.

The SSC identified the following next steps:

- The SSC's Ecosystem-Based Management subcommittee should meet with the EPDT once the general format and specific goals and objectives of the Plan have been determined. The purpose of the meeting would be to work with the Team on scientific objectives and review of available tools for EBFM.
- The Council should request NMFS to initiate development of an annual report on conditions in the California Current ecosystem. The SSC can provide guidance on the content, review and dissemination of this report.

- As a step towards integrating ecosystem factors in stock assessments, the SSC recommends that a subset of stock assessments be expanded to include ecosystem considerations. This would likely require the addition of an ecologist or ecosystem scientist to the Stock Assessment Teams (STATs) developing those assessments. The SSC's Ecosystem-Based Management subcommittee should develop guidelines for how ecosystem considerations can be included in stock assessments.
- The SSC should meet with ecosystem modelers to review ecosystem models that could be used for management purposes in the future, and to develop a plan for scientific review of those models.

PFMC
09/13/10