

DEVELOPMENT OF A COUNCIL FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) is considering ecosystem-based approaches to fishery management and is in the process of developing a Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) as a vehicle for bringing ecosystem-based principles into the Council decision-making process under its existing Fishery Management Plans (FMPs). The Council has also been exploring the plan's potential to broaden its current authority to species and issues not currently addressed in existing FMPs.

In June, the Council moved to develop an FEP with the adopted purpose of “[*enhancing*] the Council’s species-specific management programs with more ecosystem science, broader ecosystem considerations and management policies that coordinate Council management across its FMPs and the California Current Ecosystem (CCE). An FEP should provide a framework for considering policy choices and trade-offs as they affect FMP species and the broader CCE.”

In addition to adopting a Purpose and Need statement for its FEP, the Council also moved:

- Developing an FEP that would be primarily advisory in nature, with the potential to expand the plan to include regulatory authority in the future, should the Council so desire;
- Continuing to manage stocks and fisheries through existing FMPs, including developing potential new management measures for forage fish species through those FMPs, as the Council deems appropriate;
- Developing a list of West Coast species that are currently not included in any FMP, not managed under state authority, and not listed under the Endangered Species Act to, in part, define “forage species” and to assess their potential vulnerability to developing fisheries, and;
- Tasking the Ecosystem Plant Development Team (EPDT) with recommending a preliminary draft process and schedule for the development of an FEP.

In response to the Council’s tasks, the EPDT has provided a draft outline for an FEP (Agenda Item H.1.a, Attachment 1) which includes the plan’s adopted purpose and need, a proposed schedule and process for developing and revising the FEP, and a proposed reporting schedule under which the Council will receive a comprehensive annual ecosystem conditions report, as well as periodic reports throughout the year that focus on specific management issues before the Council. Appendix A of the draft FEP outline also includes an analysis of CCE low trophic level species and their potential vulnerability to future fisheries exploitation.

Given the broad interest in ecosystem-based management in the Council process, it is anticipated that the Council will receive reports from a variety of its advisory groups including the EPDT, the Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel, the Scientific and Statistical Committee, and the Habitat Committee. Management teams and advisory subpanels in attendance in November may also report under this agenda item as their schedules allow. At the meeting the Council is being asked to provide feedback on the draft FEP outline and the initial list of forage species and to provide guidance on the process, schedule, and tasks for further development of the FEP.

Council Action:

1. **Provide feedback on the Draft FEP Outline.**
2. **Review and comment on the list of species and accompanying analysis.**
3. **Provide guidance on the process, schedule, and tasks for future work on FEP development.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item H.2.a, Attachment 1, Draft Pacific Coast Fishery Ecosystem Plan.
2. Agenda Item H.2.c, Public Comment.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Provide guidance for Further Development

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10/14/11