

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
DEVELOPMENT OF A COUNCIL FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN

The Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) heard a presentation by Council staff, Mr. Mike Burner, reviewing progress on the development of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) for the California Current.

The CPSAS appreciates the work of the Ecosystem Plan Development Team (EPDT), and concurs with the EPDT and Council that the FEP should remain advisory text in nature (with the potential to expand to include regulatory authority in the future if the Council so desires), particularly in light of the acknowledgement that current ecosystem models don't accurately forecast CPS due to their boom / bust cycles.

CPSAS members agree with the basic format of the FEP, but recommend that the EPDT address a data gap that the CPSAS identified as a high priority research need. Currently the Atlantis model does not adequately assess several components of CPS stocks, in particular, the nearshore component of the Southern California Bight and the peak summer feeding cycle in the Pacific Northwest and Canada. The CPSAS recommends that future research include these areas as they represent a significant portion of CPS resources.

The CPSAS concurs with the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team's (CPSMT) statement that if a clear need for immediate resource management is established for any particular species, then it should be included in the appropriate regulatory plan.

The conservation representative noted that forage species play an important ecological role in the California Current ecosystem as prey for other marine life. Given the global demand for aquaculture and aquaculture feeds, currently unfished forage species may become the target of future fisheries. A minority of the CPSAS supports being proactive and precautionary by initiating an amendment process to include the non-managed lower trophic level (forage) species identified in Table A-1 of the draft Pacific Coast Fishery Ecosystem Plan into the CPS Fishery Management Plan (pages 28-29). Similar to the forward thinking approach the Council and National Marine Fisheries Service took to protect krill; the amendment process should include consideration of prohibiting the development of new commercial fisheries for these species.