

ECOSYSTEM PLAN DEVELOPMENT TEAM REPORT ON DEVELOPMENT OF A COUNCIL FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN

At its June 2011 meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) directed the Ecosystem Plan Development Team (EPDT) to suggest a draft process and schedule for developing the Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP). The Council also directed the EPDT to develop a list of species that are: not currently included any fishery management plan (FMP), not the subject of state management, and not listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Our main report, Agenda Item H.2.a, Attachment 1, takes the form of a draft FEP outline, and is intended to illustrate how an FEP might look if its design were based on the Purpose and Need statement the Council adopted in June 2011.

Section 1.3 of the draft FEP responds to the Council's direction to provide a preliminary draft process and schedule for developing an FEP by proposing a schedule for handling the FEP over the next 12-18 months. Section 1.4 proposes a schedule and process for annual state-of-the-ecosystem reporting.

Appendix A to the draft FEP outline is provided in response to the Council's list-of-species assignment. The EPDT has initially focused on pelagic low trophic level (LTL) species with the following approach to reviewing those species:

- Providing a draft definition for the term "low trophic level (LTL) species," which would include those species commonly thought of as "forage fish," accompanied by a list of the most common of the California Current Ecosystem (CCE) species meeting that definition, with information on those species' relative abundance, fisheries potential, and role in the ecosystem;
- Assessing worldwide fisheries landings (marketability) for LTL species with no or low harvest from the CCE, yet which are similar to species that are moderately- or heavily-fished elsewhere in the world; and
- Reviewing the range of fisheries permissible within the West Coast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) under the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) and current Federal regulations.

Based on the EPDT's work developing our reports over the past several months, we are recommending that the Council consider the following actions at this November 2011 meeting.

- Adopt an annual review schedule for developing the FEP, with the first iteration of the plan to be finalized in early 2013. The EPDT anticipates that the FEP will go through multiple iterations over time, and therefore requests guidance on prioritizing the sections of the FEP that should first be developed for review by the Council, its advisory bodies, and the public. The EPDT recommends that highest priority be given to developing the desired contents of an annual state-of-the-ecosystem report, so that the Council can build its future policy priorities from a science-informed position.

- Provide comment on the EPDT's approach to the list-of-species assignment, particularly on the question of whether benthic LTL species and mid-to-upper trophic level species should be added to the analysis.
- Assign the EPDT to draft suggested updates for the Federal list of fisheries allowable within the West Coast EEZ, based on the EPDT's list-of-species analysis and current West Coast Fishery Management Plan parameters.

PFMC
11/03/11