

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON DEVELOPMENT OF A  
COUNCIL FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed a draft of a Pacific Coast Fishery Ecosystem Plan being developed by the Ecosystem Plan Development Team (EPDT). The EPDT proposes development of an annual ecosystem report and species-group reports that would summarize information from the annual ecosystem report for the Council's use in its harvest-setting deliberations.

The SSC notes that the National Marine Fisheries Service Science Centers and the Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) Team (Agenda Item H.1) have also begun drafting an IEA Report that describes conditions in the California Current Ecosystem as they relate to FMP species. The IEA Report and the annual ecosystem report proposed by the EPDT appear to be similar in terms of objectives and content. The SSC recommends that the EPDT and IEA Team coordinate to ensure that they are working from the same base data, avoid duplication of effort, and perhaps even consider producing a single joint report. Such coordination would be facilitated by the fact that some EPDT members are also members of the IEA Team.

The SSC appreciates the desire of the EPDT to provide relevant species-group summaries that would facilitate the Council's harvest deliberations. The SSC notes that these informational documents (referred to by the EPDT as 'hotsheets') should provide sufficient detail to allow stock assessment scientists and Stock Assessment Review Panels to consider species-relevant ecosystem information in a nuanced manner. The SSC is willing to review future drafts of the annual report and the species-group information documents as they become available.

Appendix A of the draft Fishery Ecosystem Plan includes a preliminary list of lower trophic-level species in the California Current Ecosystem that are currently harvested or could potentially be subject to fishery development. In terms of ecosystem management, the SSC considers it premature to consider lists of species for management action without first considering what species groupings would best serve to promote ecosystem diversity and function. The SSC recommends that the EPDT develop species groupings based on criteria related to diversity and function. The SSC also notes that maintaining ecosystem diversity may or may not require bans on harvest.