

## PROTECTING UNFISHED AND UNMANAGED FORAGE FISH SPECIES INITIATIVE

In April 2013, the Council adopted a Pacific Coast Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) for the U.S. Portion of the California Current Large Marine Ecosystem as a vehicle for bringing ecosystem-based principles into the Council decision-making process under its existing Fishery Management Plans (FMPs). At the same time, the Council adopted an Ecosystem Initiatives Appendix, which provides examples of how the Council could address issues that affect two or more Council FMPs or coordinate major Council policies across the FMPs to fulfill identified FEP needs.

Initiative 1 is intended to recognize the importance of forage fish to the marine ecosystem off of the U.S. West Coast, and to provide adequate protection for forage fish. The Council is not pursuing a permanent moratorium on fishing for forage fish. Instead, the Council's objective is to prohibit the development of new directed fisheries on forage species that are not currently managed by the Council, or the States, until the Council has had an adequate opportunity to assess the science relating to any proposed fishery and any potential impacts to existing fisheries and communities. Under the current rules, there is some risk that fisheries could develop before such analyses could be conducted.

At its September 2013 meeting in Boise, Idaho, the Council adopted a list of species to consider for additional protective measures and directed the *ad hoc* Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) to develop alternatives for prohibiting development of new commercial fisheries on these species groups through amending one or more existing FMPs, describe existing directed commercial fisheries and existing incidental take levels in other commercial fisheries, and recommend which FMPs would be best suited for amendment. The EWG met in Portland, Oregon in early-February and has completed a report responding to the Council's directions from September (Agenda Item, I.1.a, Attachment 1). This report was made available at the March 2014 Council meeting to those advisory bodies that were not scheduled to meet at the April 2014 Council meeting. The report and a video reader's guide have also been posted to the Council website in advance of the April Briefing Book to maximize review opportunities.

At this meeting, the Council and its advisors are scheduled to review the EWG report and the list of species and their linkages to FMPs, adopt a range of alternatives for future review and analysis, and to discuss a process and schedule for potential FMP amendments. Under the tentative schedule proposed in the EWG report, the Council would next address this issue at its September 2014 meeting in Spokane, WA to review a revised analysis of the alternatives and to consider draft amendatory FMP language for public review.

### **Council Action:**

- 1. Review list of species.**
- 2. Adopt a range of alternatives for further review and analysis.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item I.1.a, Attachment 1, Ecosystem Initiative 1: Protecting Unfished and Unmanaged Forage Fish Species.
2. Agenda Item I.1.b, EWG Report.
3. Agenda Item I.1.b, Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel Report.
4. Agenda Item I.1.b, Supplemental Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel Report.
5. Agenda Item I.1.b, Supplemental Highly Migratory Species Management Team Report.
6. Agenda Item I.1.c, Public Comment.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview Mike Burner
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Review List of Species and Adopt Range of Alternatives

PFMC  
03/24/14