

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON PROTECTING UNFISHED AND UNMANAGED FORAGE FISH SPECIES INITIATIVE

The Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) and the Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Panel (CPSAS) jointly received a briefing by Cyreis Schmitt concerning the Ecosystem Workgroup Report “Ecosystem Initiative 1: Protecting Unfished and Unmanaged Forage Fish Species.” The CPSMT commends the Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) for the concise, yet thorough, report.

The CPSMT notes the EWG proposes a revised Purpose and Need statement that more clearly articulates the intent to prohibit the development of new fisheries for unfished and unmanaged forage fish species absent Council evaluation under Ecosystem Initiative 1. The CPSMT agrees with the revised statement and recommends its approval.

The EWG report presents two alternatives to achieve protection of unmanaged forage fish for Council consideration. The CPSMT recognizes Alternative 2, which would place subject species in Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) as ecosystem component species, is consistent with the Initiative’s Purpose and Need to prohibit fishery development.

Regarding the specific pathways under Alternative 2, the CPSMT finds each to be a reasonable option for public review. While recognizing merits of each, the CPSMT recommends the Ecosystem Trophic Role (2.2.1) pathway. One benefit of the Ecosystem Trophic Role (2.2.1) pathway is that it may accomplish the objective of incorporating species into FMPs more efficiently. The other pathways, Bycatch and Gear (2.2.2) and Predator-Prey (2.2.3), realize this same objective but may require additional work to determine the appropriate placement of species or species groups into FMPs. Determining under which FMP a species is to be managed might be better addressed if and when a new fishery is proposed. With such an approach, the species and gear would be identified, and thus the linkages to a particular FMP would be more readily evaluated.

Currently, jacksmelt are an EC species in the CPS FMP and should remain so regardless of which pathway is implemented. This does not mean that all other silversides group species could not be added to either the CPS or other FMPs under this Initiative.

During development of Amendment 13, the CPSMT reviewed logbook, fish ticket, and observer data to assess bycatch of forage fish species in CPS fisheries and generally found that incidental catch and bycatch of subject forage fish species was minimal or sporadic, and depending on the species information, was generally lacking as a result. The CPSMT isn’t aware of any other sources of information that the EWG should consider.