SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
ECOSYSTEM FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) discussed the concept of ecosystem-based fishery management, and how it may move forward for Council-managed fisheries. A clear link between current fishery management practices and developing explicit ecosystem considerations is provided by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act definition of optimum yield that states: "optimum yield … takes into account the protection of marine ecosystems."

The SSC found the "Staff White Paper – Development of an Ecosystem Fishery Management Plan" to provide a useful framework for beginning the process of developing an Ecosystem Fishery Management Plan (EFMP). In particular, the SSC concurs that a Plan Development Team (Team) should be established for this purpose, as is proposed in the white paper. However, the white paper focuses primarily on the process and does not specify the rationale or specific elements that should be included in an EFMP. Since many of the fundamental issues have not been resolved concerning how ecosystem considerations could work in fishery management, the SSC suggests that the initial charge for the Team be to define the objectives of an EFMP, and how those objectives could be translated into policy.

The SSC notes that existing control rules for Council-managed species provide only limited ecosystem considerations. Consequently, it would be useful to have a summary of the degree to which these considerations are currently being addressed, and an explanation of how existing Council management practices may be inadequate in this regard.

Key issues that should be addressed at the outset of the EFMP process are to define the ecosystem(s) being managed, and to establish the scope of ecosystem impacts that would ideally be addressed under the proposed EFMP. Also, it is important early in the process to consider the data and scientific requirements for providing practical ecosystem advice to the Council.

PFMC
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