

ECOSYSTEM ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON REVIEW OF FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN INITIATIVES

The Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel (EAS) met via webinar on November 4, 2014, and January 14, 2015, to develop recommendations to the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) on future Fishery Ecosystem Plan initiatives. The results of those discussions were summarized in a preliminary report on the topic, identified for this meeting as Agenda Item E.2.b, EAS Report. The EAS subsequently met on March 7 and 8, 2015, to further discuss proposed initiatives and recommend a targeted portfolio of initiative actions that capitalize on opportunities for informing and improving management.

Future ecosystem initiatives have been proposed in Appendix A to the Pacific Coast Fishery Ecosystem Plan (Agenda Item E.2.a, Attachment 1), through public comment during the EAS webinars and in letters to the Council (Agenda Item E.2.c, Public Comment), the Supplemental Ecosystem Workgroup Report (Agenda Item E.2.b), and in comment to the EAS from the Habitat Committee at our meetings on March 7 and 8. We assessed the various proposals on the basis of their potential benefits to the Council's management decisions, with particular respect for national standards and the intent of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan; the relative resources required to develop the initiative; and the value of looking beyond or across Fishery Management Plans to fulfill the purpose of the initiative.

Recommended Portfolio

The EAS recommends that three concepts be adopted as a portfolio meriting additional investigation and development as potential comprehensive ecosystem initiatives. These, in our opinion, are ideas that transcend individual Fishery Management Plan (FMP) development processes and address over-arching or cross-cutting ecosystem issues. They have also attracted support from both technical experts and stakeholders. They are:

- Appendix A: A.2.2 – Bio-Geographic Region Identification and Assessment Initiative
 - Matches management to the scales at which the ecosystem operates
 - Addresses spatial distributions and also the processes that affect them
 - Provides a foundation for understanding various impacts of climate, management, and other actions
- An “Indicators Initiative”:
 - Results in an efficient set of indicators to understand a complex and changing system
 - Increases understanding on implications for management decisions
 - Integrates elements from several proposals: A.2.6 & A.2.7, A.2.9, the Ecosystem Work Group's proposal for a Coordinated Ecosystem Indicator Review Initiative, and ideas for a Forage Status Indicator as articulated by Wild Oceans and other stakeholder groups in public comment
- Appendix A: A.2.8 – Cross-FMP Effects of Climate Shift Initiative
 - Supports management actions that maintain and promote resilience in fisheries
 - Aids interpretation of trends, variability & relationships among indicators
 - Captures predicted impacts & responses in species and processes

Focusing on the three proposals in this portfolio will produce information that is immediately applicable to management decisions and provides valuable context for decisions about future initiatives. In particular, developing information to support A.2.2 and the Indicators Initiative could inform the design of A.2.8. We are thus recommending a stepwise approach to building the Council's body of work in ecosystem-based management rather than proposing a next, single initiative to pursue. We are also acknowledging that the process moving forward must be adaptive and respectful of competing priorities for staff time and financial resources.

We want to emphasize that prioritizing these proposals for near-term action is not meant to dismiss the importance of other proposals or to suggest they not be pursued. As an example, the EAS had a substantive discussion on A.2.5—the Safety Initiative—and would encourage the Council to investigate the development of a cross-FMP fishery safety risk assessment.

Suggested Next Steps

1. Engage the Integrated Ecosystem Assessment team, the Ecosystem-Based Management Subcommittee of the Science and Statistical Committee, appropriate former members of the Ecosystem Plan Development Team, and the EAS—to develop a draft outline of work for the recommended portfolio, to be presented to the Council at its June 2015 meeting.
2. Implement a consultative process between the IEA team and the Council's management teams and advisory bodies on an efficient set of indicators that informs the State of the California Current Report, Fishery Management Plans, and the Cross-FMP Effects of Climate Shift Initiative.
3. Provide additional guidance, informed by the draft outline of work, on developing the three initiatives in the portfolio, including—as needed—the appointment of development teams, so that draft initiatives can be developed, released for public comment, and acted on by the Council.

PFMC
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