

## ECOSYSTEM WORKGROUP REPORT ON FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA AND WORKLOAD PLANNING

On Monday, March 9, 2015, under agenda item E.4., the Council took final action on Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 1 (CEBA 1). CEBA 1 would prohibit the future development of directed commercial fisheries for forage fish in federal marine waters until the Council has had an adequate opportunity to both assess the scientific information relating to any proposed directed fishery and consider potential impacts to existing fisheries, fishing communities, and the greater marine ecosystem. CEBA 1 would amend all four of the Council's fishery management plans (FMPs) to bring a suite of forage fish species into the FMPs as Shared Ecosystem Component (Shared EC) Species: Amendment 15 to the Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS) FMP, Amendment 25 to the Groundfish FMP, Amendment 3 to the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) FMP, and Amendment 19 to the Salmon FMP. The Council has tentatively scheduled its deeming process for CEBA 1 implementing regulations for its September 2015 meeting in Sacramento, California.

The CEBA 1 FMP amendments that the Council adopted in March 2015 would add language to all four FMPs that cross-references Council Operating Procedure (COP) 24. COP 24 would specify conditions for exempted fishing permits to collect scientific information on the feasibility of future fisheries targeting Shared EC Species. COP 24 would not assume that the Council will approve future fisheries for Shared EC Species. At the March 2015 Council meeting, the Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) presented a draft COP 24 to the Council, in response to prior requests from the Council and its advisory bodies that CEBA 1 include a mechanism for collecting scientific information on future potential forage fish fisheries. The Council considered draft COP 24 at its March 2015 meeting, during Administrative Matters (Agenda Item I.4.) on Thursday, March 12, 2015, but neither adopted nor rejected COP 24.

The EWG met via webinar on April 29, 2015, and discussed the CEBA 1 FMP amendment language. At the same time as it considers deeming draft CEBA 1 implementing regulations, the Council should consider taking one of the following actions:

Explicitly reject COP 24, and remove references to COP 24 in CEBA 1; or

Adopt a COP to specify conditions for issuing EFPs to collect information on fisheries targeting Shared EC Species.

The EWG also recommends that, when the Council schedules its future deliberations on CEBA 1 and COP 24, those agenda items occur close to each other in time, which the EWG anticipates would prevent the process-related confusion that occurred with COP 24 at the March 2015 meeting. For those future Council discussions, the EWG plans to submit as briefing book materials: the FMP amendment language adopted by the Council in March 2015 and a draft COP 24. EWG members will also collaborate to draft Federal regulatory language to implement CEBA 1, although that language will appear before the Council as a National Marine Fisheries Service agency report, not as an EWG report, in keeping with COP 1 on General Council Meeting Operations.