

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON CALIFORNIA CURRENT ECOSYSTEM REPORT INCLUDING INTEGRATED ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT

In a joint session with the Ecosystem Working Group and the Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel, the Habitat Committee (HC) reviewed the State of the California Current Annual Update, presented by Drs. Chris Harvey and Toby Garfield of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The HC was impressed with the critical information provided in the report, which continues to demonstrate its value in documenting the state of the ecosystem while the application of the report to the Council process is still being defined.

The three advisory groups discussed ways in which the Council could provide feedback to the Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) Team on ecosystem indicators and their utilization by the Council. The HC notes the following:

- Spatial patterns in indicators are highly valuable because they provide relevant regional context for fishery-related decision-making. Subregions of the ecosystem, such as depth strata and biogeographical and fishery management boundaries, deserve consideration. Climate-related species shifts and boundary conditions in Canada and Mexico are other spatially relevant considerations.
- Selecting key indicator species that fill specific ecological niches or help define subregions would provide more meaningful information for describing the state of the ecosystem.
- Indicators are potentially valuable from a forecasting or risk-assessment perspective. The HC encourages further efforts to define key indicators that can be used for forecasting.
- The Council could consider how the report fits with its annual cycle and meeting schedules of advisory bodies. NMFS suggested that if new indicators are warranted, they should be recommended by June in order to provide time for IEA partners to synthesize data.
- The annual update summarizes a great amount of information, which can be challenging to present in 20 pages. Some possible ways to improve the presentation are to add pages to the report to allow more in-depth synthesis, and to increase use of maps and other graphics to illustrate the cumulative effects of multiple environmental indicators upon managed species and other biological indicators. The HC benefited greatly from the webinars sponsored by the Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel (EAS) and Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) and suggest these continue.

The HC will continue to review the report and discuss indicators in April or June to provide additional comments to the EAS and EWG by the June Council meeting.