

ECOSYSTEM WORKGROUP REPORT ON
FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA AND WORKLOAD PLANNING

The Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) notes that the Council's Preliminary Year-at-a-Glance Summary under Agenda Item F.6, Attachment 1 lists Fishery Ecosystem Plan Indicators Initiative preliminary action at the September 2016 meeting and final action at the March 2017 meeting. The EWG notes that for recommendations on indicators to be incorporated into the 2017 State of the California Current Ecosystem Report, they would have to be finalized at the Council's September 2016 meeting. For that reason, the EWG recommends retitling the September agenda item "Council final recommendations on indicators to be included in the 2017 Report."

The EWG also notes that the Preliminary Year-at-a-Glance includes a tentative item for November 2017, "Sablefish Ecosystem Indicators." We recommend that the Council move this item to the March 2017 meeting, both to keep the item with other ecosystem issues under regular discussion at the Council's March meetings, and to ensure that the scientists involved in the project have adequate time to complete the products they are preparing for that item. After consulting with Dr. Melissa Haltuch and Dr. Nick Tolimieri, the EWG understands that sablefish is not on the list of groundfish species to be assessed in 2017, which simplifies coordinating Council review of their work with the groundfish stock assessment review schedule. Drs. Haltuch and Tolimieri preliminarily plan to report to the Council on three projects:

- A re-evaluation of sablefish recruitment drivers, thoroughly updating Dr. Schirippa's mid-2000s work on this topic. This project requires collaboration between the Southwest and Northwest Fisheries Science Centers, and the Centers have only recently been able to exchange the project's needed physical environment data.
- A stock-wide assessment model, which has required coordination between the Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Science Centers, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and Alaska Department of Fish and Game. This model is in the early stages of development, with model-building collaboration between WDFW and the Northwest Center.
- A management strategy evaluation for sablefish, as mentioned in the joint Centers' draft Western Regional Action Plan for climate science (Agenda Item F.2, Attachment 1).

For the Council's March 2017 meeting, the EWG also recommends that the Council retain time on its agenda to discuss ecosystem indicator planning for 2018 and beyond, as part of its discussions on the 2017 ecosystem status report. In March 2016, the Council had supported the EWG's recommendation ([Agenda Item D.2.a, Supplemental Ecosystem Workgroup Report 2](#)) to identify "focal topics" for future state of the ecosystem reports related to Council management activities. The Council tasked the EWG with developing draft cross-fishery focal topics in addition to those initially suggested in their March 2016 report. If the Council hears comments in March 2017 on focal topics for the March 2018 ecosystem status report, that process could ensure that we are annually reflecting back to the Centers on what we hope to learn about the California Current Ecosystem going forward.