

ECOSYSTEM WORKGROUP REPORT ON
ECOSYSTEM-BASED FISHERY MANAGEMENT ROADMAP

The Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) met with the Habitat Committee (HC) and the Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel (EAS) to hear a briefing from Ms. Heather Sagar on NMFS's draft Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management Roadmap. We are grateful to Ms. Sagar for coming out to brief the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and its advisory bodies, and to the Council for giving us an opportunity to provide comments on the Roadmap.

While the EWG generally supports the Roadmap, we would be concerned if NMFS implementation of the Roadmap would significantly redirect the Council's ecosystem-based fishery management work. The EWG notes that this Council has already undertaken several of the Roadmap's action items, such as: developing and implementing a fishery ecosystem plan (FEP, Action Item 1b) maintaining ecosystem-focused advisory bodies (Action Item 1a,) and providing an ecosystem status report (Action Item 2b.) We also note that the Northwest and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers are working on a variety of the Roadmap's short- and mid-term science program recommendations.

Many of our target and protected stocks do not yet have stock assessments, let alone the comprehensive ecosystem-level analyses envisioned in the Roadmap. It is difficult to imagine the level of funding that would be needed to implement all of the Roadmap's action items. We are concerned that if NMFS's ecosystem scientists are tasked with meeting the action items in the Roadmap, they may not be available to address the Council's existing ecosystem science needs. In other words, the Roadmap assumes that NMFS now knows the existing and future ecosystem science needs of fishery management councils, but those councils may have alternate ecosystem science priorities. Similarly, does the role of the ecosystem-based fishery management coordinator include work with the fishery management councils to ensure that councils have input into ecosystem science and policy priorities?

We appreciate the Roadmap's reference to the assessment and understanding of cumulative impacts under the National Environmental Policy Act. Chapter 4 of the Pacific Coast FEP, *Addressing the Effects and Uncertainties of Human Activities and Environmental Shifts on the Marine Environment*, considers the ecosystem-wide cumulative effects of fishing and non-fishing human activities on the California Current Ecosystem (CCE.) As the Science Centers develop work in support of the Roadmap, we ask that they particularly consider the issues discussed in that FEP chapter: fish abundance within the CCE, the abundance of other organisms within the CCE, changes in biophysical habitat within the CCE, changes in fishing community involvement in fisheries and dependence upon fishery resources, and aspects of climate change expected to affect living marine resource populations within the CCE.

PFMC
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