

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT
ON THE CLIMATE AND COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE WORKSHOP REPORT

A representative of the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) attended the joint Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council)/The Nature Conservancy (TNC) ‘Climate and Communities Initiative Workshop’ on January 22-23, 2020; reviewed the March 2020 Workshop Report; and listened to the Ecosystem Working Group (EWG) webinar on February 25, 2020. Based on these interactions, the GMT offers the following three comments on the current state of the “Developing Future Scenarios for Climate Change in the California Current Ecosystem (CCE)” exercise.

First, the January workshop was informative for participants, as it brought together disparate stakeholders, many of whom do not often interact. For example, in addition to scientists working to predict physical, biological and socio-economic changes over the next twenty years in the CCE, the workshop also included members of the food industry that spoke about how market forces and market outreach can affect consumer seafood consumption. Bringing together a myriad of people that interact in various ways with the CCE is valuable for developing and implementing rounded ecosystem-based management.

Second, the complexity of scenario planning for ecosystem-based management was apparent by the second day of the two-day January meeting. Over the past year, Jonathan Star, who is leading the scenario planning exercise, has introduced, on several occasions, the concept of scenario planning by providing an example of how scenario planning helped Shell Oil weather market storms. Upon completing the workshop, it was clear that scenario planning for ecosystem-based management under climate change in the CCE is markedly more complex than the Shell Oil example. By the end of the second day, so many scenarios had been laid out that it became difficult to imagine how to parse this information. It will be a challenge to cull the scenarios discussed at the workshop into a usable product for the Council.

Third, an important aspect of scenario planning in the Council context is to explore how the decision-makers can actually respond to various scenarios. During the workshop, we focused primarily on physical, biological and socio-economic events that may transpire in the CCE under a changing climate. The importance of translating ecosystem events to management action is emphasized in the Pacific Coast Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) Goal 1 which states that “The FEP should provide a framework and public forum to improve and integrate ecosystem information for use in Council decision-making.” Exploring exactly how the Council can take in ecosystem information and make decisions informed by that information is something that should be a major part of Scenario Planning. Although this will add additional complexity to Scenario Planning, the GMT believes that exploring Council decision-making processes is paramount for the success of this work.