

ECOSYSTEM WORKGROUP REPORT ON
EXECUTIVE ORDER 13921: PROMOTING AMERICAN SEAFOOD COMPETITIVENESS
AND ECONOMIC GROWTH – FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) reviewed the briefing book materials for Agenda Item C.2. on Executive Order 13921, *Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth*, and offers these comments and recommendations for the Council’s consideration:

- E.O. 13921 states that the Council’s list of recommended actions must be consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and other laws. The MSA, at its core, already serves the fisheries goals of E.O. 13921. In following the MSA, the Council attempts to balance long-term conservation and management needs (National Standard 1), while providing for the sustained participation of and minimizing adverse economic impacts on West Coast fishing communities (National Standard 8) and minimizing costs and avoiding unnecessary duplication (National Standard 7). The Council’s efforts to advance ecosystem based fisheries management buttresses these goals. The long-term viability of West Coast fisheries and fishing communities depends on the long-term health of the California Current Ecosystem, and therefore the elimination of regulations is not necessarily the means to optimizing catch and conservation. However, routinely revisiting regulations based on new information and circumstances can help avoid unnecessary regulatory burdens.
- With regard to the assessment of the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of offshore aquaculture on the environment, we recommend that the Council forward Chapter 5 of the 2013 Fishery Ecosystem Plan, *PFMC Policy Priorities for Ocean Resource Management*, to the National Marine Fisheries Service and other agencies for consideration in those assessments. We also remind the Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service that the agency’s own California Current Integrated Ecosystem Assessment and the associated annual ecosystem status report provide a broad range of indicators and other useful information that can support the analysis of the effects of a variety of human activities on the ecosystem.
- Federal regulations that implement the fish and fish product import provisions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (81 FR 54390; August 15, 2016) are intended to improve the competitiveness of West Coast seafood in domestic markets. We recognize that U.S. fisheries are subject to higher standards than many other areas of the world, and support the continued implementation of these and other regulations that keep U.S. fisheries competitive, and domestic and imported seafood sustainable in the long term.
- Managing fisheries for sustainability likely ensures a long-term competitive advantage for West Coast fisheries and fishing communities. Consumers who care about sustainability and buying local product need information to make choices about the seafood they buy. Are West Coast fisheries being adequately supported by agencies in ensuring that the general public knows about the sustainability of West Coast seafood?

Finally, we note that between this agenda item and Agenda Item J.1, Attachment 1, the Council's draft letter to the California Energy Commission on offshore wind energy installations, the Council may wish to consider expanding or revising the process by which it reviews new activities proposed for the Exclusive Economic Zone off the West Coast. We will continue to bear these challenges in mind as we work on updates to the Fishery Ecosystem Plan.

PFMC
09/14/20