

ECOSYSTEM ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON REVIEW OF FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN INITIATIVES

The Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel (EAS) met to discuss the report provided by the Ecosystem Working Group (EWG) draft revised Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) Initiatives Appendix (Agenda Item [H.3.a, EWG Report 1](#)). We appreciate the EWG's efforts in this regard and acknowledge the considerable effort taken to revise and integrate the previous FEP initiatives with new ideas and recommendations coming out of the Climate and Communities Initiative (CCI) process. We also reviewed and discussed the recommendations from the public comment letter ([link](#)) provided by Ms. Michele Robinson on behalf of five conservation organizations. We offer some overall comments and specific recommendations for moving forward on the FEP Initiative process.

General Comments

The EAS appreciates the opportunity to consider several meaningful initiatives that would help us to better understand how the California Current Ecosystem (CCE) is changing due to climate impacts, and prepare for a resilient fishery management system in the face of that change, noting that it will affect fisheries and communities across all dimensions.

We appreciated the 'Indicators and Actions Initiative' proposed by the conservation groups, that in their words would lead to '*FMP management actions that increase responsiveness to changing environmental conditions*' and note that this seems to align closely with Initiative 2.1 in the EWG's report 1.

The EAS discussed how the results of the Climate and Communities Initiative () might direct our recommendation for the next priority. Although the CCI scenario planning exercise provided a solid foundation for identifying and "*improving [...] responsiveness of our management actions [...] and strategies for increasing the resiliency of our managed stocks and fisheries,*" the EAS feels strongly that the underlying goal of the CCI has not been fully realized. Achieving the CCI's objectives, as initially set out by the Council and within a reasonably aggressive timeframe, will better inform management in the face of an uncertain future of climate variability.

Given the need to focus the list of initiatives and identify priorities for initiative selection, we developed the following criteria to guide our recommendations:

1. The initiative must contribute to achievement of the CCI goals on climate adaptation for West Coast fisheries and build on the previous successes.
2. The initiative must cut across the cultural, social, ecological, and economic dimensions of fisheries management
3. The initiative must be doable, actionable, and sequenced in a way that progress can be seen and measured over time

Initiative Recommendations

Based on the criteria discussed above, **the EAS identifies Initiatives 2.1 and 2.6 (EWG Report 1) as our highest priority and recommends combining those initiatives and renaming it as the *Climate-Informed Fisheries Management Initiative*:**

2.1 Ecosystem and Climate Information for Species, Fisheries, and Fishery Management Plans (FMPs)

This initiative would formally pursue and employ fishery management plan- (FMP) specific indicators that would serve as signals for when fishery management evaluation is justified to achieve conservation/fishery goals; and identify the types of fishery management changes that could be engaged (and thresholds for those) by those signals’).

2.6 Supporting Fishery and Fishing Community Resilience. The consequences of climate-induced variability for fishing communities is a significant concern and it is essential that communities have the ability to prepare and adapt. Fundamental to this issue is community safety, inclusive of all community members, including shore side members, and how community safety is threatened by climate change. Safety is a component that cuts across multiple initiatives and is critical moving forward, as discussed further below.

The EAS recognizes the value in multiple initiatives and that a few of these initiatives are so closely connected that it is difficult to effectively work on one in isolation. We agreed that the highest priorities are advancing the integration of ecosystem science into the management process (2.1) and continuing to advance resilience work for communities and fisheries (2.6).

The EAS believes the following themes should be included as **cross-cutting and overarching components of the final initiative:**

Safety The EAS feels strongly that safety of life of all fisheries participants is a fundamental need. Climate related ecosystem impacts such as compressed seasons, stock shifts, and unpredictable weather all contribute to a higher safety risk. Therefore, the EAS is supportive of the EWG’s suggestion to create an ad hoc advisory committee (Cross FMP Safety Initiative, FEP Appendix, [Report 1](#)). We would propose that a core task of that committee should be identifying how fleet responses to changing ocean conditions and regulations impact overall community risk, resilience, and safety.

Flexibility in Fisheries Management Process Use of FMP-specific indicators may result in the need for more immediate changes to regulations than the current Council process allows. Determining ways the management system can increase in nimbleness and efficiency, utilizing indicators effectively (such as those intended from the proposed modified 2.1), is essential to moving from observing the current and changing ocean and translating that into more informed ecosystem based management.

Inclusion of Co-Managers and all Stakeholders The future initiative process must be inclusive of all stakeholders to enable a full understanding of the potential impacts to fisheries, communities, and the environment. This includes members and representatives of Tribes and indigenous peoples who have traditional knowledge, and broadening the scope of “stakeholders” to reach individual fishery participants across all levels (e.g., captains, crew, deckhands, shoreside

employees, recreational anglers, science advisors, and fishery managers) to ensure inclusion of those affected by Council decisions and actions.

Overall, the proposed initiatives will enable a transition from generating important data to greater application of those data to a healthy ocean and fishing community. The EAS does not expect that this new initiative would be completed within the two-year timeframe, but could reach key milestones within that time. Additionally, our intent is that the Council would consider developing and executing these initiatives across all FMPs, which will require strong coordination and collaboration with the management teams, technical teams, and advisory subpanels.

Summary

We are experiencing a time of unprecedented change in the ocean's ecosystem, and we have an impressive amount of information to aid in our understanding, including the breadth of thought and engagement facilitated by the CCI, and the continued excellence of the State of the California Current Ecosystem Status Report. The EAS strongly urges the Council to choose the Initiative 'blend' we have outlined to advance the CCI's goal to expand application of ecosystem science and process into FMP-related actions, including stock assessments, to achieve climate resilient fishery management. This effort will facilitate healthy communities, maintain productive fisheries, promote economically robust ports, and enhance safety for fisheries participants. It will also lay the necessary foundation critical to achieving nimbleness within the ecosystem science and fishery management system.

PFMC
03/11/22