

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON REVIEW OF FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN INITIATIVES

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) received a presentation from Dr. Kit Dahl (PFMC Staff) on the Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) Initiatives and draft updates to the FEP appendix proposed by the Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG). The SSC reviewed the nine proposed FEP initiatives and provided comments. The SSC is generally supportive of the appendix and commends the EWG on their work thus far on the revised FEP.

Proposed initiative 2.1, Ecosystem and Climate Information for Species, Fisheries, and Fishery Management Plans (FMPs), is a particularly promising direction for future work. Previous initiatives and the California Current Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (CCIEA) program and annual report have generated a large amount of ecosystem and climate information. However, more focus on how to make use of this information when considering specific management actions is needed. Proposed initiative 2.1 offers an opportunity to develop pathways and processes to do this. The SSC notes that the incorporation of ecosystem information in decision making is a long-term goal and this initiative should be considered a first step in a longer process.

The work described in proposed initiative 2.2, Science Policy and Planning for Understanding the Effects of Oceanographic Conditions and Recruitment on Council-Managed Finfish Species, may be better conducted once better oceanographic models and data sources are available. For example, the ongoing National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate and Fisheries Initiative should produce operational ocean models that would be useful for modeling fish populations on the West Coast.

Proposed initiative 2.6., Supporting Fishery and Fishing Community Resilience Initiative, may be an extension of the work completed during the Climate and Communities Initiative rather than a new initiative. The SSC also notes that there is ongoing work at the Northwest and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers validating resilience indicators and evaluating resilience of West Coast fishing communities. Some elements of initiative 2.6 may duplicate this work.

Proposed initiative 2.8, Assess Flexibility in Fisheries Management Process Initiative, would work to identify ways to increase "flexibility" in how the Council makes decisions, under the assumption that the ability to change regulations more quickly is unambiguously good. However, work on this initiative should also consider ways in which this flexibility may have negative as well as positive effects on fishery stakeholders. Reducing the time it takes to complete the regulatory process may reduce opportunities for public participation in the Council process. More frequent changes in regulations may also reduce operators' ability to plan for future conditions and reduce the ability to buffer against uncertainty.

Work on proposed initiative 2.4, Cross-FMP Essential Fish Habit (EFH) Initiative, may be more productive once EFH has been defined for individual species within each FMP and is therefore a low priority relative to other proposed initiatives.