

ECOSYSTEM ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel (EAS) reviewed and discussed the Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) Strategy prepared by NOAA Fisheries. The EAS applauds the overarching goals of the strategy— “to serve stakeholders equitably by engaging underserved communities in the science, conservation, and management of the nation’s ocean resources and their habitat” and the iterative process used to produce this document.

The EAS makes the following observations and recommendations:

- 1) The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) will have opportunities for substantial engagement in the development of regional EEJ strategies, and the EAS recommends that the Council make use of these opportunities. In particular, the Council can use the development of regional strategies to better identify and serve communities affected by Council actions, including Tribes, coastal communities, fishing communities, and others connected with fishing activities who may remain less visible, for example, shore-side stakeholders whose living depends in whole or in part on commercial fisheries.
- 2) The issue of developing and maintaining trust among affected entities and individuals was prominent in our discussion. The EAS recognizes the critical importance of trusting relationships in addressing issues of EEJ, and notes that the development of regional EEJ strategies can help to build necessary trust.
- 3) With respect to the strategy itself, the EAS notes that many of the metrics proposed by NOAA to evaluate success are measurable but may not be meaningful. That is, measures such as the number and percentage of NOAA staff trained, number of NOAA offices represented at regular meetings, or the number of Regional/Program EEJ working groups established reflect activity but are not meaningful indicators of impact. We flag this as an issue for the Council to consider as it establishes its own measures of success in addressing systemic inequities associated with Council activities.