

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE GEOGRAPHIC STRATEGIC PLAN AND
REGIONAL EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) discussed the National Marine Fisheries Service National Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) Strategy (Agenda Item H.5, Attachment 3).

The incorporation of Traditional Ecological Knowledge into the decision-making process needs to be better defined, including directed outreach to Tribal communities to build working relationships. This should be accompanied by training for those involved in the outreach and decision-making, preferably led by Tribal members. It is unclear whether incorporation should follow a national strategy or if a regional strategy tailored to the local Tribal communities would be a better approach. Recruitment of individuals into the Council process from underserved communities (such as Tribes) should begin as early as possible and not be limited to university or college students.

The EEJ Strategy proposes measuring progress on several research and monitoring actions in terms of the number of studies or projects conducted. Although the number of projects is the beginning of a metric to define success, evaluating effectiveness of these actions will ultimately require additional measures. Implementing the EEJ strategy will require high quality social and economic analyses to better understand the demographics of existing Council participants and regional stakeholders, evaluate the distributional impacts of policy, understand climate impacts on communities, and monitor environmental justice concerns. Prioritization of social science and other research that helps to address equity issues can be accomplished through the Research and Data Needs process.

Much of the labor related to EEJ is currently being taken on by individuals from historically underrepresented groups already engaged in the Council process. In many cases, these same individuals lead and report EEJ discussions in advisory bodies and serve on the EEJ committee. The SSC reiterates the need to consult outside experts in EEJ to develop and implement a holistic EEJ strategy that includes meaningful participation of the whole community the Council serves.

PFMC
09/11/23