

ECOSYSTEM ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON THE ANNUAL CALIFORNIA CURRENT ECOSYSTEM STATUS REPORT

The Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel (EAS) would like to commend the California Current Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (CCIEA) Team for another enlightening and powerful summary of the state of the California Current Ecosystem. We continue to be amazed with the village working behind the scenes to produce the Ecosystem Status Report (ESR).

Highlights

- We greatly appreciated the increasing foresight provided over both short- (upcoming year) and long-term (2050) predictions that were included in Appendix E.
- We note that the ESR is foundational for a multitude of items discussed in H.2 and H.3, which underscores the ESR's increasing value to sustainable fisheries and fishing communities.
- We appreciate the incorporation of the Ocean Observatory Initiative Node data (IOOS), which leverages real time data infrastructure that could be increasingly powerful to inform episodic or unpredicted environmental shifts.
- We commend the ESR for its inclusion of recreational fisheries in the societal impacts section.
- The ESR is an important venue to consider mixed ocean uses, such as wind farm placement and potential impacts on the fishing fleets, thus section 4.2 was a key component to include in the state of the California Current Ecosystem.
- We applaud the addition of cumulative estimated biomass for CPS and the continued inclusion of regional forage composition.
- We support the continued work to present seabird diet data and appreciate efforts to connect seabird diets with marine environmental conditions and how seabird diets may illuminate productivity and availability of forage within specific regions.
- We also appreciated having a preview of the ESR at the February 27 Ecosystem Workgroup webinar as well as the opportunity to discuss the ESR with Drs. Andy Leising, Mary Hunsicker, and Chris Harvey during our meeting this week.

Recommendations

- We support the requests by the CCIEA identified in Agenda Item H.1.a, Supplemental CCIEA Team Report 3 (March 2024) identifying future paths for the ESR, including the input from the Scientific and Statistical Committee on potentially leveraging existing work on salmon stoplight tables by converting them into a risk table type framework.
- We recommend creating an infographic (similar to the ESR main report Box 1.1 figure) to provide an synoptic and approachable outlook for the upcoming year.
- We suggest including observations from the fishing fleet, where appropriate, that could provide powerful insight into the state of the ocean and can help explain episodic and difficult to predict/model events. We highlight the work by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife/Oregon Sea Grant/Oregon State University in creating an application for this purpose as an important step and hope it can be widely adopted to provide the opportunity for increased inclusion of at-sea skipper observations.

- Finally, we suggest that the aggregations used in Figure 5.1 be evaluated for the potential to mask ports at higher risk that may be overlooked when viewed in aggregate, and note that the process for selecting specific communities within broader port areas may benefit from additional clarification.

We also discussed the importance of timely data availability for decisions as part of adaptable fisheries management, which is foundational to items discussed under H.2 and H.3. NOAA currently supports a web-based IEA program dashboard providing a broad range of data, some of which is included as indicators in the ESR, in addition to data not included in the report. We would encourage continued refinement of this dashboard for improved visibility and usability by the public. In addition, inclusion of other key data and short-term model predictions (as provided in Appendix E) would increase its utility. Expansions of data availability could result in near-term species distribution models highlighting areas that may have increased bycatch during certain periods, and/or if there are unexpected environmental conditions (e.g., warm blobs) that could expand/modify fishing opportunities.

In summary, we appreciate the inclusion of many of the EAS' suggestions over the years into this year's ESR and the synoptic and forward-looking product generated.

PFMC
03/09/24