

## ECOSYSTEM WORKGROUP REPORT ON THE CALIFORNIA CURRENT ECOSYSTEM STATUS REPORT

Dr. Mary Hunsicker of the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) and Dr. Andrew Leising of the Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) presented the California Current Ecosystem Status Report (the ESR) in a public online webinar on February 27, 2024 and during an Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) meeting on March 7, 2024. We thank them, the Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) team as a whole, and the many ESR contributors, for another comprehensive and informative report.

The EWG recommends that the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) endorse the Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC's) priorities in the "Review of Potential topics for SSC-ES / CCIEA in Summer 2024" section of [H.1.b, Supplemental SSC Report 1](#). We provide more detailed recommendations on next steps for review of the risk tables in an EWG supplemental report under Agenda Item H.2. Those recommendations do include the potential inclusion of the salmon stoplight approach within the scope of the review.

### *Recommendations and Comments on ESR*

We appreciated the application of the EWG use of the risk table framework to the salmon stoplight tables. In addition, the EWG supports the CCIEA team's use of automation tools and supports their expanded use in the future. The ESR is the culmination of a significant amount of work and the EWG feels it is important to keep the IEA team's workload in mind when the Council is reviewing and commenting on the ESR.

The EWG continues to express its utmost support for the ESR and provides two recommendations which are intended to give the Council information that may contribute to on-the-ground management decisions. General comments on this year's ESR and presentation are provided at the end of the report.

- Each year, the IEA team discusses topics to include in the main body of the report, in an appendix, or not at all. We offer the following suggestions for the Council consideration when providing guidance. Short-term forecasts are expected to become more developed and useful for decision-making. We therefore encourage future ESRs to consider including a broad overview of short-term forecasts in the main body of the report. An example of a short-term forecast might be fish year class strength. This would complement the look at the previous year with a discussion of expectations for the current year, without removing any of the current content in the main body of the report. Additional detail on the short-term forecasts, as well as more strategic long-term forecasts could continue to be included in an ESR appendix.
- Topics focusing on long term projections or that are helpful for strategic planning like offshore wind could remain in the climate change appendix or be included in a hot topics section of the ESR presentation, as appropriate. The CCIEA team should use their discretion in how to present this information.

- Recommend that the ESR highlight additional elements such as El Niño/La Niña, marine heatwaves, etc. as “hot topics” in future reports. We suggest forecasts be highlighted in the main report or housed in “hot topics” based on ESR authors’ preferences.

### *General Comments*

- The ESR is valuable for providing a clear understanding of the myriad ecosystem dynamics in an efficient manner. We appreciate the cohesive and concise story and believe the switch from a page limit to a word limit approach is working well.
- The format of the presentation of the ESR, which documents conditions and the evolution of ecosystem dynamics in a chronological fashion, was particularly effective in this year’s presentation.
- We applaud the development of a click-able infographic that allows for rapid movement among sections.
- The climate change appendix and the wind planning work underway in the IEA were valuable.
- The EWG also supports the connection between the salmon stoplight tables in the ESR and the EWG risk table framework under development as part of FEP Initiative 4.
- We were particularly pleased to see Section 3.5.2 on highly migratory species (HMS) diet and hope that diet data monitoring and publication is well supported into the future so that the Council and the public may better understand the potential effects of climate variability and change on the CCE food web. The diet data provide a valuable resource to confirm fisheries independent survey findings on forage species.
- The utility of PDO and NPGO as indicators of conditions in the CCE may need additional research (see 2023 [H.1.b, Supplemental EWG Report 1](#)).
- The coastwide estimates of krill abundance are an important ecosystem indicator.

PFMC  
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