

## ECOSYSTEM ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON THE CLIMATE AND COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE REVIEW AND PRIORITIZE TASKS

The Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel (EAS) makes the following comments on the Climate and Communities Initiative Review (CCI) and Prioritize Tasks. The EAS appreciates the Ecosystem Working Group's (EWG's) efforts to fold the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) proposals into this agenda item and include a consolidated list of suggestions for the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and agency action from the CCI on Council process, communication, and science (Agenda Item H.3.a, EWG Report 1, Appendix A). Building upon the EWG's efforts and given our understanding that further work on the CCI as well as Initiative 4 may be limited by funding and staff capacity, the EAS focused its discussion of CCI priority tasks on those with linkages to the IRA proposals. Table 1 (below) summarizes the EAS recommendations for CCI priority tasks and describes the linkages between those and the IRA proposals and Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) initiatives.

### **Exempted Fishing Permits**

The EAS discussed that exempted fishing permits (EFP) can provide flexibility in the fishery management process to allow for fishing on emerging or shifting stocks, support portfolio diversification, and encourage gear innovation to respond to changes in the ocean environment or to avoid bycatch. Experimentation supports sustainable climate ready fisheries management and EFPs enable fisheries participants, scientists, and managers to collaboratively target new stocks, test new fishing regulations, or test gear. However, the prolonged EFP timeline and lack of EFP priorities may hinder the ability to use EFPs under changing conditions. The EAS prioritized CCI tasks 9, 10 and 11 because they apply to all three IRA proposals. Development of a comprehensive EFP program from conception to implementation that identifies the Council's goals for EFPs, streamlines the application process, and evaluates the results can help support sustainable fishing in a changing ocean ecosystem.

### **At-Sea Observations**

As noted in our report on Agenda Item H.1.a, the EAS discussed the value of fishermen's "on the water" observations and supports finding opportunities to incorporate that firsthand knowledge or other qualitative information into management processes. The EAS prioritized the CCI data collection point 3a because of its relevance to all three IRA proposals and multiple FEP initiatives (Table 1). Fishermen's real time data could be used to make responsive management decisions as fishing opportunities arise, which would bring additional ecosystem information into the Council process. However, the success of this type of tool is contingent upon building trust between management and fishermen to provide consistent and accurate data and a repository for the information.

### **Communication**

The EAS chose to highlight two CCI communication priorities (2 & 3) because of the impact of management transparency and communication on vulnerable fishing communities, which is relevant to the IRA funding proposals and FEP initiatives (Table 1).

## Council Flexibility

In September 2023, we recommended the Council pilot approaches to improve the nimbleness of the process to respond to interannual variability and long-term climate trends consistent with FEP objectives aligned with Initiative 2.8 (Agenda Item F.1.a, Supplemental EAS Report 1, September 2023). By incorporating environmental drivers into management and improving our nimbleness and responsiveness to climate change, the Council can take the comprehensive work presented in the annual Ecosystem Status Report and use it to promote more healthy and resilient fishing stocks, fishing communities, and coastal economies. CCI tasks 11 and 12 align with both the IRA proposals and the FEP initiatives (Table 1).

**Table 1. EAS recommendations for priority CCI tasks with cross-references to the IRA proposals and FEP initiatives.**

<u>CCI Priorities</u> (EWG report H.3.a, Appendix A)	<u>IRA Proposal</u>	<u>FEP Initiatives</u>
Council Processes 9) Re-evaluate the Council’s EFP process to simplify and clearly define the process requirements so that they do not exclude participation (especially for smaller vessels).	1) Vulnerable Fishing Communities <sup>1</sup>	2.6: Supporting Fishery and Fishing Community Resilience Initiative
Council Processes 10) Identify mechanisms to align EFP review with funding sources; encourage/support more EFPs that address shifting stocks; identify management challenges where less desirable species may be out-competing a fishery’s target stocks, and opportunities to minimize bycatch of choke species	1) Vulnerable Fishing Communities 2) Innovation in Dynamic Environment <sup>2</sup> 3) Bycatch Mitigation <sup>3</sup>	2.3: Cross-FMP Dynamic Bycatch Monitoring and Minimization Policy Initiative 2.6: Supporting Fishery and Fishing Community Resilience Initiative 2.8: Assess Flexibility in Fisheries Management Process Initiative
Council Processes 11) Identify ways to expedite both the Council and NMFS implementation of EFPs for use under changing conditions, possibly supporting fishing portfolio diversification.	1) Vulnerable Fishing Communities 2) Innovation in Dynamic Environment	2.6: Supporting Fishery and Fishing Community Resilience Initiative 2.8: Assess Flexibility in Fisheries Management Process Initiative
Council Processes 12) Evaluate whether the Council process itself is adequately flexible by reviewing the recommendations made under the Council Meeting Process and Efficiency agenda item from April 2023.	1) Vulnerable Fishing Communities 2) Innovation in Dynamic Environment	2.6: Supporting Fishery and Fishing Community Resilience Initiative 2.8: Assess Flexibility in Fisheries Management Process Initiative

<sup>1</sup> Vulnerable Fishing Communities: Considering the effects of Council management actions on vulnerable fishing communities impacted by a changing marine ecosystem

<sup>2</sup> Innovation in Dynamic Environment: Innovating the Implementation of Council Actions to Respond to a Dynamic Ocean Environment

<sup>3</sup> Bycatch Mitigation: Developing climate-ready fishing methods that mitigate bycatch of non-target, associated species in a changing ecosystem

<p>Communication 2) Identify ways in which Federal, state, and tribal agencies can improve communication with their constituents so that stakeholders and the public better understand their interests and the potential impacts and opportunities associated with climate change.</p>	<p>1) Vulnerable Fishing Communities</p>	<p>2.6: Supporting Fishery and Fishing Community Resilience Initiative</p>
<p>Communication 3) Explore the development of communication pathways to clarify the stock assessment review, approval, and implementation process to make it more clear for constituents so that they understand when the agencies and the Council are soliciting input.</p>	<p>1) Vulnerable Fishing Communities</p>	<p>2.6: Supporting Fishery and Fishing Community Resilience Initiative</p>
<p>Data Collection 3a) Support engagement with industry through “Skipper science” to promote collaborative science and engagement with fishing communities within the Council process. State agency and/or local Sea Grant organized round tables could provide a venue for conversations and information exchange between industry and scientists.</p>	<p>1) Vulnerable Fishing Communities 2) Innovation in Dynamic Environment 3) Bycatch Mitigation</p>	<p>2.3: Cross-FMP Dynamic Bycatch Monitoring and Minimization Policy Initiative 2.6: Supporting Fishery and Fishing Community Resilience Initiative 2.8: Assess Flexibility in Fisheries Management Process Initiative</p>

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