

ECOSYSTEM ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
COUNCIL OPERATIONS AND PRIORITIES

The Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel met via webinar on May 21, 2024, reviewed and discussed the Executive Director’s Recommendations for Organizational and Process Refinements ([Agenda Item C.2, Attachment 1, June 2024](#)), and the Council Staff Report on Agenda Topic Prioritization Methods ([Agenda Item C.2, Attachment 2, June 2024](#)), and has the following comments.

First, we appreciate the Council’s budget situation and the need to find concrete ways to reduce travel and meeting costs to address the projected annual deficit (\$777,137) in addition to identifying ways to make the Council process more streamlined and efficient. We also understand and appreciate the Committee of the Whole’s approach to addressing the budget situation and focusing the Council’s agenda on “core” activities as a priority. However, we think that the criteria developed by the Committee of the Whole to define core activities as “those enumerated in the Magnuson-Stevens Act, specifically related to the preparation and amending fishery management plans and pursuant regulations; protected species related actions directly affecting Council-managed fisheries, and Tribal relations” to be inclusive of identifying essential fish habitat (EFH) and minimizing fishery-related impacts to EFH for Council managed stocks. Furthermore, NOAA Fisheries has fully engaged in implementing ecosystem-based fisheries management to fulfill its key mandate - stewardship of the nation’s living marine resources and their habitats, interactions, and ecosystems. Therefore, we believe that habitat and ecosystem-related items should also be considered “core.”

In particular, the annual ecosystem status report, which describes the status of the EFH for Council-managed stocks as well as specific indicators which influence stock health, as well as providing insights into the impacts on fishing communities and participants, is a key component of managing Council fisheries. In addition to the statutory requirement to identify and minimize impacts to EFH, there is a national policy regarding the need to use the Best Scientific Information Available in Council decision-making as well as national standard guidelines as to how best to do that, including a national roadmap for ecosystem-based fishery management. Therefore, the Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel recommends the Council continue to schedule a presentation of the ecosystem status report, including an opportunity for Council and stakeholder engagement and discussion.

PFMC
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