

## ECOSYSTEM WORKGROUP SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT ON THE INFLATION REDUCTION ACT PROJECTS

The Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) met on September 10 with Pacific Fisheries Management Council staffer Gilly Lyons, who provided a presentation summarizing three projects that will be funded over the next three years under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The EWG recommendations to the Council are as follows:

1. Clarify the work the Council is asking EWG members to do in support of IRA projects. Currently, the potential expectations associated with these projects are described differently in various Council documents.
2. Provide future IRA project briefing materials in formats that focus on each project individually and in greater detail, rather than providing briefing materials that address all three projects simultaneously.
3. Assess each IRA project against the goals and objectives of the Council's Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) and the Climate and Communities Initiative (CCI) follow-on actions.
4. Hold separate inception workshops or webinars for each of the three projects that focus on the proposed outcomes of the projects alongside the roles, responsibilities, information needs, and expertise requirements for each of them. This should be done before work on the projects begins in earnest.

The EWG reviewed the IRA projects and timelines. Given the connections outlined in Agenda Item C.3, Attachments [1](#) and [2](#), they are comparable in workload to three separate FEP Initiatives, as each focuses on areas that affect multiple fishery management plans.

The staff recommendation regarding the EWG's proposed future roles and responsibilities in Agenda Item C.3, Attachment 4 states:

“The EWG will provide technical and policy advice in support of the Council's three Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)-funded projects. IRA projects are focused on increasing the climate resilience of Council-managed resources and are anticipated to be completed in 2027. The EWG may provide technical and policy advice to the Council on other Ecosystem issues and items as needed and/or requested by the Council.”

The EWG supports this role as long as more discussion and clarification can be provided on the workload implications and necessary expertise, as that would impact the level of EWG involvement. Previously, only one FEP initiative was implemented at a time, and these IRA projects are comparable to the workload of three initiatives. Therefore, the EWG does not have the capacity to operate in the same technical and policy role as with prior FEP initiatives. With FEP Initiative 4 still being implemented by the Council and currently piloted for the Groundfish FMP only, there is also concern about whether these projects might divert resources or attention from the completion of the current initiative and its implementation, alongside the Council's other ecosystem work.

It is important to ensure that IRA projects are synergistic with the Council's ongoing and past FEP efforts. The EWG looks forward to discussing how these projects and the others are connected to the [FEP goals and objectives](#), FEP [Initiative 4](#), and the [follow-up actions from the CCI](#).

As the IRA projects are developed further, the EWG suggests that consideration be given to how the proposed projects make U.S. West Coast fisheries and fishing communities climate resilient. In the EWG's review of C.3, [Attachment 1](#), the IRA projects seem more focused and tailored to current applications rather than how these applications will apply to future climate projections. It will be important to consider how these projects can increase resilience and flexibility to achieve the goal of promoting climate resilient fisheries for current and future climate scenarios.

The EWG recognizes and appreciates all the work to provide information on these projects under agenda item C.3 (Attachments 1-3), and suggests in future meetings that these three distinct projects be separated and reported on individually to provide a more consolidated view of the project details, timelines, and roles and responsibilities. The EWG also recommends that as part of the initial development process, a one-day webinar or workshop be conducted for each of the IRA projects to discuss roles, responsibilities, information needs, and expertise requirements, and as they evolve, project outcomes. These workshops would help in identifying the necessary technical contributions that are needed and ensure that the EWG and other stakeholders are adequately prepared to support the IRA projects.

As the IRA projects continue to develop, specific subject matter and technical expertise may be needed that may not be covered by the current EWG membership. The Council's original intent in maintaining the EWG as an ad hoc committee was to provide itself with the flexibility to shift EWG membership to best reflect the needs of particular ecosystem initiatives under Council consideration. The EWG anticipates that, given the scope of these projects and the role requested of the EWG, membership may need to be altered to address needs for technical and subject matter expertise. The EWG also supports involving experts with relevant knowledge from each Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and other technical areas to advise Council staff and contractors on the development of these IRA projects. The EWG supports IRA project-specific alterations to EWG membership as needed to meet project needs, but recommends that a core EWG membership should remain to provide the continuity and institutional knowledge to link projects to current and past Initiatives, and application of efforts across FMPs. In this manner the EWG would be flexible in its involvement, by acting as a review body while also providing technical support as needed. This approach would ensure that the necessary expertise is applied effectively to each project.

PFMC

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