

ECOSYSTEM WORKGROUP REPORT ON SPECIAL PROJECT 2: SOCIOECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

The Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) reviewed and discussed Attachments 1 and 2 under Agenda Item D.3. According to the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff proposal for this project, the objective of Special Project 2 is “to develop tools and a decision framework to allow the Council to more explicitly consider how specific management proposals affect vulnerable West Coast fishing communities.” The methodology described in [Agenda Item D.3, Attachment 2, Community Resilience Decision Tool Methodology](#), suggests addressing three concepts intended to allow the Council to more closely review the potential effects of its actions on fishing communities: exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity. The indicators proposed and discussed in the methodology in Tables 2, 3, and 5 of Attachment 2 appear reasonable given the data and information available, although none of the proposed economic indicators address the costs of fishery participation, which are important to the long-term vulnerability of fishing communities to both market and environmental risks.

The EWG reviewed the Council tasks for this June 2026 action and provides the following considerations and recommendations for each section.

1. Consider synthesis report and gap analysis and draft methodology.

The EWG provides comments on the report and methodology for Council consideration in Appendix 1 of this report (below). For the methodology as described to be used by analysts assessing the potential effects of Council actions, it will need to be implemented through a simple, repeatable, and easily accessed template, dashboard, or similar tool or analysis framework. As development of this framework moves forward, it will be important to clearly understand the respective roles and responsibilities of Council staff, contractors, and advisory bodies such as the EWG in reviewing and applying this framework. The EWG serves in part to help the Council consider issues that are important across its fishery management plans (FMP). The methodology could help address the challenge of understanding how actions taken in one FMP interact with actions in others, particularly if it can be applied in a way that enables consistent tracking through time using a tool that makes analysis and monitoring more manageable. It is unclear how the methodology provided in these reports can be condensed into such a tool, but the EWG expects that will be demonstrated as the project progresses.

2. Consider selection of a type or category of example action to which the methodology and framework may be applied.

The EWG provides the following criteria for the Council to consider when selecting a type or category of Council management action to recommend the methodology and framework be applied:

- 1) The category or action must include management alternatives or options that directly relate to assessing community resilience, which will allow the Council and others to evaluate the framework’s usefulness in comparing policy decisions.

- 2) If the selected category or action is a current action, it must appear on the Council agenda early enough for case study results to be provided no later than the June 2027 Council meeting, ensuring that recommendations and feedback can be incorporated before the framework methodology is finalized in September 2027.

In addition to evaluating a single case study, the EWG suggests the Council consider whether the contractors should prepare one-page summaries of previously applied resilience analyses that rely on a similar framework, including examples from other regions. In Appendix 1, the EWG discusses how these one-page summaries could provide a useful starting point for understanding how similar approaches have been used in other West Coast fishery management contexts and help illustrate where the framework may offer value.

The EWG underscores the importance of case study results being available by the June 2027 Council meeting so that Council input on the case study can inform the framework methodology before its finalization in September 2027. In reviewing [Attachment 2](#) and the associated Northern Economics, Inc. (NEI) timelines, the EWG notes that the June 2027 check-in from the Year at a Glance schedule is currently missing from the NEI timeline and the EWG emphasizes the need to complete the case study in time for that milestone.

3. Select an example action and provide guidance on next steps.

The EWG reviewed the advance briefing book's Year at a Glance ([Agenda Item C.5, Attachment 1](#)) to identify Council actions that meet the EWG's recommended criteria from Section 2 for potential case study actions. The EWG defers to the appropriate FMP advisory bodies regarding the appropriateness of these agenda items as case studies, but believes the following actions would meet the EWG recommended criteria and serve as useful case study examples to evaluate the application of the proposed methodology:

Salmon FMP:

- March/April 2027 season development. For example, in case the Council must consider closing or severely limiting particular salmon fisheries, could this framework help the Council and the public understand the potential effects of closures and limitations on communities?

Groundfish FMP

- Specifications Flexibility – FPA (November 2026). For example, if the intent of this action is to improve resilience for the fishing industry and fishing communities, could this framework help the Council and the public understand whether the actions considered are likely to improve community resilience?

Appendix 1

EWG detailed comments on synthesis report and gap analysis and draft methodology

The EWG has three comments, below, regarding resources and information missing from the *Community Resilience Decision Tool: Synthesis of Information & Gap Analysis* (Agenda Item D.3 Attachment 1).

First, the Council's [Fishery Ecosystem Plan](#) (FEP) is not addressed in the analysis documents for this agenda item except as an information vehicle. Section 4.5 of the FEP, "Fisheries Management,

Ecosystem Services and the Well-being of West Coast Communities” should be addressed as part of this project, since it provides background on the Council’s approach to fishing community well-being and details on implementing FEP Goal 3:

Goal 3: Implement fisheries management that ensures continued ecosystem services for the well-being of West Coast communities and the nation.

Objective 3a: Continue to provide for commercial, recreational, ceremonial, subsistence, and nonconsumptive uses of the marine environment;

Objective 3b: Continue to monitor and engage in opportunities to minimize and mitigate the effects of non-fishing activities on the ecosystem to better ensure that conservation benefits are not undermined by negative impacts of these activities;

Objective 3c: Support education efforts to promote understanding of CCE biophysical processes, how the ecosystem affects human well-being, and of the potential risks and benefits to ecosystem services from climate variability and change.

Second, the Council’s Groundfish FMP includes a definition of fishing community needs at Section 4.6.3.2 that is not addressed in the analysis documents for this agenda item, and which could help the Council and the public better evaluate and understand the vulnerability and adaptive capacity of fishing communities:

“Fishing communities need a sustainable fishery that is safe, well-managed, and profitable; provides jobs and incomes; contributes to the local social fabric, culture, and image of the community; and helps market the community and its services and products.”

Third, the *Synthesis of Information* suggests at page 18 that “Articles about West Coast fisheries from news outlets and journals can offer insight into actions that could improve the resilience of some fisheries...” In 2022, the Council completed a cross-fishery strategic planning exercise intended to explore actions to improve the resilience of fisheries and fishing communities to change via its Climate and Communities Initiative. In [March 2024](#), the Council re-reviewed the priorities and recommendations from that initiative under Agenda Item H.3 when it received numerous comments from its advisory bodies and the public. While the Council decided to not take any action at the time, the ideas and priorities in those comments, and the hundreds of ideas and comments received from the fishing public during that initiative, remain available to the Council [on its website](#).

Tracking indicators over time

The EWG recommends that the Council provide guidance to the contractors that the framework should allow for indicators to be tracked over time for West Coast communities. The framework is meant to help the Council understand how different management actions might affect community resilience, vulnerability, and adaptive capacity, and to support National Environmental Policy Act, Magnuson-Stevens Act, and National Standard 8 analyses, but it is the view of the EWG that these indicators should do more than just support the framework itself. They should also give the Council a way to watch longer-term trends that are happening regardless of any specific action. In short, the indicators should help compare alternatives during decision-making while also helping the Council monitor how community resilience is changing over time. A dashboard, such

as [FishEye](#), could be a useful way to provide this information. The CCIEA team is developing a companion dashboard for the Human Well-Being section of the California Current Ecosystem Status Report, and it is possible that these tools could support long-term use of the framework recommended by the contractors. The EWG also notes that the work by [Seara et al. 2025](#) should be considered when exploring integration with broader community resilience work and the development of online web tools, given its focus on indicators that assess community resilience.

One-page summaries

In addition to evaluating a single case study, the EWG suggests the Council consider having the contractors prepare one page summaries of previously applied resilience analyses that rely on a similar framework (e.g., [Fisher et al. 2021](#); Golden et al. *in prep*; [Harvey et al. 2023](#) (Section 5.4); [Samhoury et al. 2025](#); [Warlick et al. 2025](#)). For example, Warlick et al. 2025 evaluated vulnerability of West Coast groundfish fisheries to offshore energy development using indicators of exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity, identifying fishing communities in Coos Bay and Brookings, OR, as most vulnerable (Fig. 5). This type of information could be used in the context of non-regulatory Council actions (e.g., comment letters). Taking this dual approach, reviewing past applied analyses alongside conducting a focused case study, would highlight how the Council could use the indicators not only within the framework assessment process but also more broadly to track community conditions outside a specific action.

PFMC
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