ECOSYSTEM WORKGROUP REPORT ON SPECIAL PROJECT 3: WORKSHOP TO DEVELOP NEW FISHING SYSTEMS

The Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) reviewed the proposed Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff report (E.2, Attachment 1, PFMC Staff Report on Special Project 3: Workshop to Develop New Fishing Systems) and has the following recommendations for Council consideration:

- Consult with the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Advisory Bodies (ABs) on the utility of the proposed Outreach and Engagement Sessions described in the staff report.
- Reiterate that the sole focus of the workshop should be to investigate how dynamic ocean management (DOM) methods might inform bycatch mitigation efforts, risk-based frameworks, and management that is more adaptive to rapidly changing environmental conditions. This aligns with the focus from the funding proposal for this project (Agenda Item C.3, Attachment 1, PFMC IRA Project Proposals, September 2024).

DOM Background

Dr. Elliott Hazen of the Southwest Fisheries Science Center gave a presentation on the EWG webinar on February 25, 2026, on the science behind DOM around the Nation[1] and on the use of DOM in HMS fisheries across regional fishery management councils, including:

- Pacific Council and West Coast – EcoCast
- Gulf Council and Atlantic HMS – GulfCast
- Western Pacific - HICast

Platforms such as EcoCast, HICast, and GulfCast are great building blocks for knowledge-leveling and subsequently exploring what tools would be useful for West Coast sustainable fisheries management. This could include the consideration of life stages, bycatch species, secondary targets, and economic goals in the context of advancing management goals. By aligning operational realities with conservation objectives, DOM could offer a collaborative pathway to achieving sustainable fisheries outcomes across regions and FMPs, and would allow the West Coast once again to lead the way in optimal fisheries management. DOM is well-aligned with Executive Order 14276, *Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness*, which calls for modernizing "data collection and analytical practices that will improve the responsiveness of fisheries management to real-time ocean conditions."

Dr. Hazen's presentation highlighted DOM as a real-time approach to reducing bycatch while supporting viable fisheries. EcoCast has paved the way for broader adoption by demonstrating how dynamic tools can outperform static closures under anomalous ocean conditions by balancing bycatch reduction with economic cost. This allows for continued learning and monitoring of changing ocean conditions and managed species responses in real time. The EWG also recognizes

[1] Dr. Hazen will give an in-depth version of this talk as a NOAA Library Seminar talk on March 11, 2026, at 12 p.m. (Pacific), "Dynamic ocean management: models for megafauna and fisheries." Register for the NOAA Library seminar here.

there is space for non-real time information that can enable DOM, though that was not the focus of the presentation.

Proposed Workshop

It is the understanding of the EWG that work done by the HMS Advisory Subpanel, HMS Management Team, Ad Hoc HMS Fishery Innovation Workgroup, and the Council may have already addressed both of the proposed workshop goals articulated in the staff report for this agenda item. Therefore, we suggest revising and updating workshop goals as follows:

1. Provide opportunities for the fishing community to discuss how DOM and other tools could support an economically viable, low-bycatch West Coast HMS fishery, as well as associated challenges and constraints of the use of DOM to date.
2. Identify and discuss ideas for how new or modified DOM tools could inform future fishing practices, methods, and approaches that have the potential to expand HMS fishing opportunities while minimizing bycatch.

A workshop of this nature could help address the Council priorities from the Climate and Communities Initiative that called for advancing climate-ready fisheries through improving information available to fishermen, and through improving communication and coordination with fishing fleets.

The workshop could provide information about existing DOM tools and focus on ways to better align these tools with the needs of West Coast fishermen. A key objective would be to collaborate with HMS fishermen, including Exempted Fishing Permit participants, to co-develop and refine tools that reflect real operational needs. A secondary outcome of the workshop would be to consider the potential future application of DOM and other tools that utilize quantitative spatial analysis of environmental data in other West Coast fisheries.

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