ECOSYSTEM ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT AND FLEXIBILITY – SCOPING

The Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel (EAS) reviewed the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) Staff Report on Council Special Project 1: Adaptive Management and Flexibility (Agenda Item H.1, Attachment 1, September 2025) and received a briefing from Ms. Gilly Lyons on our webinar on September 16, 2025. The EAS appreciates the comprehensive and readable document with the identification of innovations to allow the Council to develop, analyze, and adopt management actions on a timescale that is more responsive to rapidly changing ocean conditions, and offers the following comments on the scope of this project.

While the EAS supports further exploration of all of the tools described in the report, the EAS would like to highlight two items, in particular, that we recommend as priorities:

1. Developing and implementing if/then statements; and
2. Improving the timeliness of data streams, including the use of local and traditional knowledge in decision-making.

The EAS sees value in predefining triggers and actions that can facilitate faster implementation and recommends that such actions be considered not just for the conservation of stocks, but also to provide increased access and fishing opportunities, utilizing a framework approach that allows actions to be taken without the need for a Council meeting. While we understand that identifying and analyzing a broad suite of scenarios that reflect a variety of conditions in developing if/then statements will take considerable effort in the near-term, the EAS believes that being able to effectively respond to conditions that are different from preseason assumptions will ultimately improve fishery sustainability over the longer term.

As the EAS has noted in previous reports, we recommend the Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service's Northwest and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers work with tribal, commercial, and recreational fishermen to collect and provide real-time ecological data. As fishermen spend a considerable amount of time on the water throughout the year and cover a large geographic area, we think that not using their on-the water observations and vessels to collect useful environmental data is a missed opportunity.

We also recommend working with fishermen to provide their knowledge and observations of how changes in stock abundance and distribution may have occurred over time or under varying conditions. While this may not necessarily lead to a faster management response, their observations may provide useful insight about ecosystem relationships that may not otherwise be documented or understood. Multiple reports from the fishing industry may signal changes that might otherwise be unseen or missed by traditional surveys.

PFMC
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