

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN FIVE-YEAR REVIEW – SCOPING

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) reviewed Briefing Book materials for this agenda item and members of the GAP attended the August 21, 2018 Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) Webinar. The GAP appreciates the work done by the EWG in developing the Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) and in keeping the Council and advisory bodies apprised of ecosystem-related matters of relevance to Council-managed fisheries.

The FEP has been generally successful in providing ecosystem-related information and a framework for Council action. The FEP's Initiative Process is an effective mechanism for the Council to consider and move forward issues of importance. In scoping review of the FEP, the GAP highlights that a key question for the Council is whether broad, sweeping changes are needed or if narrow refinement of the FEP is the better course of action?

The GAP thinks the latter is the appropriate choice for a few reasons. First and foremost, workload. A broad initiative to review and scope changes to the FEP would be a burden across already fully subscribed management teams and the tribal, state, and Federal staff that comprise those teams. Specific to groundfish, the GAP is concerned that a broad review of the FEP would further delay development and implementation of critically needed changes to groundfish regulations. These important regulatory changes would provide significant economic benefits to fishery participants through improved fishing opportunities on rebuilt stocks. Second, the current FEP was developed through a deliberative process that aimed to produce a document that was informative and useful. As noted above, the FEP has achieved these objectives. Therefore, while targeted updates are likely warranted (e.g., where new information is available), it does not appear that there is a need to change the nature of the FEP. Finally, because of its overall importance to Council-managed fisheries, the GAP recommends that FEP-related efforts focus on meaningfully advancing the Climate and Community Initiative because it should have direct benefits on fisheries and fishing communities. The GAP elaborates on this recommendation in our report under Agenda Item G.3.