

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON CLIMATE AND COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE UPDATE

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) was briefed by Dr. Kit Dahl about progress to advance the Climate and Communities Initiative. In past reports to the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council), the GAP recommended that the Initiative be identified as a high priority and that “progress on this initiative would benefit from the development of tangible scenarios... that coalesce what is a large and nebulous set of potential environmental changes, potential fishery effects (both positive and negative), and potential community impacts into easier to grasp and understand examples.” (GAP Report G.3.b, September 2018).

The GAP is pleased that progress is being made on this important Initiative. The March 2019 Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) report (Agenda Item E.2. a, EWG Report 1, March 2019) provides a review of recent work and describes scenarios that could be evaluated, as well as preliminary ideas relative to process. The GAP thinks the groundfish-related scenarios are relevant to fishery stakeholders and merit further consideration. EWG Report 1 includes only a brief discussion of next steps. However, the EWG does suggest adapting a scenario planning process developed by the National Park Service into a “*simpler, more streamlined approach to achieving the goal of identifying strategies for improving the flexibility and responsiveness of Council management actions.*” To this end, Dr. Dahl indicated that the EWG is preparing a supplemental report about meetings in Spring/Summer 2019, a report to the Council in September 2019, and a workshop in Fall/Winter 2019. The GAP supports a streamlined process to move forward in a timely manner rather than languishing on the back burner taking up staff time and resources.

While the GAP supports the Initiative, the GAP is concerned that without clear guidance to the EWG this effort will consume limited staff time and resources without producing tangible benefits (such as better forecasts of potential outcomes and tools for managers) in the near term. It would be helpful to the GAP to receive assurance that work on the Initiative will not negatively impact the production of groundfish assessments to inform future management nor impede implementation of important regulatory changes to improve current fishery management. The fishing industry is already adapting to changing ocean conditions in various ways, it is fishery management that often lags behind due to the time it takes for regulators to understand and react to changing ocean conditions. This Initiative should aim to provide tools for scientists and managers to respond more quickly, and to allow the management process to be more readily adaptive, e.g., by providing information to develop biennial management measures that provide for flexible and adaptive management by the Council and National Marine Fisheries Service.