

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN FIVE-YEAR REVIEW

In a joint webinar on March 1 with the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT), the Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) heard a summary on the Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) 5-Year Review by Ms. Yvonne deReynier. The CPSAS also reviewed the Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) Report on Updating the Ecosystem Plan (Agenda Item E.3.a, EWG Report 1, March 2019).

The CPSAS thanks the EWG for their in-depth approach to this review, and thanks the Council for initiating the review process. Acknowledging workload considerations we suggest that the Council recommend that the EWG undertake at least a modified update. This should include a Vision update, using the EWG draft, and adding content to Chapters 3 and 4, specifically including information on food habits and predator-prey interactions. A minority of the CPSAS recommends that the update also focus on the addition of ecosystem-level goals and objectives. The inclusion of such goals and objectives, along with associated indicators, could assist the Council in better implementing ecosystem-based fishery management (EBFM) across its four fishery management plans (FMPs).

The 'key' forage species in the California Current are small, pelagic schooling species such as sardine, anchovy, herring, saury, osmerid smelts, and pelagic juveniles of a wide range of benthic fishes. We suggest a time series should be developed of the combined biomass of the species that dominate the food consumption of predators on small pelagics.

Recent ecosystem models have addressed the relationship between forage fishes and the population abundance of protected predator species. However, to date, none of the recent California Current ecosystem models have focused on a top-down analysis specifically concentrating on the effects of this predation on forage fishes. Nor is there adequate study of the magnitude of prey switching in the California Current.

The CPSAS suggests that the FEP update should include bottom up and top down ecosystem analyses, if available, in order to implement Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management (EBFM) effectively. The EWG report notes the relative absence of CCE food habits data and analyses. Both the 2013 and 2018 Research and Data Needs documents emphasize the need for this information. Further, data documenting competition between protected species, and analyses calculating the trade-offs between competing predators and fisheries, should be included in the FEP. Finally, as part of the five-year review, the CPSAS supports the inclusion of new and updated science, as well as relevant Council actions taken since the FEP's adoption, to help ensure that the FEP is as current as possible.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

PFMC
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