

COUNCIL FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN (FEP) DEVELOPMENT

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) is considering ecosystem-based approaches to fishery management and is in the process of developing a Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) as a vehicle for bringing ecosystem-based principles into the Council decision-making process under its existing Fishery Management Plans (FMPs).

The Council last reviewed the FEP in June of 2012 and provided guidance on further FEP development for the November 2012 Council meeting. In keeping with Council guidance in June, the Ecosystem Plan Development Team (EPDT) has provided a revised draft of the FEP, with an emphasis on drafts of Chapters 4 through 7 (Agenda Item K.1.a, Attachment 1). Chapter 4 considers the potential effects to the ecosystem from environmental processes and human activities and, when finalized, could recommend safeguards in fisheries management measures to buffer against uncertainties induced by those effects. Chapter 5 discusses Council ecosystem-based policy priorities across its FMPs, as they may apply to ocean resource management and policy processes external to the Council (e.g., West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health, National Ocean Council, international fishery and ocean resource management bodies). Chapter 6, which the Council has seen in earlier drafts, identifies and prioritizes research needs. With this draft FEP, the EPDT also introduces a draft Chapter 7, which would bring the Council's draft policy on forage fish species, as articulated in June 2012, into the FEP. Chapter 7 also introduces the concept of additional FEP initiatives to the Council process.

At this meeting, the Council is scheduled to review and refine the draft FEP and adopt a preliminary FEP for public review. Final FEP adoption is tentatively scheduled for March of 2013. It is envisioned that the FEP will then become a "living document" that evolves in response to changing Council needs and the availability of new information. The draft FEP at K.1.a., Attachment 1 proposes a six-year cycle for the FEP, so that descriptive passages within the FEP would remain in place until the next review period, suggested to begin in late 2016 or early 2017, with adoption of a revised FEP suggested for late 2018 or early 2019.

In a related matter, the Council took action in June to formally recognize the importance of forage fish to the marine ecosystem off our coast and to provide adequate protection for forage fish. The Council adopted the objective "to prohibit the development of new directed fisheries on forage species that are not currently managed by our Council, or the States, until we have an adequate opportunity to assess the science relating to the fishery and any potential impacts to our existing fisheries and communities." The Council plans to meet this objective through two primary approaches. The first consists of updating to the Federal List of Fisheries and Gear authorized off the West Coast while describing in the FEP the standards that the Council would use in assessing whether a proposed new fishery could compromise its conservation and management measures. The second is to enact protections through amendment to one or more of the Council's Fishery Management Plans. The Council scheduled the bulk of this effort to occur after the FEP is completed. Section 7.1 of the draft FEP outlines a process for implementing this initiative and includes proposed revisions to the Federal List of Fisheries and Gears. To expedite the process, the Council may consider requesting input from its advisory bodies, States, Tribes, and the public on the proposed revisions to the Federal List of Fisheries and Gears in advance of FEP completion.

Council Action:

1. **Provide feedback on the Draft FEP.**
2. **Consider adopting a preliminary FEP for public review.**
3. **Provide guidance on priority tasks for future work on FEP development.**
4. **Consider requesting input from its advisory bodies, States, Tribes, and the public on the proposed revisions to the Federal List of Fisheries and Gears in advance of FEP completion.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item K.1.a, Attachment 1: Draft Pacific Coast Fishery Ecosystem Plan.
2. Agenda Item K.1.d, Public Comment.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. Report of the Ecosystem Plan Development Team
- c. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
- d. Public Comment
- e. **Council Action:** Adopt Preliminary FEP for Public Review

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