

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON INTEGRATED ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) thanks Drs. Phil Levin and Brian Wells for meeting with us to discuss the work they are doing with Integrated Ecosystem Assessments (IEAs) as well as a proposed workshop that would be hosted by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northwest and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers.

First, we are interested in the upcoming workshop proposed by the Science Centers and hope to have representatives from the GMT included in the list of attendees. This will be an important exercise to scope the type of information and products that can improve ecosystem understanding in the Council's fisheries management, including groundfish. Further, as noted in Agenda Item K.1.c, the Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) is a good compendium on the state of ecosystem understanding in the California Current, but the IEA can serve as a more iterative process for feeding ecosystem information into the Council process. This will be particularly true should targeted products be developed as a result of the type of interaction envisioned in the proposed workshop.

The GMT further notes that expediting a review of Atlantis (the basis for several IEA outputs) needs to be undertaken as soon as feasible.¹ Having such a model that has been peer reviewed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) could help to inform process improvement under Amendment 24. This might not need to be as rigorous as a stock assessment review, but would affirm whether it represents the best available science to inform ecosystem-based management. One of the primary questions that we hope to answer in development of a Tier 1 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document concerns "significant impacts" to the marine environment, specifically when our understanding of significant impacts changes. These ecosystem assessments could document the cumulative impacts of fisheries to the marine environment, which is at the heart of the significant impacts question inherent in NEPA.

PFMC
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¹ This recent publication is one IEA output Kaplan, I. C., Gray, I. A., Levin, P. S., 2012. Cumulative impacts of fisheries in the California current. Fish Fish, n/a. URL <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-2979.2012.00484.x>