

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON THE CALIFORNIA CURRENT ECOSYSTEM REPORT

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the Draft Annual State of the California Current Ecosystem Report. Dr. John Field from the Southwest Fisheries Science Center answered SSC questions regarding the report.

The report is a succinct source of information on trends in climate indicators, fish and sea lion abundance, non-fishing human activities, and major fisheries. The report is an important first step in providing the Council family with an ecosystem perspective on West Coast fish stocks, fisheries, and coastal communities. The Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) Workshop proposed under Agenda Item K.2.b will provide an opportunity to consider a broader range of IEA products that may warrant inclusion in future versions of the report. The report will likely evolve over time, depending on which indicators are available and best suited to addressing ecosystem concerns identified by the Council.

The SSC offers the following considerations for future iterations of the report, which may require a report that is longer than 20 pages:

- To make the report more accessible, the indicators should be explained in less technical language and further explanation should be provided regarding the relevance of each indicator.
- Section 4.1 provides useful information on major fisheries, including non-FMP fisheries that are commonly pursued in combination with FMP fisheries. In addition to the ecosystem-wide view in Figure 4.1, a landings breakdown by region and fishery would provide additional insight into geographic variation. Ex-vessel price trends should also be provided to help explain effort shifts among fisheries.
- Seafood demand is not a very informative indicator, as it pertains to the U.S. as a whole and demand is satisfied by imports as well as domestic fisheries.
- Non-fishing activities (e.g., aquaculture, benthic structures, shipping activity, and offshore oil/gas) should be described regionally to the extent possible. If shipping activity is being included as a source of habitat effects, then that indicator (volume of water disturbed) should be put in perspective (e.g., by comparing to water disturbance associated with storm activity). However, if it is intended to suggest risks to marine animals and fishing vessels posed by shipping, then the volume of shipping traffic would be a more appropriate indicator.
- To avoid confusion in interpretation, the most recent five years in the trend lines should be coded a different color from the green/yellow/red coding used in Figures 2.2 and 3.3.