

# Ecosystem Committee Minutes

Tuesday, March 29, 2011 1-4pm  
NPFMC conference room, Old Federal Building, Anchorage, AK

**Committee:** Stephanie Madsen (chair), Bill Karp, Dave Fluharty (teleconference), Jim Ayers (teleconference), Jon Kurland (teleconference), Diana Evans (staff)

**Others attending included:** Matt Eagleton, John Olson, Sarah Ellgen, Bob Foy

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## EFH Omnibus Amendments

The Committee heard an update from staff on the changes that have been made to the public review draft of the EFH Omnibus Amendment package. Mr Kurland provided a brief summary of the NMFS letter recommending action on the Council's EFH actions. The Committee acknowledges the sustained good work by Council, Alaska Region, and Alaska Fishery Science Center staff in shepherding this conclusion to the EFH 5-year review. **The Committee notes that the analysis is ready for decision-making and recommends that the Council move forward with final action on each of the actions identified in the omnibus amendment.** Consistent with the Committee's recommendation in February, the Committee encourages the Council not to hold up the omnibus amendment pending further action on the Bristol Bay red king crab discussion paper (see below).

## EFH / Bristol Bay Red King Crab Discussion Paper

The Committee received a presentation from Dr Bob Foy, of the Kodiak Laboratory of the AFSC, on the discussion paper evaluating the effects of fishing on EFH for Bristol Bay red king crab (BBRKC). The discussion paper follows up on concerns identified by the Crab Plan Team during the EFH 5-year review in 2010. The paper, and the additional information included by Dr Foy in his oral presentation, suggest that there is an area southwest of Amak Island that may be particularly important for rebuilding red king crab populations, due to the fact that eggs released in this area may have a greater chance of survival through larval and juvenile life history stages, compared to eggs released in other parts of Bristol Bay. Trawl fishery interactions with ovigerous female crab in this area may have a disproportionately adverse effect on the red king crab population.

**The Committee recommends that a technical review of a revised discussion paper be undertaken by the Crab Plan Team and the SSC before the Council initiates an action on this issue.** The paper should be expanded to include the new information discussed in Dr Foy's oral presentation, which could be presented at the Crab Plan Team's May meeting. For the Plan Team's September meeting, the discussion paper could be augmented in several ways. Dr Foy noted that survey work is planned for this summer which may provide more information on the location of juveniles in the nearshore. Further work could be undertaken to look specifically at bycatch within and around the Red King Crab Savings Area, and especially to the southwest along the peninsula. Dr Foy is also intending to investigate whether a larval drift model can be run for red king crab larval release in different locations, which may provide key information about the importance of the area southwest of Amak Island for red king crab juvenile survival. The Committee also discussed whether the potential impact of the trawl fishery on crab in this area is a habitat or a bycatch issue, and recommends that this be further developed in the discussion paper. Additionally, the Committee recommended that the authors consult with the preparers of the Ecosystem SAFE report to incorporate information on ecosystem relationships in this area.

**The Committee also encourages the SSC and the Council to consider the research needs identified in the discussion paper in the Council's annual setting of research priorities in October.** The Committee appreciates the work that has been put into the discussion paper, which highlights a potentially important issue for Council consideration.

### **Future direction on ecosystem issues**

The Committee discussed how it might consider some big picture ecosystem issues, and continue to evaluate the Council's ecosystem-based management efforts compared to efforts in other arenas. Dr Karp offered to provide a presentation of interesting and innovative work that is ongoing in Europe, based on his experience with the ICES Science Committee.

The Committee noted that they would like to revisit discussion about the AI FEP, how it is working, and what is its current status. In January 2010, the Committee met with the AI FEP Ecosystem Team, and developed a plan to prepare a presentation on the state of the AI ecosystem and updates to the FEP for the Council. The Committee proposes getting this work back on track, and on the Council's schedule.

The Committee is considering scheduling a meeting in the late summer or early fall to address these issues, as well as to provide continued feedback to the Council on the BBRKC discussion paper.