



Ecosystem Workshop Planning Subgroup

REPORT TO ECOSYSTEM COMMITTEE

January 2022

Subgroup members: Bill Tweit, Rose Fosdick, Stephanie Madsen, Tom Panamaroff; Diana Evans, Kate Haapala (Council staff)

At the October 2020 Council meeting, the Council expressed a continuing interest in understanding and evaluating the impacts of environmental change on Council management of sustainable fisheries, and engaging with stakeholders and coastal communities who are at the front lines witnessing those changes. In 2018, the Council held an Ecosystem Workshop that provided an opportunity for dialogue and exchange of ideas among scientists, managers, and stakeholders. The Council expressed an interest in perhaps convening another workshop at some point, and asked its Ecosystem Committee and Community Engagement Committee to think further and consider a path forward. The Ecosystem Committee took the lead, and convened this group with a subset of Ecosystem Committee members and a member of the Community Engagement Committee to develop a proposal for the Committee and Council.

The subgroup has met throughout 2021, and made progress in articulating a draft theme, goals, and potential structure for the workshop (see Appendix 1 to this report). The subgroup intended for the workshop to occur in early 2022, but given the importance of holding the workshop in-person in order to meet the intended goals, and the continued disruptions resulting from the global pandemic, that date was at first pushed back to October 2022, and now, **the subgroup proposes that the Council postpone holding the workshop in 2022, and instead take an opportunity to step back and regroup.**

That being said, the subgroup continues to believe in the value of an Ecosystem Workshop along the lines initially outlined in the attached proposal (Appendix 1). Particularly in these divisive times, it is all the more important to highlight and create opportunities for the larger community of persons interested in the sustainability of Alaska's waters to have conversations and dialogue about their different knowledge and different views. Even if those conversations are difficult, the opportunity to bring people with different interests together in a neutral, non-threatening environment is a necessary step to reaching mutual understanding. The expected outcome of the workshop is not a policy or regulatory recommendation, but rather, that collaborations and discussion will reduce misunderstanding and build relationships going forward.

The decision to recommend postponing the workshop was largely driven by the uncertainty of travel while still in a pandemic, but other factors also contributed. The planning horizon for an important workshop such as the one being proposed needs to be sufficiently long for prospective participants to plan ahead and budget for travel. Additionally, the subgroup realized that the Council needs to identify a focused problem statement or issue for participants to work on collectively during the workshop. For example, at the first Council Ecosystem Workshop, the emergence of the GOA Pacific cod collapse was the unifying focus. Logistically, Council staff also noted that the Council is hosting the twice-postponed national SSC workshop this August as well, and if both workshops go forward, staff resources for planning will necessarily be divided. The subgroup concurs that time spent in advance planning for this workshop is critical to its success, and should be intentional and thorough.

The subgroup is anxious not to lose the benefit of the planning that has already been undertaken, as the Ecosystem Committee and Council consider how to regroup with respect to hosting a workshop. In addition to the details outlined in the proposal, the subgroup had made progress in beginning to identify

potential speakers and breakout group topics, external opportunities to support travel for participants, and planning informal discussions within the structure of the workshop (including an evening reception).

The subgroup recommends that the Ecosystem Committee take this delay as an opportunity to reflect on how best to regroup and adjust the workshop planning to maximize its ability to achieve the Council's goal of fostering continued dialogue and understanding of concerns around environmental change in Alaska's waters. The subgroup suggests some potential prompts for Ecosystem Committee discussion:

- What should be the problem statement or issue that provides the focus for the workshop?
- Lessons from the WPFMC indicated the potential of hosting a series of small conversations rather than just a single large one. Does it make sense to nest this workshop as one event within an extended time horizon? What would that look like? For example, there is ongoing work with the Council's BS FEP initiatives (LKTKS, Climate change) – might outputs from these initiatives form an opportunity to extend conversations initiated at the workshop?
- Does the current subgroup have a sufficiently broad perspective? At one time, there was a suggestion to expand the subgroup with additional members of the Community Engagement Committee. With a longer time horizon, it may be useful to consider bringing in others.

The subgroup does not have a specific recommendation about a new date for the workshop at this stage. One possibility might be to take the next three or four months to regroup as necessary, and come back to the Council in June 2022 with a revised proposal for the workshop.



North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Simon Kinneen, Chair | David Witherell, Executive Director
 1007 W. 3rd Avenue, Suite 400, Anchorage, AK 99501
 Phone 907-271-2809 | www.npfmc.org

DRAFT UNDER DEVELOPMENT

North Pacific Fishery Management Council Ecosystem Workshop

POSTPONED - DATE TBD

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council is proposing to hold a 1.5 day State of the Ecosystem Workshop in 2022, likely in association with a Council meeting in Anchorage, AK. The workshop would be the second in the Council’s ecosystem workshop series, initiated first in February 2018 in Seattle, WA. The initial workshop focused on the state of western scientific climate change modeling and understanding. This second workshop is intended to focus on the varying perspectives of ecosystem change and how those changes affect fishery-dependent communities, fishermen, subsistence activities and resources, and other parts of the marine ecosystem.

The workshop agenda, schedule, and other materials will be made available through the Council’s website as they are developed and approved by the Council.

What is the theme of the workshop?

The draft theme of the workshop as suggested by the steering group is “Sharing Perspectives of a Changing Ocean Climate”. The theme is intended to invite discussion from multiple perspectives, including traditional knowledge, local knowledge, and western science, on the climate-related changes occurring in the Gulf of Alaska, Bering Sea, and Chukchi and Beaufort Seas where the Council has management jurisdiction.

What are the goals of the workshop?

The second state of the ecosystem workshop has two related goals – to bring together people with different perspectives and knowledge systems to share information and observations about large marine ecosystems, and to build relationships among them. It is hoped that participation will be diverse and include people not necessarily familiar with the Council’s process.

Building upon the recommendations from the Council’s Community Engagement Committee, the goals of the workshop are to:

1. Increase knowledge of both western and local and traditional knowledge of the state of the ecosystem.
2. Build relationships between scientists, traditional and local knowledge holders, industry members, and the Council.
3. Share information about the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, Gulf of Alaska, and Arctic ecosystems.

4. Increase ongoing opportunities for communication about the state of these larger marine ecosystems.

The Council is committed to treating information respectfully, sensitively, and appropriately, including appropriate discussion of risks of participation and ownership of data and information presented. The Council is committed to treating all sources of knowledge, whether documented or undocumented, with the same level of respect, and welcomes participation and knowledge from all parties.

What is the structure of the workshop?

The workshop will include a balance of plenary presentations, small-group breakout sessions, and large group discussions. The primary focus will be on the small group discussions because previous experience showed they had the greatest value to many of the participants. The discussions will be structured to encourage collaboration and discussion between attendees with different experiences and perspectives. To facilitate discussion, attendees will be asked to register so workshop organizers can plan to maximize cooperative participation. Presentations will build the attendees' understanding of traditional and local knowledge, and western scientific understanding of the state of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands, Gulf of Alaska, and Arctic marine ecosystems of Alaska.

The organizing framework throughout each workshop session is to bring forward the three perspectives of Alaska native community members, fishing captains and crew, and western scientists. The workshop agenda will be divided to address the following broad topics, using specific case studies or examples:

- what is the status of the ecosystems today, and where are the urgencies? What do we predict for these trends going into the future?
- what tools do we have to address these concerns, and how can we work together to prepare for this future?

In the opening plenary, three speakers would be invited to set the stage for the workshop by sharing their personal experience of witnessing and working with ecosystem change from the three perspectives: Alaska community members, on-the-water fishermen, and western scientists.

In addition to the formal plenary and facilitated breakout sessions, the intent would be to structure the workshop to allow for informal conversation as well, through seating arrangements, coffee break opportunities, and an evening reception.

Who will attend, and how can the public participate?

The workshop is intended to be an in-person workshop. That intention will be influenced by the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the eventual return to in-person Council meetings. The steering group feels strongly that the workshop must be in-person rather than virtual or online, in order to meet the workshop goal of building relationships and a shared purpose. If the pandemic recovery stalls, the workshop would be delayed until such time as in-person meetings are allowed and appropriate.

The primary audience for the workshop includes members of the Council and its advisory bodies (SSC, AP, committees) and others with knowledge of or interest in the state of the marine ecosystems of Alaska. The workshop will prioritize discussion between the Council and its advisory bodies, and holders of ecosystem traditional, local, and western scientific knowledge. Opportunities for public input will be provided throughout the workshop. To facilitate public discussion amongst different participants, attendees will be asked to register so workshop organizers can plan to maximize cooperative participation. The workshop plenary presentations may be broadcast over the web for listen-only participation.

What are the expected outcomes or next steps?

There is no direct policy or regulatory outcome planned for the workshop. Instead, the ecosystem workshop is anticipated to be the second in a series of workshops designed to bring Council members, fishing industry members, rural and Alaska Native community members, scientists, and the public together to share perspectives, information, concerns, and ideas to address ecosystem and climate changes in the Gulf of Alaska, Bering Sea, and Arctic ecosystems. The organizers hope that the collaborations and discussions that occur during the workshop will continue to provide multiple perspectives and knowledge sources to the Council process.

Although a report from the workshop will be prepared and presented to the Council and public, the steering group hopes that the primary outcome will be the relationships that are created and strengthened by bringing people with differing perspectives together.

Who is planning the workshop?

The Ecosystem workshop is a Council initiative. The Council's Ecosystem Committee is developing the theme, goals, and format for the workshop.