



D3 Programmatic Evaluation

February 2024 Council Meeting

Action Memo

Council Staff: Sara Cleaver

- Action Required:
1. Review discussion paper
 2. Provide initial input and direction on staff questions and clarifications for specific policy language to use in the analysis
 3. Identify any additional information needs that will allow the Council to refine alternative language in October 2024.

BACKGROUND

Beginning in October 2022, the Council, through its Ecosystem Committee, has explored initiating a programmatic evaluation of its fisheries management policies, with specific reference to impacts of climate change on the marine ecosystems and the people who are dependent on those ecosystems. In June 2023, the Council drafted the following action alternative for analysis: adopt a more adaptive (as compared to the status quo management policies in the FMPs) ecosystem-based management policy and objectives for Council-managed fisheries which would enable the Council to develop and implement climate-resiliency tools; new pathways to incorporate indigenous, local, and traditional knowledge; and new tools to assess and adapt to risk in the face of additional uncertainty in stock status and distribution due to climate driven marine ecosystem changes. Since that time, the Council has also developed a four-year plan for enhancing climate resilience in fishery management and governance, under IRA funding. The development of this programmatic evaluation and its associated climate-resilient management policy is one of three main activities under that plan.

Staff are seeking feedback at this meeting on a series of questions or clarifications about how to draft management policy(ies), goals, and objectives to be included in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Groundfish, BSAI king and Tanner crab, Scallop, and Salmon Fishery Management Plans (FMP), and for the halibut fisheries under the Council's jurisdiction. The intent in bringing this before the Council is that the information gathered at this meeting, in conjunction with the Climate Scenario Planning Workshop in June 2024, will provide the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) with adequate information to begin the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Scoping process by drafting and issuing a Notice of Intent (NOI) for the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) over the summer. The NOI is expected to request input from a diverse group of stakeholders and Tribes on the Council's proposed action to revise its fisheries management policies, goals, and objectives.

In October 2024, the Council will review any scoping comments that are received from Tribes and stakeholders, as well as the workshop report, to use in further refinement of alternatives for the programmatic evaluation before staff begin to prepare the analysis for initial review in 2025. At that meeting, the Council is expected to identify specific management policy, goal, and objective language that incorporates climate resiliency, local, traditional, and indigenous knowledge, and capacity to adapt to risk. The Council may wish to consider whether it would be helpful for staff to develop strawman language for the Council to review and revise at the October meeting, based on feedback received at this meeting, at the workshop, and through scoping.