LENFEST OCEAN PROGRAM

SCHOOL OF AQUATIC AND FISHERY SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON
College of the Environment

Task Force Convened on Fisheries and Ecosystems

For more than a decade, scientists have recognized that fisheries management should consider the interconnections between fishing, fished species, humans, and the well-being of the larger marine environment. There is strong support for this approach, known as ecosystem-based fisheries management, but no clear path to implementation.

Recognizing this, the Lenfest Ocean Program has charged a team of scientists with creating a practical blueprint that managers can use to make ecosystem-based fisheries management operational. The Fishery Ecosystem Task Force will hold a series of meetings and provide recommendations in 2016.

ECOSYSTEM-BASED FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

U.S. fisheries management is organized around Fishery Management Plans (FMPs), traditionally focused on a single species or an associated group of species. Fisheries science has in the past been similarly oriented, so the most well-developed methods focus on maintaining individual species at sustainable levels.

Ecosystem-based fisheries management builds on single-species management by accounting for the relationships among all ecosystem components—marine organisms, humans, and the environment—in a holistic, synthetic, integrated fashion. To begin implementing this approach, some regional fishery councils have adopted or are drafting fishery ecosystem plans (FEPs) as a parallel to FMPs. But the plans differ substantially, and there is no standard for what they should contain.

"This Task Force will take the next step in making ecosystem-based fisheries management a reality. We are working closely with managers and stakeholders to ensure our work will be useful and won't just sit on a shelf."

- Tim Essington, Task Force Chair

"We are going to examine Fishery Ecosystem Plans and similar documents from around the globe. There has been a lot of innovation in the U.S. and beyond, and we will stand on the shoulders of this collective wisdom."

- Phil Levin, Task Force Co-Chair

TASK FORCE CHARGE

The Task Force's main output will be an outline of the components of effective FEPs. It will provide a set of specific questions that every FEP should address and a set of recommendations for how each question can be answered. The goal is for managers to be able to do so using existing data and in a way that is useful for their specific management contexts, ecological dynamics, and socioeconomic circumstances.

The group will focus on guidance for U.S. fishery management councils but will also provide a framework that can be adapted by other management bodies. It will meet four times over a two-year period in four regions around the U.S.

LEADERSHIP

The Task Force is led by Timothy Essington, Professor in the School of Aquatic & Fishery Sciences at the University of Washington, and will bring together natural and social scientists. Phil Levin, an ecologist and Senior Scientist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will co-chair the Task Force and chair an advisory panel of managers and NOAA scientists.

ADVISORY PANEL

The Task Force will work closely with an advisory panel to ensure its recommendations are in line with existing data and management structures. This panel will be made up of fishery management council members, NOAA Fisheries managers, and NOAA Fisheries scientists from around the U.S.

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

- Timothy Essington, Chair, University of Washington
- Phillip Levin, Co-Chair, NOAA Northwest Fisheries Science Center
- Lee Anderson, University of Delaware
- Alida Bundy, Bedford Institute of Oceanography
- Courtney Carothers, University of Alaska Fairbanks
- Felicia Coleman, Florida State University
- Jonathan Grabowski, Northeastern University
- Selina Heppell, Oregon State University
- Edward Houde, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science
- Olaf Jensen, Rutgers University
- Christian Möllmann, University of Hamburg
- Kenneth Rose, Louisiana State University
- James Sanchirico, University of California Davis
- Tony Smith, CSIRO Australia

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