

North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Ecosystem Committee
October 29-30, 2015
Minutes

Committee: Bill Tweit (Chairman), Stephanie Madsen, Jeanne Hanson, Steve Ignell, Rose Fosdick, Jim Ayres, John Iani (phone), Dave Benton (phone), Steve MacLean (Council staff), Diana Evans (Council staff), Matt Robinson (Council fellow)

Also attending: Brandee Gerke, Doug Limpinsel, Kerim Aydin, Steve Marx, Dorothy Childers, Nicole Kimball, Trent Hartill, Jon Warrenchuk, Ernie Weiss

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Ecosystem Committee met in Anchorage, AK on October 29-30, 2015 to discuss the development of the Bering Sea FEP discussion paper for presentation to the Council at the December meeting. The committee was also requested by the Council to review and provide comment on the draft NOAA Ecosystem Based Fishery Management policy.

Diana Evans (Council staff) walked the committee through the discussion paper, highlighting changes that had been made since the committee last reviewed the paper in August 2015. Recommendations from the committee had been addressed, and the paper had been restructured to reflect the committee's recommendations from August. The committee noted that much of the work necessary for moving toward EBFM is occurring, and will continue to occur without the development of a Fishery Ecosystem Plan, but that transition will occur without the involvement of the Council. The committee agreed that a primary value of the FEP is that it provides a means for the Council to clearly communicate its vision and priorities for EBFM to NMFS programs and the AFSC. Further, an FEP establishes a transparent, inclusive process that allows for participation of all relevant stakeholders and communicates Council EBFM objectives to the public. The committee noted that the discussion paper includes several sections where questions are raised that are best addressed as the FEP is developed, or as action modules are developed. For instance, the Next Steps section includes selection of a core FEP team; it is not possible at this time to identify individuals or positions that would need to be filled. Rather, these details would be addressed once the FEP is approved and initiated.

Steve Ignell (AFSC) stated that development of an FEP has the full support of the AFSC and the AFSC believes that this research need can be accommodated without diminishing other research activities of high priority to the Council and AKRO.

Significant discussion occurred regarding the four example Action Modules that are described in the discussion paper. The committee stated that the strawman action modules are good examples of the sorts of action modules that are envisioned for development, but note that the four described in the discussion paper are strawman descriptions in various states of completeness, and do not represent all action modules that could be incorporated in a dynamic FEP.

After committee discussion, public comment was provided by John Warrenchuk (Oceana), Brandee Gerke (NMFS), and Steve Marx (Pew Charitable Trusts).

After public comment, the committee approved the following recommendation:

The Ecosystem Committee recommends that the Council proceed with development of a Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan consistent with the framework described in the discussion paper presented to the Council. The committee further recommends that the development of the FEP proceed with

development of the Core FEP, and Action Module 1, Assessment and gap analysis of Council’s EBFM approach against best practices. The committee also requests that the Council authorize the Ecosystem Committee to proceed with addressing the Next Steps identified in the document, specifically providing recommendations on the composition of the Bering Sea FEP team, Terms of Reference for the BS FEP team, and development of an outreach and public involvement plan for developing the FEP with the appropriate Council partners.

The committee reviewed the draft NMFS Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management Policy, and noted that the policy is reflective of the actions and policies already enacted or underway by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and does not identify any areas where this draft policy would cause the Council to change direction. However, the committee noted that there are some sections (e.g., p5, para2, last bullet) that should identify a broader range of stakeholders for inclusion. **The committee recommends that the Council draft a comment letter to NMFS that supports the draft policy, and suggests language that identifies “interested stakeholders” for participation in the process.**

The committee was informed of an upcoming meeting of the Arctic Marine Protected Areas Working Group on November 9-10 at the University of Alaska Anchorage, Gorsuch Commons. Notice of the meeting and an agenda are attached.

The committee identified Tuesday, February 2 for their next meeting, where review of the Groundfish Workplan will be on the agenda.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 on Friday, October 30.