

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Dan Hull, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director



605 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

Telephone (907) 271-2809

Fax (907) 271-2817

Visit our website: <http://www.npfmc.org>

North Pacific Fishery Management Council Ecosystem Committee Minutes February 6, 2018

The NPFMC Ecosystem Committee met on February 6, 2018 from 8 AM to 5:30 PM in Seattle, WA. Committee members present included: Bill Tweit (Co-chairman), Theresa Peterson (Co-chairman), Dave Benton, Stephanie Madsen, Jeremy Rusin, John Iani, Jon Kurland, Rose Fosdick, Jim Ayers, Steve MacLean (Council staff).

Others present included: Diana Evans, Kerim Aydin, Elizabeth Figus, Brandee Gerke, Doug DeMaster, Becca Robbins Gisclair, Megan Peterson, Clem Tillion, Brenden Raymond-Yakoubian, Julie Raymond-Yakoubian, Marian Combes, Lauren Divine, Mike Levine, AnneMarie Eich, Gretchen Harrington, John Benner, Pat Pletnikoff, Stan Senner, Steve Marx, Rachele Daniel, Jon Warrenchuk, Rob Rosenfeld, Harry Lincoln, Fred Phillip, Branden Amasuk, Mateo Paz Soldan, Lori Swanson, Phillip Zavadil, Heather McCarty, Heather Coleman, Sara Cleaver, Jocelyn Runnebaum, and Loren Smoker. Ivonne Ortiz and Stephani Zador listened via telephone.

Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan

The Ecosystem Committee received presentations on the pre-draft Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan from Bering Sea FEP Team co-chairs Diana Evans and Kerim Aydin, and Council staff Elizabeth Figus. The Committee appreciates the progress made by the FEP team on compiling the draft, although it was noted that the Committee did not have a lot of time to review the document in advance as it was not distributed until Friday, February 2nd. The Committee had a lengthy dialogue with staff about the FEP during the presentations, and provided feedback on all sections, with a note that some Committee members will provide some more detailed written feedback following this meeting. The following summarizes some of the major points of discussion and feedback by the Committee for the Team:

- Crosswalk the connection in Chapter 2 between the FEP objectives and how they are addressed in the core FEP and proposed action modules;
- Clearly identify references in the FEP to distinguish discussion of Federal versus State fisheries and include a description of the relationship of Federal and State partners in fishery management;
- Consider rewording the ecosystem objectives section to include a more generic description of “tools in the ecosystem toolbox”, with further work to come on identifying measurable objectives related to the ecosystem goals;
- Clarify that development of appropriate Council responses to changing conditions should occur within the existing Council process (with plan team, SSC, Council review), consistent with the FEP’s intent to be action informing rather than action forcing. Include a diagram or flow chart with examples;
- Consider how the FEP should address issues that are generally not within the Council’s jurisdiction, such as water quality. Potentially consider developing an action module to evaluate available monitoring and how such information would or would not be actionable by the Council;
- Distinguish between the description of subsistence activity and the cultural understanding in BS communities of a subsistence lifestyle;
- Describe how the FEP relates to programmatic groundfish policy objectives for groundfish, especially with respect to assessment of the Council’s existing management approach;

- Consider a periodic retrospective analysis of management that looks at what did and did not work, and actions may warrant further investment;
- Ensure that the Alaska regional EBFM implementation plan (under development) and the FEP are consistent, and specifically include a need to incorporate LTK into the ecosystem assessment process;
- Revise the subsistence action module to include a first priority to improve the Council’s methods for addressing LTK in the short- to long-term, and develop a methodology to improve information on subsistence activity in management analyses;
- Augment the LTK discussion in the core FEP to consider the three areas previously referenced by the Ecosystem Committee: a basic understanding of LTK principles as part of EBFM, consistent inclusion of LTK in the description of the BS ecosystem, and the action module discussion;
- Consider including the example of using LTK as an early warning system for ecosystem change in partnership with western science (e.g., sea lions on St Lawrence Island) as an illustration of LTK as a citizen science role;
- Add a clear description of the function and intent of action modules as compared to the core FEP;
- Rename the research tracking action module to reflect a broader intent to better align Council research priorities with other research funding opportunities, and ensure that the module does not focus exclusively on the NPRB, but includes other funding bodies.

The Ecosystem Committee requests that staff continue to work on the FEP document and incorporate the Committee’s comments (both from the summary above and additional detail during the meeting) into the core FEP document and changes to the action modules. The Committee also discussed the current timeline for bringing a review draft of the FEP to the Council. Staff confirmed that the eventual intent is for the Council to approve the FEP. There is no regulatory action that would result from adopting the FEP. Rather, the Council would be approving a framework to provide guidance on Bering Sea ecosystem-based management issues, and potentially forming a standing FEP team to assist in maintaining the FEP as a living framework. The Committee, however, is concerned about rushing to get to a preliminary draft of the FEP, and suggests that Council and public review of the FEP will benefit from additional staff time to address Ecosystem Committee comments. **The Committee recommends that the Council delay review of the preliminary draft FEP, to either June or October,** depending on the Council’s schedule. **Finally, the Committee requests additional opportunity to review and provide feedback on the revised FEP document before it is distributed to the Council.**

Process to facilitate ecosystem input from Bering Sea communities

The Committee received presentations from Mr. Pat Pletnikoff, Mr. Phillip Zavadil, and Dr. Lauren Divine providing perspectives on ecosystem issues from the Pribilof Island communities. Community members and representatives expressed their concerns about declines of northern fur seals, seabirds, and other subsistence resources. There was significant discussion about various ways to integrate and incorporate traditional knowledge in the Council process. Speakers introduced the concept of co-production of knowledge to the committee, a new concept for most on the committee. Co-production of knowledge was explained as a structured process to involve indigenous people in science from the beginning of the process. Committee co-chairman Tweit noted that the co-production concept appeared to be a structured partnership that takes advantage of the strengths of each partner, and asked presenters their thoughts of how this concept could be applied to the Council process. Pribilof community members suggested that identifying the barriers to full partnership, and addressing ways to address those barriers was the first step, and that the “dominant culture” must recognize that there is value in the other culture in the partnership, and be willing to accept the knowledge that the other culture brings. Committee members requested that an example of co-production of knowledge be provided to demonstrate how the process could work in the Council management process. Committee members also discussed the possibility of a workshop or project to explore the co-production concept, and others encouraged the Agency to consider

a workshop outside the Council process, and allow the Council staff and Bering Sea FEP Team to continue development of the FEP.

The Committee thanks the community representatives for their presentations and the excellent points of discussion they raised. The Committee notes that some of the points are likely to be useful to the FEP process, and noted that others should be discussed in a broader context, and reported to the Committee and Council at a point in the future.

Arctic Exploratory Fisheries

The Committee reviewed a discussion paper concerning provisions for exploratory fisheries in Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs) from around the world. In June 2017, the Council requested that staff produce a discussion paper that reviews international RFMO provisions regarding exploratory fisheries, including definitions of exploratory fisheries, management provisions, ‘best practices’ and challenges. The Council stated in its motion, its intent to amend the Arctic FMP to incorporate guidance on exploratory fishing that would inform the Council’s precautionary approach to opening commercial fisheries in the Arctic.

The Committee had an extensive and enthusiastic discussion about the Council motion’s stated intention to amend the Arctic FMP to address exploratory fisheries. There was general agreement that there is no need to amend the Arctic FMP to address exploratory fisheries. Committee members noted that the Arctic FMP section 2.2.2 specifically addresses requirements and the process for authorizing fisheries in the Arctic, although one committee member noted that the Section 2.2.2 does not, specifically, address exploratory fisheries or Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs). Ultimately, after substantial discussion **the committee unanimously recommended that the Council take no action to amend the Arctic FMP to include exploratory fishing provisions.**

The Committee also discussed whether it was useful to amend the discussion paper, despite the recommendation that the Council take no action to amend the FMP. Some committee members stated that because the ecosystem committee is recommending that no action be taken to address exploratory fishing in the Arctic Management Area, the appropriate response would be to take no further action on the paper. Another committee member recommended additions and revisions to the paper. It was stated that Council staff should not spend any more time on revising the paper if the Council takes no further action, but there was opportunity for experts on the Committee to add to the paper, if they wished. The committee noted that the discussion paper is useful as a reference paper if and when the Council chooses to amend the FMP to address exploratory fisheries in the future, or if NMFS receives any requests to authorize exploratory fisheries in the interim, and suggested that it would be useful for staff to continue to amend the discussion paper. After discussion, **the committee unanimously recommended that committee members David Benton and Jon Kurland work with staff to amend the paper and bring it back to the Ecosystem Committee for additional consideration.**

The Committee was not able to address the northern fur seal conservation plan due to a lack of time. The agenda item will be addressed at a later committee meeting.