



Ecosystem Committee REPORT

4 June 2019, Sitka, AK

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Ecosystem Committee (ECO) met in Sitka, AK on 4 June 2019 to review the Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan Team report, draft workplans for the Climate Change and TK/LK and Subsistence Action Modules, recommendations for Action Module Task Force membership requirements, a workshop on non-fishing impact assessment for Essential Fish Habitat planned by the CCC Habitat Workgroup, and the committee's 3-year outlook.

Committee Members in attendance:

Bill Tweit (Co-chair)

Theresa Peterson (Co-chair)

Jim Ayers

Stephanie Madsen

Anne Marie Eich (For

Gretchen Harrington)

Dave Fluharty (ph)

Jeremy Rusin (ph)

Dave Benton (ph)

Steve MacLean (Council
staff)

Members absent: Rose Fosdick, John Iani

Others in attendance:

Diana Evans

Kerim Aydin

Jennifer Hooper

Wes Losberger

Maggie Mooney-Seus

Jessie Gordon

Mary Beth Julie

Sarah Cleaver

Julie Raymond-Yakoubian

Brenden Raymond-

Yakoubian

Raychelle Daniel

Darcy Peter

Sally Bibb

Keth Rooten

Becca Robbins Gisclair

Tom Gemmell

Keith Criddle

Megan Mackey

Marissa Merculieff

Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan

Diana Evans (Council staff) and Dr. Kerim Aydin (AFSC), co-chairs of the Bering Sea FEP Team, provided a report on May 6-7 Bering Sea FEP Team meeting held in Seattle, WA. Presentations included an overview of the FEP Team report and workplans for the LK/TK and Subsistence, and Climate Change action modules approved by the Council, FEP objectives and indicators, and an overview of the climate change action module.

The ECO expressed appreciation for all the work the FEP Team has done to continue the progress of the FEP.

There was considerable discussion by the ECO during and after the presentations by Ms. Evans and Dr. Aydin. One of the committee members was concerned about apparently new research programs associated with the climate change action module and expressed that there should be more transparency in the work being conducted at AFSC that is related to the FEP action modules. Some of the work is related to recent environmental conditions and ecological responses (e.g., GOA cod in 2017) and are intended to formalize novel work developed at the Science Center and create products available to the public. Later

there was a suggestion that a joint meeting between the FEP Team, AFSC scientists, and the ECO could allow the perspectives from the sectors represented by the ECO to be delivered to the Team and prevent ECO members and constituents from being blindsided by new, unfamiliar research from the AFSC. One committee member noted that the ecosystem workshop hosted by the Council in February 2018 served that same purpose. Another committee member noted that it is not the intent of the AFSC to surprise anyone as they develop novel approaches to benefit the Council and other stakeholders. Understanding transparency concerns is critical to avoiding blindsiding constituents.

Another committee member noted that some indicators identified by the FEP Team were not funded for monitoring by the agency in 2019. Dr. Aydin agreed that it was unfortunate that some work was unfunded, but the indicator list is a preliminary effort that will allow the FEP Team to prioritize which indicators are tracked. One committee member expressed concern about “grading” ecosystem indicators stating that placing values on indicators could result in the FEP become action forcing, rather than action informing, as intended. There was also concern expressed about the timing of some meetings and review of some FEP Team products by other bodies before the Council has opportunity for review. It was stated that one of the values of the FEP to the Council is its use as a tool for having a strong investment in the work of the AFSC to advance EBFM, and its use for the Council to control the pace and maintain synchrony between the AFSC and Council to advance EBFM practices in the North Pacific.

The ECO asked, and Dr. Aydin confirmed that the FEP Team Terms of Reference that require regular briefings to the Council include the ECO as part of those briefings. The ECO also asked, and Dr. Aydin confirmed that mention of “management” in the FEP ToR, report, and action module workplans refers to fishery management rather than FEP or action module project management. The ECO also noted that there should be some way in the action module workplans to ensure that the work of the action module task force remains within the bounds established for the action modules by the Council. Concern was raised that Management Strategy Evaluations (MSEs) developed by the Task Forces could become action forcing. It was noted that ACLIM has MSEs built into it, and for that reason the Task Forces should not be developing MSEs.

The ECO appreciated the rationale provided to break out LK, TK, and subsistence in the LK/TK/Subsistence action module and agreed with that. The ECO also agreed with the 1/3 TK, 1/3 LK, and 1/3 subsistence representation on the action module task force.

After discussion the ECO provided opportunity for public comment. Public comment was provided by Dr. Julie Raymond-Yakoubian (Kawerak).

In response to public comment there was ECO discussion about the language in the FEP Team ToR regarding membership on the FEP Team. It was noted that the language in the ToR is the same as was included when the FEP Team was formed and matches the language for other Council Plan Teams. Because the FEP Team is already formed, there is no need to put out a call for nominations. When FEP Team members are replaced the notice for nominations will apply consistent consideration of “government entities” and “tribally-affiliated members”. It was specifically noted that task force membership is less restrictive than for Plan Teams and allows for tribally-affiliated members.

After discussion the ECO approved the following recommendations by consensus:

1. The Ecosystem Committee suggests that the Council approve the Bering Sea FEP Team Terms of Reference, after they are revised to clarify that the term “management” in the first bullet under the “Outreach and Communication” heading references getting feedback on the fishery management process as relevant to the Bering Sea FEP.
2. The Ecosystem Committee recommends that the Council approve the workplans for the Climate Change and TK/LK and Subsistence modules in principal with the following revisions:
 - Both workplans should be revised to reflect a more narrow focus and a 2-3 year schedule.
 - Remove appendices from both workplans since they are no longer needed.

3. The Ecosystem Committee concurs with the BS FEP Team recommendations for qualifications for both Action Module Task Forces. The Ecosystem Committee recommends that Action Module Task Force members should be appointed by the Council chairman after consultation with other organizations and groups, as necessary.
4. The Ecosystem Committee recommends that the Council request that the annual updates from the AFSC Director should include both funding updates and updates on new and ongoing fishery and ecosystem research. In the event that the Council hosts another ecosystem workshop, the Ecosystem Committee recommends that that information should also be provided during the workshop.
5. The Ecosystem committee recommends that when the Council takes up research priorities they should consider inviting research institutions in addition to the AFSC to provide an update on fishery and ecosystem research being conducted at their institutions.

CCC Habitat Workgroup EFH workshop

Steve MacLean (Council staff) provided a brief report on plans for the CCC Habitat Workgroup to hold a workshop concerning non-fishing impacts on EFH in Portland, OR in August 2019. The workshop was proposed based on the success of the larger EFH Summit held in 2016, but is intended to be a much smaller, technical workshop for EFH practitioners from Councils and NOAA Regional Offices. The workshop is an opportunity for Council and NOAA staff to discuss and compare methods and practices to evaluate the impacts of non-fishing activities on EFH in their regions.

3-Year Committee Outlook

The ECO continued the discussion of the 3-year committee outlook. Dave Benton provided an update on the International Arctic fisheries agreement. Mr. Benton also provided information about a workshop hosted by Canada on how indigenous Arctic people will be incorporated into the agreement.

The ECO determined that additional updates to the 3-year outlook are not necessary at this time. They proposed the next Ecosystem Committee meeting for a full day in December 2019 or February 2020. Topics highlighted for potential future review included: FEP updates, Arctic international fisheries, aquatic invasive species research associated with vessel traffic, northern fur seal updates, and EFH updates and research.