



North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Ecosystem Committee REPORT

05 April 2023 8:30am – 4:30pm (AKT)

Hybrid: In-person Hilton Hotel, Anchorage; Virtual via Zoom

[eAgenda](#)

The Committee met to discuss the Programmatic EIS planning and to draft an initial Purpose and Need statement.

Committee Members in attendance:

Bill Tweit, Chair (in-person)	Dave Benton (in-person)	Dave Fluharty (remote)
Gretchen Harrington (in-person)	Jeremy Rusin (remote)	Jim Ayers (remote)
John Iani (in-person)	Rose Fosdick (in-person)	Stephanie Madsen (in-person)
Theresa Peterson (in-person)	Nicole Watson (NPFMC staff)	

Members absent: *none, all present*

Agency and Council Staff attending included: David Witherell, Diana Evans, Kate Haapala, Sara Cleaver, Alicia Miller, Bridget Ferris, Bridget Mansfield, Kerim Aydin, Molly Watson

Public attending included: Angela Kamkoff, Brenden Raymond-Yakoubian, Chris Tran, Ernie Weiss, Frank Kelty, Glenn Merrill, Heather McCarty, Ivonne Ortiz, Jim Balsiger, Jimmy R. Hurley Sr., Karen Gillis, Kristin Stahl Johnson, Lauren Divine, Margaret Westlock Harpak, Mateo Paz-Soldan, Mellisa Johnson, Michael LeVine, Nicole Kimball, Paul Olson, Raychelle Aluaq Daniel, Steve Marx, Terese Schomogyi, Tom Gemmell, Virgil Neketz, William Stockhausen

The Chair opened the meeting with a discussion of the agenda and adjustments for time constraints over the course of the day for Committee members.

Programmatic EIS

Following the January Ecosystem Committee meeting, a [discussion prompt](#) questionnaire was distributed using the eAgenda, an email blast, and Google form as one means to solicit public input during the early stages of considering the revision of the Groundfish management policy. Email blast recipients were attendees of recent Ecosystem Committee meetings. Staff collated and distributed the responses to the Ecosystem Committee members which were presented during the beginning of this April 2023 meeting. These responses can be found on the [eAgenda](#).

The Committee appreciated the information provided in the feedback and the work evident in the process. Committee members provided their comments which included the need for forward progress in a timely manner, the importance of comprehensive public engagement, the need to integrate LKTK and ecosystem components, the rapid rate of change and challenges of climate change, and the changing and unpredictability of the ecosystem.

Following their review of this input, the Committee had a broad discussion regarding the overall need of the re-examination of the programmatic review, the concerns relating to environmental and ecosystem changes, the appropriate scope of the policy (only Groundfish or policy-wide covering all managed

species), and the need for comprehensive scoping and public engagement. Additional discussion included the relevancy of the current programmatic and the solid foundation that it has and continues to provide. Committee members acknowledged the high variability, rapid rate of change, and nonstationarity of the ecosystem and agreed that there is a need to balance urgency and the need for inclusion of stakeholders.

The overall structure of this Committee meeting was designed to allow comprehensive dialogue between Committee members and stakeholders. The Committee appreciates the detailed level of conversation and public input that occurred throughout this meeting covering the scope and vision of the programmatic. Mellisa Johnson (AYK Tribal Consortium), Mike LeVine (Ocean Conservancy), Lauren Divine (Aleut Community of St. Paul), Kristin Stahl Johnson (Marine Conservation Council), and Steve Marx (Pew Charitable Trusts) provided oral testimony. Their comments included the challenges communities are currently facing due to climate change, declining salmon populations and in other fisheries, bycatch, the importance of collaboration and comprehensive scoping, the rapid rate of change, incorporation of LKTK, and advancing ecosystem-based fishery management practices. Additional discussion focused on the scope of the programmatic: if it should only encompass the management of Groundfish, take a more comprehensive and policy-wide approach, or if it should exclude the Arctic region due to the uniqueness of this region.

Written comment was received by Vivian Korthuis (Association of Village Council Presidents), Kevin Whitworth (Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission), Becca Robbins Gisclair (Ocean Conservancy), Loretta Brown (SalmonState), Steve Marx (Pew Charitable Trusts), Paul Olson (The Boat Company), Brenden Raymond-Yakoubian (Kawerak), Kristin Stahl Johnson (OceanPeople Resources), and Chris Tran (Aleut Community of St. Paul).

Following review of comments provided to the Committee, and with public comment at this meeting in hand, the Committee developed an initial draft of a Purpose and Need statement. **The Committee acknowledged the need to provide time for additional input and review of this initial draft [Purpose and Need](#) statement before submitting a draft for Council consideration.** Additionally, **the Committee began a discussion of a range of alternatives and described its interest in receiving input on potential alternatives for the management policy before developing an initial draft of alternatives for Council consideration.** The Committee discussed options for seeking additional input from as broad a range as possible which included a comprehensive email blast, inclusion in the upcoming Newsletter, and emailing Tribal entities.

Scheduling

A brief closing discussion included scheduling an upcoming hybrid meeting for May 8th from 8:30am – 4:30pm Alaska time. This next meeting will focus on refining the initial draft Purpose and Need and developing a range of alternatives for the Programmatic EIS.