

Public Testimony Sign-Up Sheet


Agenda Item D-4 AI FEP

	NAME (PLEASE PRINT)	AFFILIATION
1	Dave Benton	MCA
2	Chris Krenz	Oceana
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NOTE to persons providing oral or written testimony to the Council: Section 307(1)(I) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act prohibits any person "to knowingly and willfully submit to a Council, the Secretary, or the Governor of a State false information (including, but not limited to, false information regarding the capacity and extent to which a United State fish processor, on an annual basis, will process a portion of the optimum yield of a fishery that will be harvested by fishing vessels of the United States) regarding any matter that the Council, Secretary, or Governor is considering in the course of carrying out this Act.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Chris Oliver 
Executive Director

DATE: May 29, 2007

SUBJECT: Aleutian Islands Fishery Ecosystem Plan

ESTIMATED TIME: 1 HOUR

ACTION REQUIRED

Review and approve AI Fishery Ecosystem Plan.

BACKGROUND

The Aleutian Islands Fishery Ecosystem Plan (AI FEP) was mailed to the Council in mid May. The AI FEP Table of Contents is attached as the end of this action memo. The FEP is a guidance document, and is intended to be an educational tool and resource that can provide the Council with both an 'early warning system', and an ecosystem context to decisions affecting the Aleutian Islands area. The Council has summarized the goal of the FEP with the following statement:

The goal of this FEP is to provide enhanced scientific information and measurable indicators to evaluate and promote ecosystem health, sustainable fisheries, and vibrant communities in the Aleutian Islands region.

The AI FEP looks holistically at the AI ecosystem, at the relationships between the different fisheries, physical and biological characteristics of the ecosystem, human communities, and other socio-economic activities ongoing in the area. The FEP demonstrates that the interactions and relationships within the AI area are clearly distinct from neighboring ecosystems. Understanding the ecosystem context of the AI should help the Council better evaluate fishery management decisions affecting the area.

In summary, the FEP:

- describes and synthesizes the Aleutian Islands ecosystem processes and interactions,
- delineates the regulatory and bio-physical boundaries of the Aleutian Islands,
- conducts a qualitative risk assessment of AI interactions,
- uses management objectives of Aleutian Islands fisheries to identify Council priorities for the FEP,
- identifies ecological indicators appropriate to monitor key ecosystem interactions,
- identifies knowledge gaps and research needs,
- provides a framework by which ecosystem considerations identified herein could be implemented within the current Council structure and management practice.

The Ecosystem Committee has reviewed the FEP, and provided recommendations for the Council in their minutes (**Item D-4(a)**). The Committee recommends that the Council adopt the FEP at this meeting, and has suggested minor changes to the document.

One change recommended by the Ecosystem Committee was to broaden the existing “Interaction R” to look at impacts from coastal infrastructure and development. **Item D-4(b)** reflects this request.

The FEP was written by the AI Ecosystem Team, whose membership is listed below. The Team will make further edits to the FEP as suggested by the Ecosystem Committee and others. The Team also intends to produce a glossy synthesis of the FEP, once it is adopted. Once these tasks are completed, the Team’s remit ends. In their minutes, the Ecosystem Committee has recommended to keep the Team active, and has identified specific purposes for the Team.

The Council also requested that the Team consult with communities within and nearby the ecosystem area. Meeting notes from the Dutch Harbor meeting were provided at the April Council meeting. The Adak meeting took place on May 22, and meeting notes are attached (**Item D-4(c)**). The Team attempted to hold a community meeting in Atka on May 11, but was unable to do so due to weather problems.

Aleutian Islands Ecosystem Team

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Kerim Aydin | National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Fisheries Science Center |
| Steve Barbeaux | National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Fisheries Science Center |
| Forrest Bowers | Alaska Department of Fish and Game |
| Vernon Byrd | United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Region |
| Diana Evans | North Pacific Fishery Management Council |
| Sarah Gaichas | National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Fisheries Science Center |
| Carol Ladd | NOAA, Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory |
| Sandra Lowe | National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Fisheries Science Center |
| John Olson | National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Regional Office |
| Jennifer Sepez | National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Fisheries Science Center |
| Paul Spencer | National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Fisheries Science Center |
| Francis Wiese | North Pacific Research Board |

AI FEP Table of Contents

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Purpose of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan
- 1.2 Scope and role of the FEP
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 - BSAI King and Tanner Crab FMP
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- Appendix C Species listed under the Endangered Species Act
- Appendix D Food web interaction strength tables
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- Appendix F Research activity in the AI

Ecosystem Committee Minutes

Monday, May 21, 2007 1pm-5pm

Traynor Room, Building 4, AFSC, Seattle, WA

Videoconference sites: NMFS Alaska Region offices, Anchorage and Juneau

Committee: Stephanie Madsen (chair), David Benton, David Fluharty, Jim Ayers, Jon Kurland, Diana Evans (staff)

AI Ecosystem Team: Steve Barbeaux, Forrest Bowers, Sarah Gaichas, Carol Ladd, Sandra Lowe, John Olson, Francis Wiese

Others participating included: Jennifer Boldt, Melanie Brown, Steve Davis, Kristy Despars, Tony Ellison, Ben Enticknap, Roy Hyder, Peter Jones, Chris Krenz, Joe McCabe, John Moller, Ivonne Ortiz, Chris Oliver, Tom Van Pelt, Dave Witherell

The Committee reviewed the Aleutian Islands Fishery Ecosystem Plan. Members of the Aleutian Islands Ecosystem Team discussed the FEP with the Committee, and presented the new chapters of the document, including implications for management resulting from the qualitative risk assessment. Dr Jennifer Boldt updated the Committee on how the FEP indicators will be incorporated into the annual Ecosystem Considerations report. The Committee developed the following recommendations.

The Committee recommends that the Council adopt the AI FEP at the June meeting, with some minor changes. Overall, the Committee believes that the FEP provides a new and holistic perspective on the Aleutian Islands ecosystem that will help guide fishery management decisions regarding the area. The Committee emphasizes that the FEP is a living document, and should not be considered a final product. While the FEP as it is now can inform the management and scientific process, it represents one stage of a stepwise process. As such, the FEP should be reviewed on an annual basis.

The Committee suggests some rewriting of the socioeconomic and regulatory interactions. The discussions in some of these interactions should be more explicitly tied to the FEP's goal statement to "promote ecosystem health, sustainable fisheries, and vibrant communities". Additionally, Interaction R, "Changes in commercial seafood processing capabilities in the AI fishery ecosystem impact fisheries and communities", should be broadened to include all coastal infrastructure and development impacts (for example, harbor improvements and upland development). The existing writeup under Interaction R fits more appropriately with the community sustainability discussion (Interaction Q).

Section 6.5 of the FEP provides a list of research priorities identified during the development of the FEP. **The Committee recommends that the research priorities are folded in to the Council's overall research priorities and forwarded to the appropriate research and funding entities.**

The AI Ecosystem Team's remit ends with the final edits to the FEP document, and the preparation of the glossy FEP synthesis that will be put together over the summer. **The Committee recommends that the Council keep the AI Ecosystem Team active, with the same membership.** In order for the FEP to serve an effective role in the Council management process, there needs to be a designated group to coordinate the FEP's utility. The Team would have the following tasks. First, the Team would complete the FEP, and refine it on a periodic basis as new information becomes available. Second, the Team would bring forward the assessment of FEP indicators and AI modeling to the Plan Teams on an annual basis. Third, the Team would report to the SSC with regard to the FEP indicators and updates to the document.

Fourth, the Team would serve as a conduit for the Council to provide AI FEP information to other agencies, through the Alaska Marine Ecosystem Forum.

The Committee will continue to work with the Team to review FEP progress, and provide feedback to the Team and the Council. The FEP also includes ideas about how the Council could move forward with formally integrating ecosystem-based management and mitigating risks associated with management. Specifically, the FEP suggests the Council further develop the concept of 'ecosystem health' referred to in the goal statement. **The Committee offers to begin the task of defining desirable or undesirable states of the ecosystem as a first step.**

The Committee agrees with the Team's recommendation to use and refine the AI FEP before embarking on FEPs for other Alaska regions. At the same time, **the Committee suggests that the Council revisit the question of whether to initiate other FEPs in Alaska next year.**

The Committee also urges the Council to continue to actively engage in the Alaska Marine Ecosystem Forum. The FEP demonstrates the interconnectivity of fishery activities with other actions ongoing in the ecosystem area. It is important for the Council to interact with other agencies, to find out about issues affecting fishery resources, and to share information.

NEW - Interaction R: Coastal infrastructure and development impact the ecosystem and communities.

Coastal development in the Aleutian Islands includes activities in the upland, estuarine, and marine environments. Those activities include creation and expansion of ports and harbor facilities, point and non-point source pollution, seafood processing waste, oil and gas exploration and development, marine mining, placement of utility and telecommunications lines, marine dredging and disposal of fill material, vessel operations, transportation and navigation, road construction, streambank modification and shoreline erosion, waste treatment, and sand and gravel mining.

Estuaries are the bays and inlets influenced by both the ocean and rivers, and they serve as the transition zone between freshwater and saltwater (Botkin et al. 1995). Estuaries support a community of plants and animals that are adapted to the zone where freshwater and saltwater mix (Zedler et al. 1992). Estuarine habitats fulfill fish and wildlife needs for reproduction, feeding, refuge, and other physiological necessities (Simenstad et al. 1991, Good 1987, Phillips 1984). Estuaries often include eelgrass beds that protect young fish from predators, provide habitat for fish and wildlife, improve water quality, and control sediments (Johnson et al. 2003, Thayer et al. 1984, Hoss and Thayer 1993, Phillips 1984). In addition, mud flats, high salt marsh, and saltmarsh creeks also provide productive shallow-water habitat for epibenthic fishes and decapods (Sogard and Able 1991).

Coastal or marine habitats comprise a variety of broad habitat types for fish species, including sand bottoms, rocky reefs, and submarine canyons. When rock reefs support kelp stands, they become exceptionally productive. Relative to other habitats, including wetlands, shallow and deep sand bottoms, and rock bottom, giant kelp habitats are substantially more productive in the fish communities they support (Bond et al. 1999). The stands provide nurseries, feeding grounds, and/or shelter to a variety of groundfish species and their prey (Feder et al. 1974, Ebeling et al. 1980).

Risk Assessment

Summary Ratings: Probability – low, Ecosystem impact – low, Economic impact – medium
Geographic scale – local, Time scale – less than 10 years

Probability: Although many forms of coastal development can have an effect on marine resources, the opportunity for development in an extremely remote environment minimizes the probability of impacts.

Ecological impact: Limited local effects may occur; however, impacts at an ecosystem scale are low.

Economic impact: To the extent that development affects local water quality, estuarine, or marine habitat, communities may be impacted adversely. At the same time, such coastal development may also contribute to the sustainability of such communities.

Geographic scale: Local.

Time scale: Effects of any activities would be longer term, as most development is intended to persist.

Implications for Management

What is the risk?

Coastal development activities have the potential to adversely affect the quantity or quality of estuarine and marine systems. Broad categories of such activities include, but are not limited to, mining, dredging, fill, impoundment, discharge, water diversions, thermal additions, actions that contribute to nonpoint source pollution and sedimentation, introduction of potentially hazardous materials, introduction of exotic species, and the conversion of aquatic habitat that may eliminate, diminish, or disrupt the functions of fish habitat.

How is the Council addressing the risk right now?

The Essential Fish Habitat Environmental Impact Statement analyzed non-fishing impacts on the Aleutian Islands (NMFS 2005: Appendix G). Initial steps to address any risk associated with such impacts have been taken by the Council. The Council requested regular updates on coastal development from the Habitat Conservation Division of NMFS. The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires NMFS to recommend conservation measures to federal and state agencies regarding actions that would adversely affect EFH. These EFH conservation recommendations are advisory, not mandatory, and may include measures to avoid, minimize, mitigate, or otherwise offset the adverse effects to EFH. Within 30 days of receiving NMFS' conservation recommendations, federal action agencies must provide a detailed response in writing. The response must include measures proposed for avoiding, mitigating, or offsetting the impact of a proposed activity on EFH. State agencies are not required to respond to EFH conservation recommendations. If a federal action agency chooses not to adopt NMFS' conservation recommendations, it must provide an explanation. Examples of federal action agencies that permit or undertake activities that may trigger EFH consultation include, but are not limited to, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and Department of the Navy.

What would be ways to consider any risk identified, and mitigate this risk?

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council may choose to comment on proposed actions that may adversely affect EFH.

Indicators

Indicators from Ecosystem Considerations chapter	Indicators not in chapter for which data is available	Indicators for which data not available
Habitat permit reviews from NMFS-HCD		Habitat impacted by coastal development

Data Gaps / Research Needed

Effects of coastal development on managed and non-managed species.

Adak AIFEP Community Meeting Notes
Tuesday May 22, 2007
Adak Community Center 5:30 pm

DRAFT MEETING NOTES

Comments on the Ecosystem Plan

- Hate to have our area (the Aleutians) be the guinea pigs for the first Fishery Ecosystem Plan the Council is doing. Should start somewhere where there aren't so many variables.
- The data from the chart in the ecosystem plan doesn't contain fisheries data for Adak because the fishery hadn't started out here yet. So it doesn't represent the current state of the ecosystem.
- Would be good to have volume and value of catch separated by off shore and on shore and separated by processed in Aleutian Islands ecosystem processing and outside processing.
- With one processor each in Adak and Atka, onshore processing figures for communities in Aleutian Islands ecosystem can't be released because of confidentiality requirements.
- A lot of our Aleutian fisheries are in state waters because we don't have the big bench.
- Mackerel is pretty much off shore, but in cod probably 30% of the cod is caught inside state waters.
- We don't want to be left out of the process. We need it to survive as a community.

Additional Ways the Aleutian Ecosystem is Different from Bering Sea or Gulf of Alaska

- Need to look deeper for halibut here. Survey methods treat this area the same as the Gulf of Alaska, but here the halibut are deeper. We have them below 200 fathoms. So these are not counted in the surveys.
- Gulf will have more problems with temperature change or climate change than us because our fish can just go deeper. Their fish can't go deeper and they can't go north either.
- Our cod school up a month later than the eastern Aleutian Islands.
- Killer whales love to eat black cod near Dutch Harbor. Now they are eating the halibut too. Here, they just pass us on by.

Developing and Supporting an Adak Small Boat Fishery

- Here's a community with all these abundant resources at it doorstep and how many resources are getting through the door?
- We are trying to develop as a fishing community.
- We need our own cod TAC separate from the Bering Sea.
- Since the cod quota for the Bering Sea and the Aleutian Islands is combined and they school up in the Bering Sea first, the quota was all gone and nobody had

even fished here for pot cod. They took it all in the Bering Sea and Eastern Aleutians. The cod school up a month earlier over there. If it were separated and opened out here a month later, that would give us a fair chance. This is for all gear groups of p-cod.

- A-season cod opened in January, first landing here was in late January, but we usually don't get any boats until February. The fish aren't schooled up here yet. Pot cod closes first week of February so we get none out here.
- Previously what has stopped the small boat fishery here is travel time to Dutch Harbor, but now we can develop it since the community is here and the processor is here.
- Our fuel prices are higher than Dutch. They fuel up over there and fish out here. Our fishermen have to buy stuff here and are at a disadvantage. They can buy their groceries over there or in Seattle. If shipping does increase in the area, maybe we can get a barge service here.
- Crew changes do happen here for the off shore sector, but they don't stay. They are in and out in one day. They don't spend any money. Unless there's a problem with the plane. Then this is their party town.
- We can go to the Board of Fish to try to get a focused fishery, but we haven't been as successful as we'd like. They've made some fish available, but without limits to vessel length or shoreside processing.
- Well financed operations from Seattle are the biggest obstacle to us in having our issues and concerns heard in the federal process.
- It's hard to compete against the Seattle interests.

Marine Mammal issues

- Will Steller sea lion (SSL) areas get cut back? A big portion of our area is closed because of that. Can we get more fishing area?
- We're stuck with a pollock allocation that is supposed to help us, but all of the fish are in Steller sea lion critical habitat.
- I probably eat more pollock than Steller sea lion eat pollock out here. They eat other things out here. It even says so in the presentation (see slide titled "Why at Samalga Pass" which says the Aleutian Islands Steller sea lion diet is "Mostly Atka mackerel" while the Bering Sea Steller sea lion diet is "Mixed, pollock." And see Figure 3-17 of the May 17 draft of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan.
- Will sea otter protections affect us out here?
- The killer whales are responsible for depressing the sea otter populations.
- Are they the transient kind that only eats marine mammals? A big male killer whale comes in and hangs out in Finger Bay.
- People report seeing killer whales hunt sea lions and sea otters, near Adak, in Finger Bay, and in Kodiak.
- Killer whales can't get into Clam Lagoon, that's why there are sea otters there.
- The sea lions are starting to come back to Atka and Nikolski.
- Otters are there in Dutch Harbor now, but they never were there.
- Aleut's don't eat otters. Did you ever skin one? It looks like a human. But not much meat on them. Hardly any fat on them.

- Sea lions are more a nuisance because they're increasing. But no one in Adak really hunts them anymore, except for one guy.
- Nothing better than some barbequed seal rib. Sea lion too.

Adak Community Meeting Sign-In Sheet

Presentation and discussion: Dr. Jennifer Sepez, Alaska Fisheries Science Center and Aleutian Islands Fishery Ecosystem Plan Team.

Rod Whitehead, FV Larisa M

Bernardo Diaz, Adak Fisheries

Michael Swetzof, Adak Fisheries

Dave Fraser, Adak Fisheries

Esther Bennett, Adak Fisheries, subsistence user

Richard Koso, Local Business, fisherman

Mike Downs, EDAW, NPFMC Contractor

Jack Stewart, Local

Stev Weidlich, EDAW- NPFMC Contractor

Steven Hines, City of Adak

Joe Galaktionoff, Adak Petroleum



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May 29th, 2007

North Pacific Fisheries Management Council
605 West 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501
Fax: (907) 271-2817

RECEIVED
MAY 29 2007
N.P.F.M.C.

Members of the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council,

Re: Aleutian Islands Fisheries Ecosystem Plan

We commend your bold move to tackle the issue of ecosystem-based management head-on through the development of the Aleutian Islands Fisheries Ecosystem Plan (AIFEP). We support the AIFEP concept to bring ecosystem-based management to the broad work of the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPFMC), and we are pleased to have been involved with the latest draft.

We support the recommendations for future expansion of the document that are drawn out in the latest draft (section 8.2). In particular, we agree that a comprehensive ecosystem assessment be carried out, including both a baseline current assessment and an analysis of the "preferred" state of the ecosystem. The AIFEP could then analyze the costs and benefits of moving from any undesirable states to preferred states for those areas over which the NPFMC has control.

We also agree that identification of important ecological areas should be carried out. As noted in the draft AIFEP, Audubon Alaska maintains a database of Important Bird Areas in the region, and is prepared to assist in helping the NPFMC complete an assessment of important ecological areas.

Finally, we concur with and support the recommendations of the Ecosystem Committee, that the NPFMC adopt the AIFEP, while recognizing that it is a work in progress, and that the AIFEP should be incorporated into NPFMC process at the Plan Team level, with the AI Ecosystem Team (AIET) interacting with Plan Teams on an annual basis.

We urge the NPFMC to continue to seek ways for the important work of the AIET to be incorporated into routine decision-making processes, perhaps by continuing the AIET as an adjunct Plan Team, responsible for applying the AIFEP to NPFMC processes and for taking on the expansion of the AIFEP.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Iain J. Stenhouse, PhD
Director of Bird Conservation