



North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Ecosystem Committee Minutes, 2 October 2018 Anchorage, AK

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Ecosystem Committee (committee) met in Anchorage, Alaska on 2 October 2018. Committee members present include: Theresa Peterson (co-chairman), Bill Tweit (co-chairman), Stephanie Madsen, Jeremy Rusin, Rose Fosdick, Jon Kurland, David Fluharty (phone), and Jim Ayers (phone). Others present include: Mike LeVine (Ocean Conservancy), Mellisa Heflin (Bering Sea Elders), Brendan Raymond-Yakoubian (Sandhill Culture Coop), Julie Raymond-Yakoubian (Kawerak), Phillip Zavadil (City of St. Paul), Jocelyn Runnebaum (ADF&G), Keith Criddle (UAF), Mariel Combs (Oceana), Steve Marx (Pew), Elizabeth Siddon (NOAA), Stephani Zador (NOAA), Becca Robins Gisclair (Ocean Conservancy), Lauen Divine (Aleut Community of St. Paul Island).

The meeting was chaired by Theresa Peterson. The sole agenda item was review of the Draft Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan (BS FEP or FEP). The committee has been involved in the development of the FEP throughout the process, reviewing and commenting on multiple drafts as they have been developed by the BS FEP Team. At this meeting Dr. Kerim Aydin (AFSC) and Ms. Diana Evans (Council staff) presented an overview of the Draft FEP with a focus on the suggestions and requested changes made by the committee at their July 2018 meeting.

Dr. Aydin and Ms. Evans walked through the Draft FEP chapters identifying changes made as a result of committee suggestion or request. Committee members requested clarification of how their comments were addressed in a few instances. All suggestions and requests by the committee were addressed to the committee's satisfaction.

Committee members noted that the Draft FEP is improved over the previous draft. One member noted that the FEP and the process to develop it have created opportunities for the public to participate actively in discussions of the ecosystem and what is happening in the environment (human and natural) around their communities.

Committee members also expressed their surprise that relatively little ecological and environmental data were presented in the Draft FEP. Dr. Aydin explained that the intention was not to provide a compendium of data that will quickly become dated, but rather to describe how those data can be incorporated regularly into the fishery management decisions made by the Council.

The committee recommended that in the presentations made to the other Council advisory bodies the presenters clearly explain that the process proposed for the FEP Team is not a "normal" Council process with initial review, final review, etc., but emphasize that the FEP presents a process rather than a product. By adopting the BS FEP the Council is approving a process that is described in the FEP and may change as new data are obtained and greater ecosystem understanding is achieved.

The committee received public comment from Lauren Divine (Aleut Community of St. Paul Island), Julie Raymond-Yakoubian (Kawerak, Inc., written comments attached), Steve Marx (Pew Charitable Trusts), and Becca Robins Gisclair (Ocean Conservancy).

The committee asked about the timing for moving forward, should the Council choose to move forward. Ms. Evans explained that the timing would depend on the comments that are received from the public: if comments require substantial changes to the FEP, then the timeline would need to be extended. Committee members suggested that the Ecosystem Committee could serve to review public comment and how they are addressed by the FEP Team to advise the Council whether additional time is required (i.e., to identify “show stoppers”). To facilitate this potential final review, the committee recommends a December meeting should be scheduled.

The committee discussed the maps that are included in the Draft FEP as Fig 6-16, and included in the Appendix. Public testimony indicated that there was concern that the providers of the subsistence data included in the maps had not been consulted about their inclusion in the Draft FEP, and that the providers of subsistence data wanted to approve any analyses or conclusions made with or including those data. Committee members expressed that they wished to be sensitive to those who have developed those maps, but not necessarily provide “veto power” for any Council analyses. After additional, brief discussion the committee unanimously approved the following motion:

The Ecosystem Committee recommends that the maps that are currently in FEP (Fig. 6-16 (p78) and in Appendix) be removed, and in place insert a text description that the maps can be found elsewhere if they need to be referenced.

The Council also unanimously approved the following motion:

The Ecosystem Committee recommends that the Council accept the draft Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan (BSFEP); and direct staff to move forward with finalizing it and preparing for final adoption by the Council at its December 2018 meeting. In making this recommendation the Ecosystem Committee notes the following:

The Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan (BSFEP) reflects the continued leadership of the Council in continuing to move toward Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management. The BSFEP is an important tool which will promote ecosystem science, provide a systematic approach to identifying ecosystem considerations and priorities, enhance ecosystem considerations as they are incorporated into Council decisions, and provide a flexible, adaptive platform to address management and conservation needs in the face of climate and ecosystem change.

The BSFEP establishes an important pathway for communities, tribes, and the seafood industry to provide information regarding ecosystem factors and change. The BSFEP includes mechanisms to explicitly incorporate Traditional Knowledge (TK) in decision-making and provides opportunities for communities and tribes to present information, observations and recommendations about the marine ecosystem and fisheries. The BSFEP, including this current draft, is intended to be a living document that will be updated through the public process including two-way communication between the Council, its staff, and stakeholders.

Jon Kurland (NOAA Fisheries, ARA Protected Resources Division) wished to express his thanks to the BS FEP Team and his thanks to the Ecosystem Committee. He then informed the committee that Gretchen Harrington (NOAA Fisheries, ARA Habitat Conservation Division) would take his place on the Ecosystem Committee.

The committee adjourned at 4:50 PM.