



C4 Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan

December 2018 Council Meeting

Action Memo

Staff: Diana Evans

Other Presenters: Steve MacLean for Ecosystem Committee report

Action Required: 1. Review BS FEP and decide whether to adopt FEP framework
2. Decide whether to approve and prioritize FEP Action Modules

BACKGROUND

At this meeting, the Council is scheduled to review a revised draft of the Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP). The Bering Sea FEP establishes a framework for the Council's continued progress towards ecosystem-based fishery management (EBFM) of the Bering Sea fisheries, and relies and builds on the Council's existing processes, advisory groups, and management practice. This core FEP document identifies management goals and objectives for the FEP and for monitoring of the Bering Sea ecosystem, and describes how the FEP framework will support research projects (Action Modules) to address Council priorities. The FEP offers a framework for strengthening trust, transparency, and a sense of shared investment among managers, scientists, and stakeholders. The FEP was prepared by the Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan Team, which is an interagency group of Council, NMFS, and other Federal, State and IPHC staff, with contributions from other Council and NMFS staff, and with extensive input from the Council's Ecosystem Committee. The Committee is scheduled to review the revised draft on November 27th, and will provide their recommendations at the meeting.

What are the next steps if the Council adopts the FEP at this meeting?

The BS FEP is intended to be a living framework for the EBFM process rather than a static document. This draft is presented to the Council as a document for ease of review. This is not a typical Council action, because by adopting the BS FEP, the Council is not taking a "final" action, but rather is beginning the process of using the BS FEP framework and its Action Modules to focus the Council's existing policy of and progress with ecosystem-based fishery management.

The following are actions that the Council may choose to take at this meeting:

1. **Adopt the BS FEP.** If the Council adopts the BS FEP, it is endorsing the expression of EBFM in the North Pacific as characterized in the document, as well as the ecosystem goals and Bering Sea strategic objectives that are included in the draft, and the articulation of how the BS FEP framework concept is supposed to work. Adopting the BS FEP does not have the force of law; there are no implementing regulations associated with it. It is a Council policy document, and especially because it is set up as a living document, the Council can modify, adapt, and update any section of the document at any time.

- If the Council adopts the BS FEP, staff will make any additional changes and revisions based on feedback from the December meeting, and create a final document. Staff will also transfer the content of the Core BS FEP to a webpage that will contain the strategic information captured in this draft BS FEP, and from which progress on Action Modules can be tracked and made available to the public
 - Unless the Council indicates otherwise, staff will assume the existing BS FEP Team will transition from developing the BS FEP to an ongoing BS FEP Team role. We would aim to schedule a BS FEP Team meeting in the early part of 2019, and report back to the Council perhaps in April. The BS FEP Team tasks are described in section 3.3.
2. **Decide whether to approve and prioritize all or some of the five Action Modules** included in the Draft BS FEP. Alternatively, ask the BS FEP Team to bring back these and/or other Action Module ideas following their next BS FEP Team meeting, for Council review.
- If the Council approves the existing Action Modules, the Council could then decide whether to initiate some or all the Action Modules for active work. Note that because of the lengthy time the BS FEP has been under development, progress has begun on almost all the five Action Modules that are described in the Draft, which would not be the normal case for future proposed Action Modules.
 - Staff will update the BS FEP (including Chapter 4) to reflect the Council's approved list of Action Modules, once the Council has taken action.
 - For any Action Modules the Council initiates, the next step would be for staff, consulting with the BS FEP Team, to bring back workplans and Action Module staffing recommendations for the Council, Ecosystem Committee, SSC, and Advisory Panel to review. Initial drafts of workplans have been outlined in Appendix A of the draft BS FEP, but these would be dusted off and fully fleshed out for Council review at a subsequent meeting.

Changes to the Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan since the September 2018 Draft

The Council, SSC, Advisory Panel, and Ecosystem Committee reviewed an initial draft of the BS FEP at the October 2018 Council meeting. The following changes have been made to the document to address feedback received at the meeting:

- Revisions to text and figures in Chapter 3: How the BS FEP will function, especially the description of the Core BS FEP (section 3.1), Action Modules (section 3.2), the role of the BS FEP Team (section 3.3), and minor clarifications to sections 3.4 and 3.5. Clarifications emphasize that the BS FEP is a strategic planning document, and the BS FEP Team will work collaboratively to provide strategic guidance and avoid duplication with existing Council groups and processes.
- Revisions to Chapter 6, especially the description of ecological and oceanographic characteristics in section 6.2, communities in section 6.3.1, and additional information on cooperative management in section 6.3.2.
- Subsistence maps removed from section 6.3.3 and appendix.
- Minor clarifications to Action Module descriptions in Chapter 4 and Appendix A.
- Additional text added to Appendix B, suggestions from public comment for specific ways to engage with the public.
- Minor edits throughout for clarity.