

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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North Pacific Fishery Management Council Ecosystem Committee Draft Minutes

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Ecosystem Committee met in Anchorage, AK on April 4 2016 to review the 2016 Review of Essential Fish Habitat in the NPFMC's Fishery Management Plans. All committee members were in attendance except for David Benton, Dr. David Fluharty joined online.

The committee received a summary of the report, and presentations on the model-based definitions of EFH, the approach to modeling the effects of fishing on EFH, and the approach to describing the effects of non-fishing activities on EFH. This was the first time that the committee has seen the details of the fishing effects and non-fishing effects models; Committee review of both was limited to the methods and not to any results. The committee also reviewed potential next steps in the consideration of updates to EFH, should the Council choose to take that step.

The committee recognized and noted that the report satisfies the Council's responsibility to review EFH, as identified in the MSA. The committee also noted that there are several decisions that the Council will make in the near future regarding updates to EFH and the evaluation of fishing impacts and non-fishing impacts on EFH. These include whether to update the EFH definitions in the Council's FMPs, whether updates to the fishing effects or non-fishing effects analyses are necessary, whether updates to mitigation measures are necessary, and whether the Council wishes to initiate new HAPC proposals. The committee acknowledged that this will provide additional opportunity for the committee and public to review those decisions.

After discussion the committee unanimously supported the following motion:

The NPFMC Ecosystem Committee acknowledges and commends the work done by staff of the NMFS Alaska Region, AFSC, and academic partners on the model-based definitions of EFH and fishing effects models. The Ecosystem Committee recommends that the Council initiate an analysis to revise the definitions of Essential Fish Habitat in the Council's Fishery Management Plans, based on the new models. The Ecosystem Committee notes that this recommendation is contingent upon the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) satisfactory review of the model-based definitions of EFH for this purpose.

The committee also expressed its interest and intent to review the non-fishing effects report in October 2016, at a scheduled ecosystem committee meeting, and may be able to review progress toward revising EFH definitions if the Council chooses to initiate FMP amendments to revise EFH, and estimates of fishing effects if the Council requests an analysis of fishing effects on new or existing definitions of EFH.

There was also a brief discussion, and agreement, that the effects of fisheries research are addressed in the analysis of fishing effects on EFH.