

NOTICE



The North Pacific Fishery Management Council is Considering Objectives for a Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council is considering whether to prioritize time and resources to develop a Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan (BS FEP). Fishery Ecosystem Plans provide a synthesis of ecosystem information relevant to fisheries and help managers consider the ecosystem perspective in fishery decisionmaking. In 2007, the Council developed an FEP for the Aleutian Islands, which describes ecosystem processes, and physical, biological, socioeconomic, and management interactions in the area, and includes a qualitative ecosystem risk assessment and description of how risk associated with these interactions is currently addressed by managers.

Since there have been many recent studies investigating the Bering Sea ecosystem, the Council will decide whether there is value in developing a guidance document that assesses available information about the Bering Sea with respect to the fisheries that the Council manages. The BS FEP would not be a regulatory document, and changes to the management of Bering Sea fisheries would continue to be made through fishery management plan amendments. The FEP could provide an opportunity for the Council to express its management values for Bering Sea fisheries, and develop strategies to respond to emerging ecosystem science.

The Council is seeking the following input from stakeholders:

- What should be the objectives of the Bering Sea FEP? What questions should the FEP answer?
- What kind of actions should be considered in the FEP? Should the FEP provide specific or general guidance for fishery management? (for example, strategies to respond to climate change, preserve subsistence fishing and hunting resources, maintain healthy populations of top level predators, etc.)
- Would the FEP provide added value over existing Council documents, and if so, how? (for example, annual SAFE reports, essential fish habitat descriptions, etc.)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC INPUT

The Council is interested in hearing from local residents and communities, as well as agencies, organizations and the general public, about the objectives and structure of the FEP, prior to decision-making. Interested stakeholders are encouraged to contact the Council with their concerns and suggestions as the Council proceeds with this effort.

Proposed Outreach Meetings:

- Nome, AK - Sunday, June 8th, 1pm - Mini Convention Center, 409 River St. Receiving public input on this issue is an agenda item at the Council's June meeting.
- Anchorage, AK - Thursday, August 21st, 3:30 - 6 pm (tentative - location TBD)
- Seattle, WA - Monday, September 15th, 3:30 - 6 pm (tentative) - Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Further information on this project, including a discussion paper prepared in January 2014, is available at www.npfmc.org.