

Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan Team

PROPOSED Terms of Reference

Establishment and objective

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) has established a Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan (BS FEP) Team. The Team will provide strategic support for the Council's goals and objectives for ecosystem-based fishery management (EBFM), as described in the BS FEP. While the focus and prioritization will be on the Bering Sea, the Team will consider the context of the North Pacific in providing ecosystem advice, and will ensure that products with application to other ecosystems or management areas are not unduly limited to the Bering Sea.

BS FEP Team Functions

Specific tasks for the BS FEP team include the following.

1. Strategic guidance for monitoring Bering Sea ecosystem status

- Develop and keep current an appropriate suite of ecosystem indicators specific to the BS FEP's Ecosystem Objectives, to be tracked in ~~an appropriate scientific product~~ ~~report the annual Ecosystem Status Report~~. Note, collaboration may be required for developing appropriate social science indicators.
- Review ecosystem status through recent ESRs and other ecosystem information, report on indicator status for success metrics.
- Provide ~~the Council with a regular~~, strategic review of ecosystem products, ~~red flags, discussion points from the previous fall cycle~~, particularly with respect to the BS FEP's Ecosystem Objectives, ~~including consideration of any red flags or discussion points from the previous fall cycle~~. Coordinate with the ongoing ~~AFSC efforts~~ to discuss ecological processes ~~in the spring~~.

2. BS FEP Action Modules

- Provide recommendations on new Action Modules, prepare candidate ~~action modules as proposals for ideas~~ for Council consideration (six questions).
- Track progress of ongoing Action Modules, review workplans and recommend staffing, ensure that results are reported to the Council in a way that fosters their use in the management process. Provide appropriate reporting and, if appropriate, recommendations, to the Council and other Council advisory bodies (SSC, Advisory Panel, Ecosystem Committee, others).

- Ensure that there is coordination and connectivity among ongoing Action Modules as appropriate.

3. Maintain the Core BS FEP

- Consider how completed Action Modules inform the Core BS FEP, update Core BS FEP as appropriate with new information and Action Module results.
- Consider developing a BS FEP summary of how ecosystem information was used in the specifications process or other Council actions each year.
- Track how concepts and information developed as a result of the Council's BS FEP is used in the Council process, including connections between research priorities and funded research.

4. Outreach and communication

- Provide a venue for getting feedback from diverse perspectives in the management process, including communities.
- Recommend outreach and communication products in support of the BS FEP, including written briefs, online information, and workshops as appropriate.
- Provide the Council with periodic briefings on Bering Sea ~~overviews of AFSC~~ ecosystem products and research, including progress with use and review of local knowledge (LK) and traditional knowledge (TK) within and alongside natural and social science in the fisheries management process.
- Work collaboratively with other Council Plan Teams and other partners.

Organization

Membership

FEP team members will be appointed from government agencies and academic institutions having expertise relating to the Bering Sea ecosystem. The membership should include scientists and managers with diverse expertise, including ecosystem modeling, stock assessment of Bering Sea species, oceanography, seabirds and marine mammals, habitat, social science, and economics. Ideally, the FEP team should represent a diverse group of participants from many different agencies with expertise and management responsibility in the Bering Sea ecosystem, as well as members who also participate on the Council's other Plan Teams for Crab, Groundfish, and the Social Science Planning Team.

Officers, workgroups, and rules of order

The FEP team will be directed by a Chair or Co-Chairs, who are elected from the membership for two year terms. There is no limit to the number of consecutive terms that a Chair may serve.

Workgroups: The team may form work groups to make progress on specific workproducts, which will be directed by a work group leader from the FEP Team.

In general, rules of order will be informal. FEP team decisions will be reached by consensus, whenever possible. The diversity of the team's perspectives on recommendations or statements will be reflected in the publicly available meeting minutes. In representing the FEP Team publicly, the spokesperson will take care to relate FEP Team opinions accurately, noting points of concern where consensus cannot be reached.

Meetings

The FEP team will hold an annual in-person meeting that will generally occur in March, in order to facilitate an annual report to the Council in April. The FEP team may also hold a second meeting during the year, generally by phone or videoconference. When such meetings are held, the Team will report to the Council in October.

Public participation

FEP team meetings will be open to the public and will be noticed in the Federal Register. Written comment submitted to the FEP team will be accepted until the start of the meeting, and will be available to the Team and the public. Oral testimony during the meeting will be accepted at the discretion of the Chair. To the extent practicable, members of the public who are attending the meeting in person will be able to participate in Team discussions.

Reporting

A report of each meeting will be prepared by Council staff or designee, with assistance and review from FEP team members. The FEP Team Chair(s) will be responsible for finalizing the report. The report will be made publicly available and will be presented to the Council and its advisory bodies.

Council: The BS FEP is the Council's document, and any policy embodied in the BS FEP, or Action Modules undertaken under the "umbrella" of the BS FEP must all be authorized by the Council. The BS FEP does not have inherent authority, but the BS FEP can provide context for the Council to take action through its existing authority under the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

SSC: As the Council's scientific advisory body, any recommendations from the BS FEP Team, or recommendations arising from information undertaken through an Action Module of the BS

FEP, will be reviewed by the SSC as per the Council's standard procedure. The SSC may then choose to make recommendations to the Council regarding the BS FEP.

Ecosystem Committee: The Council has designated the Ecosystem Committee with oversight for BS FEP Team's ongoing implementation of the Core BS FEP and Action Modules. The Ecosystem Committee also has an ongoing policy role in advising the Council on EBFM implementation. The BS FEP Team will continue to liaise with the Ecosystem Committee regarding recommendations and Action Modules, and the Committee will provide policy recommendations to the Council as appropriate. The Ecosystem Committee may also choose to make recommendations to the Council regarding the BS FEP.

Plan Teams: The BS FEP Team should provide regular updates to the Plan Teams, and to the extent that BS FEP information affects a particular FMP, that information should be shared with stock assessment authors and the Plan Teams. The Plan Teams may also choose to make recommendations to the Council regarding the BS FEP.

Social Science Planning Team (SSPT): The BS FEP Team should also provide regular updates to the SSPT, which was established to improve the quality and application of social science data that informs management decision-making and program evaluation in the Council process. Social science considerations are an important component of EBFM, and feedback from and collaboration with the SSPT concerning social science aspects of the Core BS FEP and Action Module projects will be helpful to both groups. The SSPT may also choose to make recommendations to the Council regarding the BS FEP.

Community Engagement Committee (CEC): The Council created this Committee in June 2018 to advise the Council on strategies for improving engagement with rural and Alaska Native communities. The FEP Team should coordinate with the CEC to avoid duplication of effort and to learn from engagement strategies and public involvement best practices as they are developed. The Community Engagement Committee may also choose to make recommendations to the Council regarding the BS FEP.