

AI Ecosystem Team

January 27-28, 2010

AFSC, Seattle, WA

DRAFT MEETING REPORT

Team members:

Kerim Aydin	Sandra Lowe
Steve Barbeaux	John Olson
Forrest Bowers	Jennifer Sepez
Diana Evans	Paul Spencer
Sarah Gaichas	Francis Wiese
Carol Ladd	

Absent: Tom Gelatt

Others participating: Jason Anderson, Dave Fraser, Ivonne Ortiz, Jon Warrenchuk, Stephanie Zador

The Team met all day on Wednesday, January 27, and during the morning and early afternoon of the following day. From 2pm on Thursday, January 28, the Team met jointly with the Council's Ecosystem Committee, in order to discuss with the Committee further action on the FEP. The Team prepared a short handout of comments for the Ecosystem Committee, which are included as the final section of this report. The Team's discussions with the Ecosystem Committee are captured separately in the Ecosystem Committee's minutes from the January 28th meeting.

Team membership

Since the Team last met, there have been some alterations to the composition of the Team. A marine mammal expert, Dr Tom Gelatt, has been appointed to the Team, although he was not able to be present at this meeting. Also Dr Vernon Byrd, seabird expert from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, has retired from the Team. A replacement from USFWS has been proposed, Dr David Irons, who is interested in joining the Team. He also was unable to attend this meeting, but will hopefully be appointed to the Team in the future.

New information on the Aleutian Islands

During the first day of the workshop, the Team heard reports on new information available on the Aleutian Islands ecosystem. A list of the presentations is included below. The Team discussed that much of the new information presented would be useful to add to the FEP, and Ms Evans will write up and circulate a synthesis of the new information presented, and how/where it could be added to the FEP based on the Team discussions.

- Council and other agency actions with respect to the AI, updates from the Alaska Marine Ecosystem Forum *Diana Evans*
- Update on AI groundfish species *Sandra Lowe*
- Report on cooperative research acoustic study in the AI *Steve Barbeaux*
- Population trends for Steller sea lions, harbor seals, N fur seals, whales *Rolf Ream*
- Update on Adak and Atka fisheries and plants *Nicole Kimball (teleconference)*
- State-managed fishery activity *Forrest Bowers*
- Information from the EFH review (including fishing intensity analysis) *John Olson*

- Update on non-target initiatives, changes to AI spatial management *Paul Spencer*
- Update on communities, processing workforce project *Jennifer Sepez*
- Physical oceanography and climate information *Carol Ladd*
- Update to the AI ecosystem model, AI ecosystem assessment, tracking indicators in the Ecosystem SAFE *Sarah Gaichas/Kerim Aydin*
- AI research and funding of proposals at NPRB *Francis Wiese*

Discussion of future direction for the FEP and AIET

During the second day of the meeting, the Team discussed how to expand the utility of the FEP. The Team agreed that the FEP should be updated, both with the new information discussed during the first day, and also to capture the extensive review of interactions and indicators that was undertaken at the last Team meeting, in September 2008.

The Team had extensive discussions about how to make the FEP more useful as a tool in the management process. Various examples were identified where information from the FEP has proven useful in supporting management actions, but in most cases this is because one or more team members were involved in the relevant action. For example, information from the FEP was presented to the SSC during their discussions of whether to separate Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Pacific cod harvest specifications. A more current example was the use of FEP ecosystem information in assessing the BSAI blackspotted and rougheye rockfish complex. It was felt that the FEP needs to be highlighted to other people in the management process, including but not limited to the BSAI Groundfish Plan Team, who could benefit from the information available in the document. It was also noted that a continued effort needs to be made to highlight the FEP's primary conclusion, that the Aleutian Islands is a separate ecosystem from the Bering Sea, which some Team members felt was still not given sufficient weight in all quarters of the management process.

The Team considered various ways in which to increase the utility of the FEP as a management tool for actions relating to the Aleutian Islands. This also led to a discussion of what the role of the FEP team should be in support of the FEP and its utility. It was concluded Team's role, as currently set up, is to help provide information on the AI ecosystem that can provide context for management actions affecting the Aleutian Islands. This does not mean that the Team should, for example, provide advice on each specific Council issue that affects the Aleutian Islands. However, it may be helpful to identify a framework or series of steps for using the AI FEP, which could be helpful to others in their management actions. The Team considered that the best way to illustrate this utility might be to identify one or more case studies, instances of management actions that are being considered, where the use of FEP information could inform the action. For example, it was suggested that it may be helpful for the Crab and Groundfish Plan Teams to specify an Aleutian Islands portion of their meetings, during which all Aleutian Island stock assessments are considered together, and an Ecosystem Assessment presentation can be focused specifically on the AI.

The Team also discussed at what level of the management process the AI FEP is intended to be used. Examples of the various levels include incorporating information into stock assessments, or Council analyses, and AI ecosystem considerations by the Council Plan Teams (Crab and BSAI Groundfish), and also by the SSC, AP and Council. The Team noted that it would be most beneficial if the information is incorporated early in the process, and not just at the Council level.

In order to address some of these many questions, the Team recommends that a Terms of Reference be developed for the AIET, which should also address the purpose of the FEP and how it is intended to be used within the management process. The Council's previous direction to the Team was focused on the

development of the FEP; now that it is in place and approved, it seems appropriate to revisit what the purpose of the Team and the FEP should be, and articulate that purpose. The Team did not have time to write out a formal draft for discussion with the Ecosystem Committee or consideration by the Council, but rather suggests that such a draft be prepared via email during the next month, and discussed at the April Council meeting.

The Team also suggests that it may be timely to provide a presentation to the Council that addresses not only the proposed updates to the FEP, but also an effective 'State of the Aleutian Islands ecosystem' report, based on the FEP interactions and indicators. While some of this information is presented annually in the Ecosystem SAFE report, and it is certainly intended and appropriate that the tracking of this information should occur in that format, it was also felt by the Team that a presentation focused just on the AI might be appropriate. The Council has never seen the FEP interactions presented alongside the ecosystem indicator information that are designed to track those interactions, and the annual indicator presentation is always for the Bering Sea, GOA and Aleutian Islands combined, during which the AI ecosystem (on which there is the least data) is more likely to get lost. The Team suggested timing the presentation for February 2011, as hopefully the AI trawl survey will occur this summer, and this would allow information from the survey to be processed and included in the report. The fall is a busy time period for both stock assessment authors and the Council, so the February agenda may be a little easier for scheduling. Also, the February 2011 meeting is in Seattle, and as many of the AIET members are Seattle-based, this would be a good opportunity for them to participate in the presentation.

Finally, the Team also discussed how to prioritize among some of the longer-term projects for further work on the FEP, some of which were identified in the FEP itself, and others of which have been suggested by the Team members. These projects are listed in the 'Comments for the Ecosystem Committee' section at the end of this report. Ms Gaichas and Mr Aydin asked for input on priorities for further work on the AI ecosystem model and the AI ecosystem assessment. Mr Wiese asked for input on how to frame research priorities for the AI in such a way as to attract proposals. The Team continued their discussion of the use of visual tools, such as the Australian star diagrams, as a way to present ecosystem policy tradeoffs in a way that is intuitive and useful to the Council. The Team concluded that it would be helpful to have input from the Ecosystem Committee and the Council about priorities for future work on the FEP; this might be a consideration that could be raised during the discussion of Terms of Reference.

Plan for AIET work

Assuming that the Ecosystem Committee and Council generally approve of the direction the Team proposes to follow, the Team agreed to the following plans for upcoming work.

Prepare a Terms of Reference for approval by the Council

The Team agreed to work via email to prepare a draft Terms of Reference for the AIET, which would also address the purpose of the FEP, and what the relationship of the FEP and the Team is intended to be with other aspects of the Council management process. The Team would propose to have a draft TOR ready for discussion by the Ecosystem Committee and the Council at the April Council meeting.

Updates to the FEP

The Team agreed to revise and update the December 2007 FEP. As occurred during the development of the FEP, each Team member will be responsible for revising one or multiple sections in the document, or providing overall editorial review of the document as a whole. The Team agreed to provide revised sections by May 15, 2010, with the goal that the document could be circulated for overall revision during the summer. Ms Evans will compile a list of updates that have been discussed during the last two Team meetings, and will also distribute the latest copy of the FEP document for the Team to work from.

Updates to the FEP will need to be approved by the Council, which will be targeted for the February 2011 meeting.

Presentations to the Plan Teams

The Team also considered that it would be appropriate to schedule presentations on the AI FEP to the Crab and BSAI Groundfish Plan Teams, at their upcoming meetings. The presentation would include a brief update on the FEP content, and potentially an example of how the FEP information is useful for Plan Team recommendations. The presentations would be scheduled for the information meetings of these Plan Teams, which are the May meeting for Crab, and the September meeting for Groundfish.

Presentation to the Council (Ecosystem Committee, SSC, AP, Council)

For the February 2011 AI ecosystem presentation, the Team will be prepared to present updated information for inclusion in the FEP, a 'state of the AI ecosystem' report on AI interactions and indicators, an illustration of how the FEP information is useful as a management tool, and a discussion of how the FEP could be further developed. Some of this work can be prepared by individual members corresponding via email, but the Team will also be meeting in person in January 2011, at which time it will prepare for the Council discussion.

Annual meeting of the AIET

The Team discussed the timing of their annual meeting, and decided that the January timeframe works better than the previous September team meeting. The Team decided to aim for the first full week of January for their annual Team meeting.

AI Ecosystem Team comments for Ecosystem Committee

The following notes were provided as a handout for discussion with the Ecosystem Committee. Recommendations following from the joint Team and Committee discussions are captured in the Committee's minutes.

Goal: Need to increase visibility / people's awareness and use of the AI FEP

Update Terms of Reference for the Team, and use of the FEP

- Purpose of the FEP: information tool help decisionmaking under the BSAI FMP framework, to focus on the separate AI ecosystem within the context of joint management
- Also: suggest inclusion of specific ecosystem considerations within AI for AI issues
- Role of Team: synthesize information available on AI ecosystem (physical, biological, socioeconomic), make available in way that can be used at all levels of Council management process (Council, SSC, Plan Teams, analytical/stock assessment authors)

Short-term timeline for outputs

February Council meeting – update on Team meeting, discussion with Ecosystem Committee

April Council meeting – Council review of Terms of Reference (maybe example of case study on using the FEP as information for particular Council issue)

May Crab Plan Team – similar presentation as to Council,

September BSAI Groundfish Plan Team – presentation on FEP, case study of using FEP information in blackspotted/rougheye BS/AI spatial management

December Council meeting – annual update on ecosystem indicators

January 2011 – FEP team meeting

February 2011 – presentation to Council, SSC, AP – updates to the FEP, state of AI indicators, case studies about utility of FEP, plan for further analysis and expansion of FEP

Presentation to Council in February 2011

Updated FEP

- New information, refinement of interactions and indicators
- Try to include mapping of new information

State of AI indicators

- Incorporate information from 2010 survey, present all information on AI indicators in one place, will allow us to highlight gaps
- Also, ‘ecosystem assessment’ of available AI indicators to indicate key trends and summaries

Case study example

- how FEP information would add value to the decisionmaking process (how understanding FEP ecosystem context is a tool to help make decisions)
- how add utility to the management process from having this FEP information

Next steps

- prioritization of longer-term issues – any direction about what we should work on here

Economist

- Purpose is to have someone fulfill our terms of reference – identify information about ecosystem interactions, highlight where there may be implications from both economic and ecological perspectives
- Needs to be able to balance market and non-market values
- FEP purpose is big picture – biophysical, biological, and socioeconomic
- this role is not a duplication of current Council analyses of regulatory actions – big picture understanding
- e.g. economist might help to identify that Adak plant is sensitive to price of cod – allows better understanding of viability of community of Adak (ties in with FEP goals, vibrant communities)

Longer-term priorities – how should we balance them?

- Work with the Ecosystem Committee on developing ecosystem policy/ evaluating tradeoffs (using visual tools?)
- Consider interactions with non-managed fish and animals when setting biological reference points (maybe symposium at western groundfish to develop)
- Systematic process for considering ecosystem consideration in harvest specifications
- Quantitative risk assessment
- Expansion of cumulative effects
- Expand geographic area of FEP to look at transition areas to east and west
- What’s the most effective way to start filing our data gaps (what are highest priority indices gaps)
- Conceptual model of the AI ecosystem – mechanistic concepts of how the system works (maybe symposium to develop – similar as for BSIERP)