

Ecosystem Committee Minutes

February 7, 2005 2-4 pm
South Room, Renaissance Madison Hotel, Seattle, WA

Committee: Stephanie Madsen (Chair), Sue Salveson (for Jim Balsiger), Doug DeMaster, David Fluharty, David Benton, Jim Ayers, John Iani, Chris Oliver (staff), David Witherell (staff), Diana Evans (staff)

Others present included Bill Wilson, Clem Tillion, Sandra Moller, Terry Leitzell, Thorn Smith, John Warrenchuk, Doug Hoedel, Mark Fina, Jennifer Boldt, and Darrell Covey.

The Committee reviewed and adopted the draft mission statement, as follows:

To discuss current ecosystem-related initiatives and assist in shaping NPFMC positions relative to (1) defining ecosystem-based management; (2) structure and Council role in potential regional ecosystem councils; (3) implications of NOAA strategic plan; (4) draft guidelines for ecosystem-based approaches to management; (5) draft MSA provisions or requirements relative to ecosystem-based management; and (6) generally coordinating with NOAA and other initiatives regarding ecosystem-based management.

Chris Oliver briefed the Committee on the January 2005 MAFAC meeting he attended with Stephanie Madsen, and summarized other background materials presented to the Committee. These included NPFMC letters to Admiral Lautenbacher and Dr Hogarth expressing concern about the Councils' involvement in Agency ecosystem initiatives; various presentations given recently by senior NMFS staff regarding ecosystem issues (including some given at the MAFAC meeting); the Ocean Action Plan; and a solicitation for members of a NOAA ecosystem research and science review panel.

The Committee discussed the distinction between NOAA's proposed ecosystem approach to management (EAM) and NMFS' proposed ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) strategies, and potential governance structures for each. Doug DeMaster clarified that EAM is a NOAA-wide initiative intended to consider and manage all aspects of marine ecosystems. NOAA has identified ten large marine ecosystems nationwide, at which level performance measures for determining and monitoring ecosystem health will be applied. Three of these are in Alaska: the Arctic, the Bering Sea, and the Gulf of Alaska. Voluntary regional councils have been proposed for each of the large marine ecosystems. EAF, on the other hand, is intrinsically related to EAM, but specifically focuses on fisheries within an ecosystem context. Chris Oliver briefed the committee on his participation in the NMFS-Council working group, which is intended to involve the Councils in NMFS' development of guidelines for EAF.

In preparation for their next meeting, the Committee requested staff prepare a discussion paper suggesting ways for the NPFMC to be involved in the development of EAM for the Alaska large marine ecosystems. The paper would examine how the NPFMC structure might be utilized to create a voluntary regional EAM governance structure, the benefits and disadvantages of such a role, and funding requirements. The paper should clearly describe the interrelationship of EAF and EAM, and the role of the NPFMC in both.

The Committee also discussed nominating a candidate for the NOAA ecosystem research and science external review panel, and recommended that the Council submit three possible nominations: Dr David Fluharty, Dr Clarence Pautzke, and Dr Gordon Kruse, provided the gentlemen are willing to be considered.

The Committee proposed a meeting schedule, and tentative discussion items for each meeting, as described below.

March 14, afternoon	Teleconference	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• review initial draft of staff discussion paper• preparatory discussions for national conference
April 4, afternoon	Anchorage, during Council meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• update from Chris re Working Group meeting• preparatory discussions for Council chairs' meeting
sometime in May	in person	TBD