

March 28, 2019

A series of teleconferences were conducted by co- chairs Bill Tweit and Theresa Peterson seeking feedback from individual Ecosystem Committee (EC) members to facilitate the discussion of a 3-year committee workplan during the April 1st meeting.

The following questions were provided to lead the discussion to develop a list of issues and challenges the EC may need to monitor on behalf of the Council.

What are high priority issues from your perspective?

How do these priorities align with the capacity of the EC?

How do they align with the Council's Ecosystem Vision Statement and the path towards implementing EBFM?

What would the role of the EC be, and what are the first steps?

The following points were made regarding the Ecosystem Committee overall:

- Meetings held around the Council meetings, 2-3 times a year with robust agendas work well.
- Recognize the EC works at the will of the Council, keep respectful of the process and make sure the Council wants to spend time on various EC topics.
- Important to keep scope of the committee defined and strive to manage expectations, stay focused on goals of the EC.
- The EC can provide the Council with a more holistic look at ecosystem considerations from a high viewpoint.
- EC can keep track of change in science community with new info that will be of use, also opportunity to weigh in as to what research can inform the process – outputs that are more useful to the Council process.
- Keep an eye out 3-4 years out of issues to track for the Council.
- Committee can play a role in looking forward for emerging challenges,
 - Within the EC report, see where there may be suggestions to augment information for the Council, are there ideas of what should be considered to add?
- EC can consider what areas in the SAFE report need additional attention.
 - Currently have a cycle for that kind of work, how many meetings would it take to review EC and SAFE reports, could be several meetings, indicators would take more meetings.

Specifics topics of interest to consider:

Climate effects across regions:

- Climate change effects will be key in fisheries management, consider how to strengthen resilience in light of climate change.
- Develop metrics to better inform management. Aim toward metrics which could be used in Ecosystem process and SAFE process.
 - Should include inventory of existing data sources, consider how information fits, consistency, and with current management structure.
 - View as task and product.
- Keep on top of the science related to climate change and bring to Council to consider impacts on fisheries management.
 - Continue to work with science center to keep abreast of work being done.

- Have one meeting focused on climate change with presentations.
 - Use to inform Council and identify best time to come before the Council

Arctic related issues:

- Anticipate demand for fishing in the Arctic
 - Set metrics to establish high bar to consider fishing.
- Develop indicators for EBFM.
- Have decision making elements such as science needs, dovetail with AFSC.
- Look for means to outreach with region and invite community involvement in setting metrics.
- Arctic EEZ and CAO
 - Recognize currently closed but once discussion starts want to conduct outreach to Western AK Communities.
 - In coordination with Dr. Anne Hollowed, identify species that would move into Arctic EEZ.

Bering Sea FEP:

- Keep solid development of BS FEP before moving into other areas, keep tabs on what has been started.
- Need to know timeframe and status of BS FEP – this will be a good time to schedule time for input.
- Concentrate on Action Modules
 - Modules are right direction but keep moving them forward – get into in a way that is helpful in the decision-making process.
 - Developing a plan of what needs to occur next is a big task in action modules, of great interest to Western AK communities is the importance of LK, LTK, value of resources, have process for major input into role of subsistence and access to resources.
 - Good to discuss subsistence and understanding more complex attributes; healthcare, cultural, respect for life, health of water and ocean – more of a comprehensive definition and how can that be factored into all ecosystem components of EBFM.
 - How do council actions and management decisions effect subsistence when looking at issues from a more comprehensive subsistence definition – may work best within AM of BS FEP.
 - Bring forward a step by step procedure as to how to go about it – consistent with vision and implementation, very progressive and envisions progressive decision-making body.
- Provide feedback to FEP Plan team
 - FEP team meeting will be good time for significant progress, can receive a report and identify next steps for EC within action.
- Continue to work toward identifying and filling ecosystem gaps
 - Environmental DNA (EDNA) may be an area to identify absence and presence of various critters. Students are working on this and could present to EC.

Gulf of Alaska FEP:

- Although we are seeing a lot of changes in the GOA, Committee members generally agreed that developing an FEP at this time isn't a high priority, as the science foundation is not as well

developed as the Bering Sea, and the GOA is a more complex LMA that might not be amenable to a single FEP, and as other management issues such as potential development of catch shares may prove distracting.

Aleutian Islands FEP:

- Upgrade AI FEP, would serve as a manageable task. May use BS FEP as a model. Consider modernizing to standard of BS FEP, action informing rather than action forcing.

Top Level Predators:

- Review 5 year biop of SSL – keep this on the list to monitor when it comes up.
- Concern with Northern Fur Seal and current depletion, also depletion of birds, EC can help avoid disaster by looking at challenges and providing a place to talk about ecosystem problems, ability to work through difficult issue.
 - Use indicator species, especially apex predators.

NOAA Science:

- Strike team ability to investigate key phenomonal to inform where to put ecosystem resources
 - What happened to P cod in the GOA?
 - What is going on with crab in the Bering Sea?
 - Review for key resources to work on larger ecosystem contributions and see if this leads to better understanding, more synoptic thinking (Gordon Kruse works on this)
- AFSC has a number of high priority things each year, ability constrained by understanding of EC process such as recruitment – is this something the EC can look at? Eg., Ecosystem impacts on recruitment?
- EC processes with indicators and what indicators will be of use – of interest to AFSC
 - Identified as a resource challenge but useful for Council to understand the importance of this type of work, way to elevate in council process. More of developmental type of project, more development could help inform the council process.
- In keeping eye on the horizon, have presentations on the agenda to educate the committee on emerging science, activities and findings.
 - Center can help nominate presentations and findings to provide to the committee.
 - New methodology, changes in scientific understanding.

Groundfish workplan:

- Could use input on EBFM
 - Is there a role for EBFM in each action?
 - How does the action relate to ecosystem vision statement?
 - Consider having a check list as to how the work plan is moving toward EBFM
 - Can use to report back as to how complying with headquarters.
 - Can also serve to help the public better understand EBFM.

Russian/Canadian boundary and EEZ:

- May be interest in a bilateral agreement for scientific research.
- Keep dialog going.
- May be opportunity for co-management on marine mammals such as polar bears and the Chukchi Sea, invite cross boundary discussion.
- Helpful to understand how the Russian ecosystem changing in terms of species distribution and stock status.
- EC could monitor and support improving communication.

Habitat perspective – keep habitat a part of conversation:

- Especially with EBFM, like progress with 5-year habitat review, can do dynamic habitat modeling, especially good in light of ecosystem changes.
- Also doing species distribution model, moving toward EBFM with a tool that also looks at where things are located.
- See changes in distribution, overlap ect.
- EC can be the location to hear about upcoming information dynamic habitat modeling and viewing how distribution changing.
- During last 5 year habitat review, the species distribution model underway but preset as snap shot in models, now being used by stock assessment authors.
 - Can serve as another tool for indicators.
- Jim Thorsen – would be good to present on dynamic habitat.

Pollutants:

- Consider EPA and amounts of vessel pollution
 - how is vessel pollution factored in commercial traffic?
 - How can the stressor of pollution factor in the ecosystem?
 - Should we consider asking the AFSC to consider pollutants into Ecosystem SAFE reports?

General:

- Review work of Jason Link and conclusions of what Councils should be doing, a roadmap. May be useful to continue dialog and make sure view from DC on track with Council activity.
- Review Australian model – MSE set thresholds – X triggers Y, indicates preassigned outcomes
- Would be helpful to get CCC communication and share input with EC.
- Ecosystems approach recognizes dynamic nature of what is occurring.
- EC review EFH and research projects.