

The University of Rhode Island



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Kingston Coastal Institute



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Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP)

J.M. Gates, Member, SSAC

Why an FEP?

- It is “The Right Thing to Do”
- SSC members have indicated that much information exists but is currently unused in FMPs
- NOAA is expected to insist on an Ecosystems approach in all its programs, including FMPs

Why now?

- Joint meeting of Scientific & Statistical Committee (SSC) and Social Science Advisory Committee (SSAC) last week re. Ecosystems approach.
- These Committees discussed a range of issues and came up with the following recommendations to the Council

Recommendation :

- That the Council, in considering an ecosystem approach to management use the following two-pronged approach:

Two-Pronged Approach (1):

- Recognize that non-fishing activities have the potential to impact fisheries, & vice-versa. Therefore, the Council needs to actively seek linkages, including considering collaborative approaches with other agencies & jurisdictions, to foster ecosystems approaches to management (EAM)

Two-Pronged Approach (2):

- More thoroughly incorporate ecosystems approaches & principles into the Council's fisheries management activities. Specifically, the Council needs to become more focused on taking advantage of what is already known as well as evaluating barriers to incorporating EAM

Recommendation 2:

- The Committees recommend that the Council proceed with the development of a Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP). A FEP would consider:
 - - the role of human communities as part of the ecosystem
 - - fishery & non-fishery impacts on the ecosystem in the NE Region
 - - goals for fishery productivity, including setting an optimum yield (OY) definition for each fishery that explicitly incorporates fishery & non-fishery considerations

Discussions

- The Committees devoted considerable time to discussion of several questions re. EAM that were raised in a report to the Council by C.Demarest :

Tradeoffs

- The FEP should provide a basis for:
 - Evaluation of tradeoffs between fisheries
 - interaction with non-fisheries management of marine resource uses
- The FEP would support, not supplant existing FMPs

Importance to the Council of non-Fishing uses of Marine Resources

- Non-fishing uses of marine resources can include transport, aquaculture, wind power, pollution discharges, etc.
- These uses can be very important to the Council's activities, though Committees recognize that they are often ignored. The degree of importance will depend on the specific issue and its location. The Committees

Council Involvement in Planning Stages

- Planning stages include scoping, hearings, etc. of projects
- The Committees recommend addressing these cross-jurisdictional impacts through existing structures, though the committees also encourage the Council to include non-fishing marine resource uses explicitly in OY definitions.(see Recommendation 2, above)

Importance of Coastal Pollution to the Council's Activities

- The Committees feel that Coastal Pollution issues are very important to federal fisheries management

Possible Council Role re. Coastal Pollution Issues

- Seek (from NOAA) an answer to the question: *“To what extent is the productivity of the marine environment compromised by coastal pollution?”*
- *Express concerns to appropriate agencies on research, regulation, monitoring & enforcement of coastal pollution issues.*

EAM's Potential to Improve Marine Resource Stewardship

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- Yes, the potential exists, but developing the approaches should not impede progress on immediate issues

Importance of Pilot FEP to Council Activities 1

- If the FEP proceeds, engaging with & educating stakeholders will be critical to gaining buy-in and avoiding the end-runs that could undermine management actions.

Importance of Pilot FEP to Council Activities 2

- Additional qualitative information should be extracted from the existing project data that may expand our understanding of the language & categories that people use, as well as their appropriateness to EAM
- Further development should be commensurate with NOAA Fisheries initiatives.

Possible Specific EAM Roles in future Council Activities 1

- The Council should include the following ecosystem concepts in developing & amending fishery management plans, drawing on existing knowledge of these factors from such sources as NOAA, universities, research institutes & regions that have existing progressive ecosystem-based management programs (e.g. Alaska, California, Great Lakes, Canada).:

Possible Specific EAM Roles in future Council Activities 2

- Multi-species interactions
- Multi-fisheries interactions
- Bycatch
- Competition, predation
- Ecosystem-based control rules—ecosystem easements— to complement the current use of MSY/OY

Possible Specific EAM Roles in future Council Activities 3

- Appropriate management units
- Documentation of previous social science research on stakeholder inputs & diversity of fishing practices & ecological knowledge
- ICNAF two-tiered catch quota system
- Indirect effects of fishing
- Socio-economic data

Other EAM Ideas for Council to Explore 1

- Innovative and/or expansive concepts/proposals/ideas from NOAA, Council PDTs, the SSC & the SSAC. Make greater use of existing knowledge, advice & information sources.

Other EAM Ideas for Council to Explore 2

- At inception of FEP, a small group meeting of:
- Council members, Social & Natural Scientists from the Committees to:
- Discuss biological/trophic interactions
- System-level processes
- Action plan to be drafted outlining EAM approaches & the research entailed

Other EAM Ideas for Council to Explore 3

- Mechanisms for further integration of social science analyses and natural science analyses into analysis of management options
- For example:
 - Development of an integrated model of the biological, social and economic impacts of management
 - To be undertaken outside of the immediate regulatory process
 - Used as a tool for the Council to explore future options

Other EAM Ideas for Council to Explore 4

Maintaining an institutional memory by retaining a dedicated point of contact for ecosystem approaches issues

Thank You



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