

# **Ecosystem-based Fishery Management**

## **Overview of Actions by Regional Fishery Management Councils**

### North Pacific Fishery Management Council

[\(http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/\)](http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/)

The NPFMC has a longer track record of involvement with ecosystem issues and questions than other Councils.

[http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/current\\_issues/ecosystem/Ecosystem.htm](http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/current_issues/ecosystem/Ecosystem.htm)) The annual SAFE (stock assessment and fishery evaluation) document has had an 'ecosystem considerations' chapter since 1995. This is primarily the product of the ecosystems task group at the Alaska Fishery Science Center (see <http://access.afsc.noaa.gov/reem/ecoweb/index.cfm>). The 'Ecosystem Considerations' [chapter of the SAFE has grown in size and sophistication since its initial version, and most recently (2005) was 300+ pages in length. In addition, stock assessment authors are asked to address ecosystem considerations in each stock assessment: ecosystem effects on the stock being assessed, and fishery effects (for that stock) on the ecosystem.

The Council formed an ecosystem committee in the late 1990s, largely at the initiative of Council member David Fluharty. The committee was active for a while, and then was suspended. In 2005, the ecosystem committee was reconstituted.

Council management includes substantial closed areas for habitat protection, bycatch minimization, gear conflict reduction, and Stellar Sea Lion & walrus protection. Some areas are closed to bottom trawl (e.g. SE Alaska, Cook Inlet, most of Bristol Bay), while the Stellar Sea Lion & walrus exclusion areas are closed to all fishing vessels.

The NPFMC observer program was begun in the early 1990s with the principal purpose being to measure total biological removals. This is an industry funded program, and observer coverage is tiered to vessel size (100% on vessels > 125', 30% on vessels > 60' and <125', and 0% on vessels <60'). The premise was that observer's are a fixed cost independent of vessel size, while larger vessels harvest larger volumes of fish and are more able (financially and physically) to host an observer.

Directed harvest of forage fishes (with the notable exception of herring that is important commercially and for subsistence harvest) has been precluded, dating from 1999. Fishes for which directed harvest is precluded include the Families Osmeridae (eulachon, capelin and smelt), Mycophidae, Bathylagidae, Pholidae, Stichaeidae, Gonostomatidae and the Order Euphausiacea (krill).

### South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

<http://www.safmc.net/ecosystem/Home/EcosystemHome/tabid/435/Default.aspx>)

This Council has also been active and involved in ecosystem-based management. The website has a multipart ecosystem management section that addresses habitat protection, food web, fishery removals, ecosystem health and research/monitoring. Related elements include habitat protection and management plans for some of the Council's coral resources. The Council also has a Sargassum FMP to protect Sargassum from large-scale commercial harvest because of its important as habitat for pelagic species.

The Council has a Habitat Plan (dated October 1998; <http://www.safmc.net/Default.aspx?tabid=80>) that is its EFH designation and description document for all of its management plans. Out of this, there is an action plan (dated December 2004) to develop a fishery ecosystem plan. [http://www.safmc.net/Portals/0/FEP%2012\\_04.pdf](http://www.safmc.net/Portals/0/FEP%2012_04.pdf)

The Council maintains committees addressing ecosystem-based management committee, marine protected areas and habitat and environmental protection.

### Western Pacific Fishery Management Council

(<http://www.wpcouncil.org/>)

Established a working group in 2002 in response to EO 13158 of May 2000. A Marine Protected Area policy document was drafted that is short, not very detailed, and seems to be more a statement of intent.

Strategic Plan for the Conservation & Management of Marine Resources in the Pacific Islands Region (March 2004)

Held a workshop to explore ecosystem-based management in April 2005, and has subsequently prepared several Draft Ecosystem Fishery Plans:

- American Samoa Archipelago
- Hawaiin Archipelago
- Mariana
- Pacific Pelagic Fisheries
- Pacific Remote Island Areas
- all dated Dec 1, 2005

A January 2006 workshop addressed the social science aspects of EBFM.

### New England Fishery Management Council

(<http://www.nefmc.org/ecosystems/index.html>)

Has formed a Habitat/MPA/Ecosystems Oversight Committee and has conducted a series of workshops describing the pilot project. A suite of presentations pertaining to the Ecosystems Pilot Project (from workshops, SSC meetings and Council meetings) are available through the website.

I'm not able to discern direction from the material available.

The Council is in the process of designating Essential Fish Habitat; the agenda for the NEFMC June 13 – 15, 2006 meeting included an item to review and approve a range of EFH designation alternatives and prey-species sections. The prey species material on the website is a review of what is known of prey for each life stage of each managed species.

The committee has announced a meeting for Tuesday, 14 November 2006 to review HAPC proposals for incorporation into a draft EIS for the Council's omnibus EFH amendment.

### Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (<http://www.mafmc.org/mid-atlantic/mafmc.htm>)

The Council has an Ecosystem Committee, but I can find no information on any activities or products from their efforts.

### Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (<http://www.gulfcouncil.org/>)

9 workshops on Ecosystem-based Management conducted in August and September 2005  
Summary document at:  
<http://www.gulfcouncil.org/Beta/GMFMCWeb/downloads/GMFMC%20Ecosystem%20Fisheries%20Management%20Report.pdf>

and presentation at:  
[http://www.gulfcouncil.org/Old/Ecosystem%20Workshops%20Overview\\_files/frame.htm](http://www.gulfcouncil.org/Old/Ecosystem%20Workshops%20Overview_files/frame.htm)

Has formed an Ecosystem Scientific and Statistical Committee – constituted of economists, biologists, sociologists and natural resource attorneys that first met  
1<sup>st</sup> meeting June 9 – 10, 2005  
<http://www.gulfcouncil.org/Beta/GMFMCWeb/prrel/pr2005-07.htm>  
and convened via conference call March 11, 2006  
<http://www.gulfcouncil.org/Old/prrel/pr%202006-07.pdf>

Congressional allocation of \$2 million to 4 councils (Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic and New England) for ecosystem pilot projects  
([http://www.gulfcouncil.org/Old/Ecosystem%20Workshops%20Overview\\_files/frame.htm#slide0020.htm](http://www.gulfcouncil.org/Old/Ecosystem%20Workshops%20Overview_files/frame.htm#slide0020.htm)) – slide 4 – this was for FY 04 and so likely dates from 2003(?)

### Caribbean Fishery Management Council (<http://www.caribbeanfmc.com/>)

could find no references to ecosystem-based management  
Council does maintain a Habitat Advisory Panel