

# Ecosystem Committee Minutes

February 7, 2006 8-11 am  
Cascade 10, Doubletree Hotel, SeaTac, WA

**Committee:** Stephanie Madsen (chair), Doug DeMaster, Dave Fluharty, John Iani, David Benton, Jon Kurland, Jim Ayers, Diana Evans (staff)

**Others present included:** David Witherell, Chris Oliver, Bill Wilson, Sue Salvesson, Joe McCabe, Cathy Coon, Meghan Jeans, Dave Fraser, Scott Highleyman, Jennifer Boldt, Ivonne Ortiz, Carla Gore, Jennifer Kassakian, John Gauvin, Bill Karp, Dorothy Childers, Susan Murray

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The Ecosystem Committee discussed the three items on its agenda. The next Ecosystem Committee meeting has tentatively been scheduled for the afternoon of Tuesday, April 4, 2006, at the Hilton Hotel in Anchorage, AK.

## 1. Ecosystem Forum in the Aleutian Islands (AIEF)

Ms Evans provided a report on the Council's progress with the State of Alaska and other Federal agencies, to explore a regional ecosystem collaboration in the Aleutian Islands. At the Federal-State-Council meeting in mid-November, the group created a Steering Committee to develop an explicit statement of purpose and function (e.g., a charter for the AIEF). The Steering Committee has met once to develop a draft charter, and will present a final draft to the larger group at their next meeting, sometime in March or April. The draft statement of purpose describes the Forum as an information-sharing forum to increase coordination among agencies regarding ecosystem research and management activities. The Forum would not have independent jurisdiction.

Mr Joe McCabe, of NOAA General Counsel, discussed the Federal Advisory Committees Act (FACA) issues raised by the Council's participation in the AIEF. The Council cannot legally participate as a member of the AIEF if the Forum intends to come up with consensus positions, as this would constitute a non-Federal group (i.e., the Council) advising Federal agencies. There are several ways to comply with FACA requirements. First, the AIEF's purpose could explicitly be limited to information-sharing, in which case the FACA issues do not arise. Second, the AIEF could apply for a FACA Charter, although there are only a limited number available to Federal agencies, under which it would be FACA-compliant. Third, the Council could choose not to be a member of the AIEF, and instead participate in the meetings as an invited expert. The Ecosystem Committee discussed the various options, but did not provide a recommendation.

## 2. Update on ecosystem committee efforts in other regions

Dr Fluharty described ongoing efforts in the Western Pacific FMC to create place-based Fishery Ecosystem Plans (FEPs). Ms Evans provided information on a recent series of workshops held by the four councils that received Federal funding for ecosystem-based management work, namely the Gulf of Mexico FMC, the South Atlantic FMC, the Mid-Atlantic FMC, and the New England FMC. Dr Fluharty also provided an update on the Great Barrier Reef Zone plan in Australia. The Committee requested that Ms Evans continue to track national and relevant efforts and apprise the Committee of further progress.

The suggestion was made that an “Ecosystem” topic might be added to the next Council Chair and Executive Director meeting agenda. Specifically, the Councils should share their respective progress on ecosystem-based management, and discuss the issue of jurisdiction and LME boundaries.

### **3. Aleutian Islands Fishery Ecosystem Plan**

Ms Evans summarized the recent revisions to the FEP discussion paper. The Committee provided revisions to the working definitions of ecosystem-based management identified in the paper. The Committee also engaged in an extensive discussion about how to move the development of the FEP from a theoretical to a practical basis, and suggested additional information be added to the discussion paper to describe where we are now in the process, and the transition to FEPs.

The Committee suggested other revisions to the discussion paper, including adding specific options for how to define a boundary for the AI FEP area, and a preliminary table of contents of the FEP. The Committee requested staff circulate the revised draft by email, so that any comments requiring revision could be included prior to the April Ecosystem Committee meeting. In April, the Committee will review the revised discussion paper, and provide the Council with a detailed recommendation as to how to move forward with the AI FEP.