

Ecosystem Committee Minutes

Tuesday, February 6, 2007 3pm-5pm
Parliament Room 3-4, Benson Hotel, Portland, OR

Committee: Stephanie Madsen (chair), David Benton, David Fluharty (teleconference), Jim Ayers, Jon Kurland, Diana Evans (staff)

Others participating included: Sarah Gaichas, Joe McCabe, Melanie Brown, Chris Oliver, Cathy Coon, Chris Krenz, Sandra Moller, Kristy Despars, Janis Searles, Jon Warrenchuk, Ben Enticknap, Willy Woodburn, Dorothy Childers

The Committee's agenda was to discuss progress on developing the Aleutian Islands Fishery Ecosystem Plan, and to provide feedback to the AI Ecosystem Team. The next Ecosystem Committee meeting is anticipated to be on March 27, 2007, in Anchorage.

Aleutian Islands Fishery Ecosystem Plan

Diana Evans summarized the report from the AI Ecosystem Team's January workshop. Dr Sarah Gaichas presented some of the findings of the Team regarding AI ecosystem interactions and ecosystem characteristics, and the approach that will be taken by the Team to develop a risk assessment for the FEP. The Team has benefited greatly from the doctoral research of Dr Ivonne Ortiz, of the University of Washington.

The Committee was excited to see the progress being made on the FEP, and the work of the Team to date. The Committee supports the Team's proposed direction, and provided some comments and feedback. Regarding the Team's question about community consultation in Akutan, the Committee suggested inviting Akutan community leaders to Unalaska for a joint discussion.

The Committee also developed a draft goal statement for the FEP, and **recommends that the Council direct staff to include the goal statement in the initial review draft** to be circulated in March. The initial review draft will be the basis of consultation with communities in the Aleutian Islands region, and the Committee feels that the draft goal statement more accurately and succinctly describes the goal of the FEP, compared to the existing purpose statement. The draft goal statement is as follows:

The goal of this FEP is to provide enhanced scientific information and measurable indicators to evaluate and promote ecosystem health, sustainable fisheries, and vibrant communities in the Aleutian Islands region.

The Committee applauds the efforts of the Team members to date, and recognizes the time and effort that Team members are contributing to this project. Team members are comprised of AFSC, PMEL, NMFS AKR, ADFG, USFWS, and NPRB staff. **The Committee recommends that the Council convey its appreciation to the relevant agencies and supervisors, for the investment of staff time and resources in this valuable project.** The Committee also hopes that particularly for AFSC staff, none of the Team members will be reprioritized away from the FEP work in the next few months to allow completion of the project within its ambitious timeline. In particular, the Committee was concerned that work on other 'ecosystem' efforts such as the Magnuson-Stevens Act ecosystem study or NOAA's regional integrated ecosystem assessments might compete with FEP completion.

The Committee looks forward to the initial review draft of the FEP in March.