

**Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee
Ecosystem Approach to Management (EAM) Report
March 22, 2005**

The Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) approved on March 22, 2005 via e-mail, the Ecosystem Approach to Management Working Group-report as submitted below and based on the oral report submitted to MAFAC on January 14, 2005.

EAM Working Group Members:

Scott Burns
Rob Kramer
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Ken Roberts
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Overall concerns expressed by the Work Group:

It is not possible to manage an ecosystem. Rather, it needs to be emphasized as an approach to fisheries management.

Concern that the regulatory process not become too cumbersome. The need to involve many new, non-traditional partners and jurisdictions can threaten any effective implementation.

Declarations that Councils are already doing EAM will not satisfy the public's perception for a needed change.

Recommendations:

- MAFAC embraces the ecosystem approach to management (EAM) and agrees with the definitions being utilized by NOAA as an accurate shift in focus toward an 'approach' and adaptive or evolutionary process rather than a new concept.

“An *ecosystem* is a geographically specified system of organisms (including humans), the environment, and the processes that control its dynamics.”

“An *ecosystem approach to management (EAM)* is geographically specified, adaptive, takes account of ecosystem knowledge and uncertainties, considers multiple external influences, and strives to balance

diverse societal objectives. Implementation needs to be incremental and collaborative. “

- The EAM should continue to evolve, building on current successes and incorporating generalities, guidelines and principals into current law. Specifics and mandates should be left to regulations only.
- The EAM should be kept as a regional, FMC-driven process through Fishery Ecosystem Plans or other means to meet standards and ensure inclusivity.
- The agency should identify existing FMC actions and examples of successes and processes that work, beginning with existing resources and pilot projects.
- Although current actions may be working and ecosystem principles are being incorporated into the current process consideration should be given to developing national standards and operational guidelines for systematically incorporating EAM into the fishery management process. Some issues identified by the EAM Work Group include what are the objectives of an EAM in fisheries management, who sets the objectives, what are the limitations, how will state sovereignty be involved?
- Councils should review their structure and constitution. Consideration should be given to establishing fishery ecosystem panels within the Councils. Examples include Gulf of Maine and South Atlantic regional partnerships.
- Build on previous work conducted by the agency, including the 1999 Report to Congress from the Ecosystem-Based Approach to Management Advisory Panel and the E-b Task Force report sponsored by MAFAC, 2003.
- Evaluate existing laws and mandates, such as the Marine Mammal Protection Act, for inherent conflicts with the principles of an EAM.

This is an interim final draft to be further discussed at the next full committee meeting.