

**Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee  
Report by the Ecosystem Task Force  
May 14, 2003, San Diego, California**

**Summary Recommendations & Technical Report**

**Motion made by Rod Moore to delete specific pilot project suggestions and adopt as MAFAC's recommendations the list of the report's summary bullets provided by Dr. Bonnie Brown, Task Force Chair. Motion was seconded by Tony DiLernia and adopted by unanimous consent.**

**Purpose:** The following recommendations and attached report entitled "Strategic Guidance for Implementing an Ecosystem-Based Approach to Fisheries Management" are being submitted to Under Secretary Lautenbacher, the Chairman of MAFAC. This report and resulting recommendations are in response to Dr. Hogarth's request in November, 2001, that MAFAC establish a task force to identify issues that need to be addressed before meaningful ecosystem-based fisheries management is feasible, and to provide guidance on how to transition from single species management to broader ecosystem models.

These recommendations and attached report consist of advice to NMFS regarding implementation of an ecosystem-based management approach and should not be construed as a recommendation for legislative mandates.

**Recommendations:** The Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee recommends that as NMFS begins the long-term process toward ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries management, the agency take the following steps:

1. Publicly and institutionally acknowledge that moving towards the use of an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries is a process that can be started regardless of the level of information on hand. There are a number of tangible reasons to begin implementing ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries management now:
  - Conserves natural resources and protects biodiversity
  - Optimizes social and economic benefits and minimizes negative social and economic impacts to communities
  - Improves public understanding of and participation in the management process
  - Ensures fisheries comply with existing laws by setting management goals with respect to fish community effects, forage, and habitat, thereby reducing the incidence of unintended consequences of management
2. Create (or solicit a study to design) an implementation scheme that includes:
  - Attention to ecosystem integrity, interagency cooperation, spatially explicit management measures, and time-series data for multiple species and habitats.

- At least a 10-year time-line, budget amounts and required FTEs.
  - Case studies that illustrate benefits of transitioning from a single-species management system to a multi-species ecosystem-based management system.
3. Undertake modest pilot projects for a region or Council area that take into account the recommended elements of an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management and specifically:
- Include stakeholder perspectives and human goals.
  - Consider the health and vitality of ecosystems into the indefinite future.
  - Include the larger landscape and connections among other landscapes.

The recommended pilot studies would require that NMFS conduct the following investigations:

- Identify the geographic area to be managed and specific ecosystem condition indicators.
  - Categorize current and proposed ocean zoning measures in that geographic area.
  - Report on efforts to ensure compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and other applicable laws and determine whether additional federal action is needed to foster an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management
  - Set measurable goals (i.e. publicly determine the desired future conditions) with reference to the ecosystem indicators identified as important. We note that concrete goals are missing in most fishery management plans (FMPs). Evaluation should be focused on ecosystem parameters, not just fishing mortality.
  - Match elements of current FMPs to the suggested elements of fishery ecosystem plans to determine missing components and whether activities that do match up can be enhanced.
4. Communication, coordination, and cooperation *versus* control must be given more prominence. Following are mechanisms that would be useful in accomplishing such a shift:
- Contact other resource regulatory agencies and become familiar with their available descriptive data for the specific area.
  - Focus on interactions among constituents and regulators, understanding the problem, team building, and trust.
  - Access and incorporate local and regional expertise (regionalize).