Aleutian Islands Ecosystem Team

Meeting Report

September 26-27, 2006
Room 2039, Building 4, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Seattle, WA

Team

Steve Barbeaux	Carol Ladd	Jennifer Sepez
Diana Evans	Sandra Lowe	Paul Spencer
Sarah Gaichas (for Kerim Aydin)	John Olson	Francis Wiese

Others present included: Joe McCabe, Ken Stump, Dave Fraser

The Team reviewed the Council and the Ecosystem Committee's recommendations for developing the FEP. The Council requests an Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) that is a strategic planning and guidance document for the actions relating to the Aleutian Islands ecosystem; the FEP will not contain management measures. In this context, the Team developed an approach for developing the FEP.

Audience for the FEP

The Team first discussed who the audience is for whom the FEP is being written. The following is the Team's conclusion:

Primary:	the Council
Secondary:	SSC, broader public, AI researchers, other agencies with AI interests (Alaska Marine Ecosystem Forum members, Bering Sea Interagency Working Group members)

FEP Process

In order to determine how to structure the FEP, the Team discussed at some length how the FEP will fit into Council process. Although the FEP document's primary audience is the Council, the Team felt that the document would most appropriately intersect with the Council process at the SSC level. The SSC hears each of the Plan Teams' reports, and makes recommendations to the Council on the basis of those reports. The FEP will hopefully provide a new perspective on the individual Plan Team recommendations, by approaching fisheries from a geographic and ecosystem-based perspective, rather than a fishery-based perspective. The SSC can then evaluate Plan Team reports and presentations on other Council issues, on the basis of the FEP's input, and tailor its recommendations accordingly.

The Team also discussed how to make the FEP a 'living' process, rather than a document that once written, provides no further benefit to the Council. The Team followed up on the suggestion in the staff discussion paper, that the Council appoint a FEP advisory team. This advisory team would update research priorities and indicator trends in the FEP, and could provide a nexus for initiating AI research and evaluation needed by other Council analyses. The Team also felt it important that the FEP intersect with the Plan Teams and stock assessment authors. Once the document is written, a workshop might be conducted for stock assessment authors on the findings of the FEP. Also, Plan Team representatives on the current AI Ecosystem Team will be able to feed back into the Plan Team process, and should Plan Team representatives be included on a future advisory team, they could continue to fulfill this function. The Team also suggested that supplements to the FEP might be issued, particularly as research techniques change or more information becomes available. Additionally, the Team strongly recommends coordinating with the annual ecosystem considerations chapter, to track information on indicators and objectives identified in the FEP.

In the longer term, the Team recognizes that this FEP may be used outside of the Council process also. The FEP may be useful as a supporting document for research efforts in the Aleutian Islands. Additionally, the FEP may be useful to other agencies operating in the area, by providing cumulative effects information, highlighting management implications, or by providing a building block for other agencies' integrative management plans for the area.

Schedule

The proposed schedule for the FEP is as follows:

September 26-27	initial Ecosystem Team meeting
early October	feedback on Team's approach from Ecosystem Committee, SSC, AP, Council
October-December	Team to draft chapters 1 and 2 of FEP
January 10-12 (T)	Team workshop to draft remaining chapters of FEP
early February	feedback from Ecosystem Committee, SSC, AP, Council
February-March	possible Team meeting; Team makes revisions to FEP and begins preparation of 'glossy' synthesis document
early April	Council initial review
April-May	Team makes revisions to FEP and 'glossy' synthesis
early June	Council approves FEP

The Team notes that the schedule for preparing the FEP is very ambitious. The Team can develop a plan based on currently available information by June, 2007, but will not be able to conduct original studies or analyses under that timeline. The Council may wish to consider having the development of the FEP be a two-stage process, with the first stage being the document to be prepared by June, 2007, and the second stage involving more in-depth studies and analyses, that would be conducted on a longer timeframe. The Team should be able to provide more guidance later in the process as to what this might entail.

Stakeholder Participation

The Team acknowledges the Ecosystem Committee's guidance, in their minutes of May 2006, that public comment on the FEP will solicited as the document gets vetted through the Council process (i.e., hearings at the SSC, AP, and Council). Following the Team's January workshop, however, the Team would like to make an extra effort to ensure stakeholders are apprised of the work on the FEP, and have the opportunity to interact with the Team as to their comments on the FEP's content. The Team also discussed presenting a poster and possibly a short workshop at the Alaska Marine Science Symposium in Anchorage, in January.

Additionally, the Team recommends that consultation and input be sought from communities in the ecosystem. There are 2 communities within the ecosystem identified for this FEP, Adak and Atka. Team member Steve Barbeaux will be in Adak in late February for other research, and has volunteered to conduct a community meeting during that time to discuss the FEP. The Team recommends that the Council send a Team representative to Atka also, to solicit participation from that community.

January Workshop

Preparing for workshop: section drafts by lead authors (identified on TOC) are due by Dec 1. Team review of sections will then by conducted through website exchange. Revised drafts are due by Jan 2. Diana Evans and Sandra Lowe (and others, as available) will integrate sections, and edit as much as possible before the January workshop. The aim is to bring together sections with one voice, and also to select case study examples that can illustrate the interconnected perspective (e.g., sea otters).

Agenda for workshop: a) continue work on chapter 2 – integrate sections, identify cumulative elements, pull out unifying stories/examples; b) review Council's management objectives, integrate and make specific for the Aleutian Islands; c) develop indicators, implications for management, priorities, and Council recommendations.

Writing Guidelines

The Team decided that the FEP should be no more than 100 pages, and should probably be fewer. The Team assigned page limit guides by chapter on the Table of Contents (below). The Team intends that the document should be written in an accessible, non-scientific style. To that end, the Team discourages the use of acronyms. Sections should identify sources of available data, but references should initially be cited in MS Word as footnotes, or endnotes, for ease of compilation.

Francis Wiese will set up a website that can be used for document exchange. We will post or link to a number of reference documents, including the FMPs and the Council's management objectives. The Team will use this website to transfer versions of the document among Team members.

AI FEP Table of Contents

1 Introduction – *10 pages*

ORIENTATION – ***Jennifer Sepez/Steve Barbeaux***

- map of AI (show where AI is on globe, focus on AI islands)
- Aleut creation myth

1.1 What is the FEP - ***Diana Evans/Francis Wiese***

- graphic of old concept/new concept: circles around FMPs, FEP looks at context of many things that we are already doing; where does FEP info affect process/ compared to plan teams
- who is affected by the FEP
- also long-term vision of dynamic FEP in future process (influencing mgmt actions); also that this is part of a process that started with ecosystem considerations chapter – this is one of steps in long process

1.2 FEP Process – ***Diana Evans/Francis Wiese***

- Plans for updating document
- living process – feedback loops to revise ecosystem goals, indicators based on new information, research priorities/data gaps
- advisory team provides guidance to SSC, Council, Plan Teams (through PT reps on team); updates FEP with supplements as necessary (new research techniques, new indicator trends, data gaps)

1.3 Purpose and Need – ***Diana Evans/Francis Wiese***

- Council's purpose statement

2 Understanding the Aleutian Islands ecosystem – *30-40 pages* – what do we know about oceanographic and climate features of the AI ecosystem area, about species present in the ecosystem and their interactions, and about human interactions with the ecosystem. This section should integrate existing models, and be a summary or inventory of other sources, rather than an encyclopedic listing. Focus on interactions between species, rather than status of individual modules.

2.1 AI ecosystem processes and interactions

- narrative; include discussion of how we know information (monitoring, etc.), references to further sources of information, gaps in knowledge (briefly)

- bring in historical context as appropriate

2.1.1 Biological relationships – ***8 pages - Sarah Gaichas/Kerim Aydin***

2.1.2 Oceanography, climate, bathymetry, habitat relationships – ***8 pages - Carol Ladd/John Olson***

2.1.3 Socioeconomic relationships (fisheries, other human activities) – ***8 pages - Jennifer Sepez***

2.2 Describing the AI boundary – *5 pages*

2.2.1 Regulatory boundaries (including discussion of how fisheries/other species are managed e.g. BSAI groundfish) ***- Diana Evans***

- include table of who is responsible for what in AI (with contact info?) (species, areas, etc.)

2.2.2 Oceanographic and biological boundaries – scales (single species, ecosystem/energy level, migratory species etc.) ***– Sarah Gaichas/Kerim Aydin***

- stock structures, 'leaky' boundaries

2.3 Cumulative interactions - focus on the interactions that are: *- 10 pages*

- treated separately under current management programs, but are actually connected (e.g., seabirds and juvenile pollock);
- or managed under same agencies, but connections not always made (e.g. marine mammals and fishery plans, economics with social);
- or things that are not currently being managed but are important to the system (e.g. myctophids);
- or things that are treated on a bigger scale than the AI but are critical to AI ecosystem

3 Management objectives – *5 pages* – based on our understanding of the ecosystem area, how can we integrate existing management goals for the various fisheries, etc., and make specific for Aleutians

- define objectives in context of uncertainty
- take existing goals/objectives, make specific to the story of the Aleutians, and perhaps focus in on the ones that are achievable

4 Ecosystem assessment – *10 pages* – using the integrated management objectives, how can we define appropriate ecological indicators to assess the state of the ecosystem by integrating models and indicators. Linkage between operational objectives and ecological indicators.

4.1 Identify critical parameters to track – risk assessment – important to talk about <u>why</u> this parameter is important to the Council, what it can indicate, and what the probability is of likely outcomes

4.2 Where possible, identify critical thresholds for parameters

5 Implications for human use of ecosystem – *20 pages* – identify areas of uncertainty, identify areas where management strategy evaluations to assess management measures calculated over a realistic range of uncertainty would be helpful

- this chapter builds on chapter 2, where we stand and what led up to it, and looks at where we stand and what does it mean for moving forward
- implications to humans, implications to fishery management, implications to other managers

5.1 Consider tradeoffs and reconcile conflicting goals

- specific tradeoffs between things that we're doing separately, but when you put them together, you can't do both (use cogent examples)

5.2 Assess areas of uncertainty

- this section will identify on-the-shelf stuff for right now, and point to future work that could be done

5.3 What is the "value added" of this FEP process?

- what are we learning from the FEP view that we couldn't get from previous ecosystem analyses (e.g., consideration of risk assessment/uncertainty; tie it back to sustainability and alerting Council to changes); what have we been missing with the single species focus

6 Priorities – *10 pages* – based on the above, what are priorities for future management analysis (MSEs), research; FMP-specific or more general

6.1 within the next year

- e.g., what might we add to the FEP if we had another year to work on it

6.2 longer-term (e.g., 2, 5, 20, 50 years – whatever appropriate scales are)

7 Recommendations for Council – *1-2 pages*

- table summarizing conclusions/recommendations from chapters 5 and 6