Ecosystem-based Management of US Pacific Pelagic Fisheries

The Pacific Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plan (PEP) was created by the Western and Central Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council to regulate the harvests of pelagic species by US vessels operating in the offshore waters of the central and western Pacific Ocean. Because ecosystems vary over time, this ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management is adaptive and takes into account ecosystem knowledge and uncertainties, considers multiple external influences (domestic and international), and strives to balance diverse social objectives.

Ecosystem Issues
- Climate change and its impacts on the ocean’s primary productivity areas
- Fishing impacts on bycatch, forage fish, and protected species
- Non-fishing activities leading to pollution, nutrient loading and ocean acidification
- Marine debris

Management Structure and Community Participation
The Pacific Pelagic EFP fosters collaboration with state, territorial, federal and international governments and non-governmental organizations to address the social, cultural, economic, biological, ecological, and other scientific issues related to successful ecosystem management. The EFP also facilitates enhanced involvement in the decision-making process by communities, especially those who rely on the environment for their livelihood, social relations, cultural identity and nutrition. The bottom-up approach begins with recommendations received during public meetings and through several advisory groups, including recently-established Regional Ecosystem Advisory Committees, which focus on impacts on the marine ecosystem.

The Council actively participates in the development and implementation of international agreements and research regarding marine resources. The most important international issues for the Pacific Pelagic EFP are the international management of highly migratory species (particularly tuna) and conservation of protected species (especially, sea turtles and whales).

Food Web

Management Objectives
1. Maintain biologically diverse and productive marine ecosystems and foster the long-term sustainability of marine resources in an ecologically and culturally sensitive manner through the use of a science-based ecosystem approach to resource management.
2. Provide flexible and adaptive management systems that can rapidly address new scientific information and changes in environmental conditions or human use patterns.
3. Improve public and government awareness and understanding of the marine environment in order to reduce unsustainable human impacts and foster support for responsible stewardship.
4. Encourage and provide for the sustained and substantial participation of local communities in the exploitation, development, conservation, and management of marine resources.
5. Minimize fishery bycatch and waste to the extent practicable.
6. Manage and co-manage protected species, habitats, and areas.
7. Promote the safety of human life at sea.
8. Encourage and support appropriate compliance and enforcement with all applicable local and federal fishery regulations.
9. Increase collaboration with domestic and foreign conservationists, as well as local and federal governments.
10. Improve the quantity and quality of available information to support marine ecosystem management.

Pacific Pelagic Fisheries
Tuna fisheries in the Pacific Ocean catch about 2.7 million metric tons of tuna, with US fisheries catching about 5% of the total. Most of the catch is taken by fleets of longline, conventional, and midwater trawling vessels. Pacific pelagic fisheries, which traditionally affect the highest biomass pelagic fish stocks in the world, are dominated by the most common and commercially valuable species.

GET INVOLVED! Contact the Council at (808) 522-8220, or email wpcouncil@noaa.gov

www.wpcouncil.gov

Funding support for this display provided by the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program