



Informational Webinar Prioritizing California's Fisheries for Management Efforts Using a Streamlined Ecological Risk Assessment

Thursday, October 3, 2019

Presentation & Discussion Highlights

The California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) hosted an informational webinar on October 3, 2019 to discuss the development of a list of priority state-managed fisheries as directed by the [2018 Master Plan for Fisheries: A Guide for the Implementation of the Marine Life Management Act](#) (2018 Master Plan). Tribes and Tribal communities, stakeholders, and members of the public were invited to learn about California's prioritization process in an effort to focus limited resources on the fisheries with the greatest management needs while maximizing resource and ecosystem benefits.

CDFW presented information to over 55 webinar participants, including details of their progress in moving from an interim priority list, as outlined in the 2018 Master Plan, to an updated priority list that reflects a more comprehensive evaluation of the risk of fishing to the ecosystem. CDFW shared details about the evolution of the Ecological Risk Assessment Tool (ERA) and their approach to scaled management, including considerations of socioeconomic and climate change factors in management efforts.

This summary is intended to provide a high-level overview of the discussion topics, key questions, and identified next steps that emerged from the meeting, rather than a transcript of the webinar. Meeting materials, including the webinar agenda and slide deck, are provided on page 3 and are also available online: <https://cdfwmarine.wordpress.com/2019/09/24/webinar-invitation-prioritizing-californias-fisheries-for-management-efforts/>.

For more information about the fisheries prioritization webinar or prioritization process, please contact Debbie Aseltine-Neilson at Debbie.Aseltine-Neilson@wildlife.ca.gov.

Presentation Highlights

Debbie Aseltine-Neilson, Senior Marine Biologist Specialist and lead of CDFW's prioritization process, provided a presentation ([here](#)) that highlighted the core components of prioritization and scaled management.

Framework for MLMA-based Management

Participants were re-introduced to the MLMA Master Plan amendment process, including the [information gathering projects](#), collaboration with partners, and engagement with stakeholders that informed the development of the draft 2018 Master Plan. Participants were reminded of the [framework for MLMA-based management](#), informed by the amendment process and outlined in the 2018 Master Plan, and CDFW highlighted prioritization as a core component to this management framework.

Prioritization Process & Results

CDFW provided background information on steps taken to develop tools to inform prioritization during the amendment process, including a [Productivity Susceptibility Analysis \(PSA\)](#) and [pilot Ecological Risk Assessment \(ERA\)](#). Building off the pilot ERA, CDFW presented participants with a streamlined ERA that is more intuitive and objective for managers to use in evaluating potential risk of fishing to the habitat and bycatch species. Using the streamlined ERA and PSA tools, CDFW has completed a prioritized list for twenty of the state's marine finfish species and three marine invertebrate species. Participants learned about the evolution of the ERA tool and the ranking of the PSA and ERA components. CDFW provided an updated priority list for recreational and commercial fisheries, and invited participants to discuss the streamlined prioritization process and results.

Scaled Management & Socioeconomic and Climate Change Considerations

CDFW discussed how higher-risk fisheries will be addressed through scaled management, which will include the consideration of socioeconomic and climate change factors in management efforts. After refining the prioritization approach, CDFW has decided that socioeconomic opportunities and challenges, as well as climate change impacts on fisheries, are important factors to consider during scaled management, rather than during prioritization. This is an update to how these factors were considered in the 2018 Master Plan and CDFW plans to share their updated vision for applying socioeconomic and climate change filters to higher priority fisheries with the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) in the coming months.

Discussion Highlights

Participants indicated they had a clear understanding and were generally supportive of CDFW's approach to prioritization and scaled management. Questions focused on understanding the process for conducting risk assessments, including data and information used, as well as the plans for completing prioritization for all state-managed species (i.e., invertebrate fisheries) and involving stakeholders in this process.

- No concerns were expressed with the streamlined ERA tool or updated priority lists for commercial and recreational fisheries as the result of applying the PSA and ERA.
 - CDFW clarified that they will not bin fisheries into high, medium, or low priority categories based on cut-offs in scores, but rather treat the priority list as a continuum, focusing on 'higher' priority fisheries first, which are generally fisheries with higher scores.
 - The prioritization process is intended to build in a degree of flexibility to be responsive to emerging or changing CDFW, Commission, and stakeholder priorities, and available resources.
 - CDFW welcomes continued conversations with stakeholders during upcoming Commission meetings or directly to share additional information on the streamlined ERA ranking process.
- One participant looked to clarify that the results of the PSA and ERA tell us about the fishery's vulnerability, rather than a status of that fish stock.
 - The risk assessment tools (PSA and ERA) inform CDFW of the potential risks to the sustainability of the target species, bycatch, and habitat from fishing activities rather than the status of the stock, which requires a formal stock assessment or another similar streamlined method/tool.
- Participants asked a number of questions specific to how data and information are used in risk assessments.
 - The PSA and ERA use best available data, which may be historical (prior to 2010) and may include conversations with fishermen.
 - Observer data may include information on the status of bycatch (e.g., retained, returned alive, or dead) as well as specific information about the gear used to catch target species.
 - Recreational fisheries were assigned the same bycatch score, reflective of the relative impact of gear type on bycatch.

Participants indicated they were in agreement with CDFW's decision to consider socioeconomics and climate change as part of scaled management. Questions focused on understanding how the potential impacts of climate change will be addressed for both high and lower priority fisheries and at what market scale socioeconomic factors will be considered.

- A question was asked if CDFW is considering how/if certain fish stocks are sensitive to climate events and if the variability across stocks and their potential response to changes in climate will inform the application of scaled management.
 - CDFW is currently focusing on understanding the relationship between atmospheric-oceanographic and climate change events and target species in higher priority fisheries using available data and information. The potential impacts of climate change, and data/information available to assess these impacts are currently being addressed in enhanced status reports (ESRs) for higher and lower priority fisheries, as information is available. CDFW is working to develop ESRs for all of its state-managed fisheries, which provides information on the species, fishery, management, monitoring and essential fish information, and future management needs and direction.
 - Some target species in higher priority fisheries have a clear and strong relationship with climate and climate change events (e.g., El Nino, warm water anomalies such as “the blob”). For example, CDFW identified CA Halibut as one example of a target species whose recruitment is strongly and positively influenced by El Nino.
- A participant identified Red Abalone as a target species that has been negatively affected by climate change in recent years.
 - CDFW highlighted that a fishery management plan (FMP) is currently in development for this species, which will include socioeconomics and climate change impacts and considerations.
- A question was asked regarding the market scale that the socioeconomic filter will be applied and how a reduced reliance on imported seafood (i.e., national food security) may be considered.
 - Socioeconomic considerations span the scale of individual ports to entire regions in coastal California, and reflect the challenges and opportunities ranging from communities to markets.
 - National food security and reducing reliance on imports can be addressed through the evaluation of assessing impacts on communities and may vary by fishery.
 - CDFW's scope is limited to understanding the potential impacts of management efforts on socioeconomics and recommending changes to management that, where possible, consider these additional variables.

Next Steps

Looking ahead, CDFW will provide an informational update about the evolution of the prioritization process and scaled management to the Fish and Game Commission Marine Resources Committee on November 5 ([here](#)) and potentially at the Commission meeting in December 2019.

- CDFW plans to present an updated MLMA Master Plan Implementation Work Plan to the Commission in early 2020, which will include a proposed approach to addressing higher priority fisheries using scaled management.
- Prioritization will likely be conducted for the state-managed invertebrate species after the streamlined ERA and approach to socioeconomics and climate changes are discussed and reviewed with the Commission, CDFW staff, and stakeholders.
- Participants are invited to engage in further discussion about the prioritization process during the upcoming MRC meeting in November and are welcome to reach out to Debbie Aseltine-Neilson, Debbie.Aseltine-Neilson@wildlife.ca.gov, with any questions or additional information needs.

Meeting Materials & References

Meeting materials and reference websites are available on the [CDFW Marine Management News](#) blog. An audio recording of the webinar is available upon request.

- [October 3, 2019 Webinar Agenda](#)
- [October 3, 2019 Webinar Presentation](#)
- [2018 Marine Life Management Act Master Plan](#)
 - [Chapter 2: Prioritizing Management Efforts](#)
 - [Framework for MLMA-based Management](#)
- [Marine Life Management Act Master Plan Amendment Process](#)
 - [Overview: Information Gathering Projects](#)
- [Ecological Risk Assessment as a Prioritization Tool to Support California Fisheries Management](#)
- [Marine Life Management Act Master Plan Implementation Work Plan](#)

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