

Council/NOAA Fisheries

EFH Climate Resilience Innovations Workshop

Organized by the Council Coordination Committee Habitat Work Group

This workshop will provide a forum to collaboratively compare best practices across regions with respect to incorporating climate change and resiliency science in our Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) and Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC) designations. The workshop will explore innovative approaches to designations, including those not currently applied in any region. This workshop would provide participants an opportunity to evaluate the approaches used or being considered by other regions, and to bring those back to their own Council regions to improve EFH and HAPC processes and resulting designations in the face of a changing climate.

Workshop Planning Subgroup

SAFMC – Roger Pugliese

NEFMC – Michelle Bachman

MAFMC – Jessica Coakley

GMFMC – Lisa Hollensead, Work Group Chair

NOAA Fisheries HQ support – Ian Lundgren, Heather Coleman

Narrative

In 1996, the Sustainable Fisheries Act amended the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) to require each federal fishery management plan (FMP) to describe and identify EFH, minimize to the extent practicable the adverse effects of fishing on EFH, and identify other actions to encourage the conservation and enhancement of EFH. Since then, regional Fishery Management Councils have completed EFH reviews and periodically revised their FMPs to ensure NOAA Fisheries and Fishery Management Councils incorporate the most recent and best science available into fishery management.

The EFH provisions of the MSA require federal agencies to consult with NOAA Fisheries on all actions or proposed actions authorized, funded, or undertaken by that agency that may adversely affect EFH as designated by the Councils. The MSA also authorizes NOAA Fisheries and the Councils to provide comments and EFH Conservation Recommendations to federal or state agencies on actions that affect EFH via EFH consultations. EFH consultations are based on designations made by Councils, and are an important mechanism for strengthening relationships among partners and advancing habitat conservation interests. The CCC Habitat Workgroup held a workshop in 2019 to improve communications between Councils and consulting agencies. We see addressing climate change as the next step in the process to better manage fisheries.

Climate change is a part of our present and future, and therefore is included in the best scientific information available that is required for making EFH designations used in consultations. Global

climate change, and accompanying physical, chemical, and biological changes in marine ecosystems, present challenges with how we consider fish habitat information when designating EFH and HAPCs and applying the designations to EFH consultations. By explicitly providing climate-related information in EFH designations, Councils can ensure that EFH designations are able to be refined easily and appropriately to account for redistribution or migration of stocks that follow specific climate-related indicators, like temperature. NOAA Fisheries and Councils will use this information to provide more specific EFH conservation recommendations when actions will continue for tens of years or more.

With rapidly changing fish species distributions and changes occurring directly to fish habitat, ensuring that EFH designations reflect current conditions is critically important. Given it often takes years to develop and implement revisions to designations, they may be outdated as soon as they are implemented. Finding ways to be nimbler and more adaptive when incorporating refined information is paramount to ensure this information can support EFH consultations as effectively as possible.

Many Councils are already developing climate vulnerability assessments (CVAs) for their managed species and fish habitat, or conducting scenario planning exercises to better understand the intersection of climate with fisheries governance, management, and data/information infrastructure. Essential fish habitat is another area which will require additional work related to climate as we strive to develop more effective designations and consultations.

This in-person meeting will provide an opportunity at the staff level to collaborate, learn from each other, consider best practices, and bring specific improvements to each of our regional processes as they relate to EFH and climate change. In preparation, we plan to include workshop-related discussions during each of our regularly scheduled webinars to bring the CCC Habitat Workgroup to a common level of understanding on these issues prior to meeting in person.

The workshop is an opportunity to benefit from innovative thinking that is happening in other regions, enhance coordination between Councils and our NOAA partners, and become more efficient in our habitat work as it is influenced by climate change.

Pre-workshop Webinars

Exploring ongoing and planned efforts at the Councils, regional offices, science centers and elsewhere will enable us to be well informed in advance of the workshop. These conversations will help us solidify agenda details and ensure we are prepared to make effective use of in-person time.

Topics:

- *Habitat Science*: a) New and innovative climate/habitat science that can potentially be applied to EFH designations; b) Data needs and gaps related to climate/habitat science.
- *EFH Designations*: a) How does climate factor into our data choices when we develop our designations (choices of years, areas to include, uncertainty)? b) How can we improve use of climate-related information in designations? c) When is EFH no longer EFH? How to handle historical areas in designations, or habitats that move, decline, disappear and may not return? d) How do we update our designations and maps more quickly, to respond to more timely data (turning the crank)?
- *EFH Consultations*: a) How is climate-related information used in current EFH consultations by NOAA and/or Councils (is it used)? b) How can we improve climate related information to support EFH consultations? c) What would consultation partners at NOAA Fisheries find useful

from the Councils on climate, beyond better designations? Risk assessments, vulnerability assessments, other tools?

- *Habitat and Climate Scenario Planning*: Where does habitat fit into the Atlantic coast climate scenario planning initiative? How could this apply to other regions, including the Pacific, which completed a scenario planning exercise between 2018-21, or the Western Pacific, which is just beginning to work on this topic?

Workshop Goal

To create a focused cross-regional forum for EFH practitioners at the Councils, NMFS regional offices, and Fishery Science Centers to share best practices with respect to how they consider climate change and climate resilience when developing their EFH and HAPC designations.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES:

- To be developed throughout 2023 based on pre-workshop webinars. Some possible objectives based on group “Deep Dive” presentations would include, discussion on EFH consultation in light of climate change, ideas and methods sharing related to approaches for describing EFH, and better delineating nearshore boundaries for EFH.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES (WILL BE DIFFERENT FOR EACH REGION):

- To be developed throughout 2023 based on pre-workshop webinars. A workshop summary report will be developed and made available to the CCC.

Workshop Logistics

Tentative Dates: Wednesday, January 17 and Thursday January 18, 2024

(Travel days Tuesday, January 16 and Friday, January 19 with 2 full days midweek for workshop)

Location: Southern California (Planning Subgroup Preferred)

Will like be at either La Jolla or Long Beach, CA. Top priority will be given for a location near a major airport, no or low-cost meeting space, expense of nearby hotels, and travel time for workshop members.

Format and Attendees (< 25 people)

This workshop will be for a small group of council staff and NOAA Fisheries staff who are responsible for EFH-related issues. This working group format was selected to maximize the opportunity to provide tangible outcomes of value to the councils and NOAA Fisheries regions.

Attendees

Council staff responsible for EFH designation, permit review, and consultation and habitat/climate related issues for their Councils. NOAA Fisheries regional Habitat Conservation Division and headquarters Habitat Conservation and Science and Technology/FSC staff.

Travel Expenses

Councils/NOAA Fisheries will pay travel for their individual staff to attend. No cost or very low cost for meeting space. Google form will be developed to coordinate participant travel/car rental to minimize costs.

BACKGROUND MATERIALS

- [EFH Summit report and regional EFH profiles page](#) (among other resources)
- [EFH Summit presentations page](#)
- Other materials developed (TBD)

Agenda (Full Agenda to be developed throughout 2023)

Day 1 (full day) 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM

- TBD

Day 2 (full day) 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM

- TBD