

MEMORANDUM

To: Risk Policy Working Group

From: Fish Condition and Ecosystem Sub-Group

Date: January 21, 2025

Subject: Recommendations on Ecosystem Characterization Factors

Purpose

The group met via webinar on December 17, 2025, to develop recommendations regarding factors and data for ecosystem characterization. The discussion focused on the goals and objectives of the climate and ecosystem factor group, and specifically the ecosystem characterization factor. Sub-group membership: Jonathon Peros, Andy Applegate, Michelle Bachman, Joe Carracappa, Geoff Smith.

Discussion & Key Recommendations

- The ecosystem characterization factor should capture risks related to changes in habitat, current habitat conditions, and trophic relationships that are not addressed in other assessment processes (i.e., stock assessments or climate vulnerability assessments). Overall, the sub-group supports inclusion of ecosystem characterization as a factor of the Risk Policy.
- The sub-group does not recommend using fish condition as a factor due to concerns about fish condition being a strong proxy capturing risks related to environmental and habitat change, and correlation with other factors such as recruitment (a separate factor). The RPWG had initially focused on fish condition as a factor that could be readily calculated for a wide range of Council managed stocks using the State of the Ecosystem (SOE) report. The sub-group continued to see value in using the SOE to support ecosystem characterization factors. Other factor ideas that were discussed were: Forage field index, primary predator/biomass, and productivity anomaly (R/SSB).

Outstanding Questions

- **Habitat and CVA 2.0:** Can/will habitat be integrated into Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CVA) 2.0? The forthcoming CVA 2.0 update will evaluate vulnerability spatially and includes habitat suitability models.

- To what extent does the climate vulnerability factor incorporate issues around risk of habitat loss / reduced area of suitable habitat? Is it important to include habitat considerations in a separate factor?
- The sub-group supports coordination with CVA 2.0 efforts (experts webinar to explain assessment updates is planned for February, so align with that meeting) to explore intersection of products and factors. The final CVA 2.0 product is expected to be ready by September 2026.
 - If CVA 2.0 is ready in the fall, the RPWG needs to consider how to score the factor using an updated data product/report.
- **Scoring/Scaling:** The sub-group sees value in maintaining a placeholder for an ecosystem factor to be clear that something is coming soon, even if it is not ready for scoring by June 2026.
 - Does assigning a neutral score to a developing factor equate to removing it?