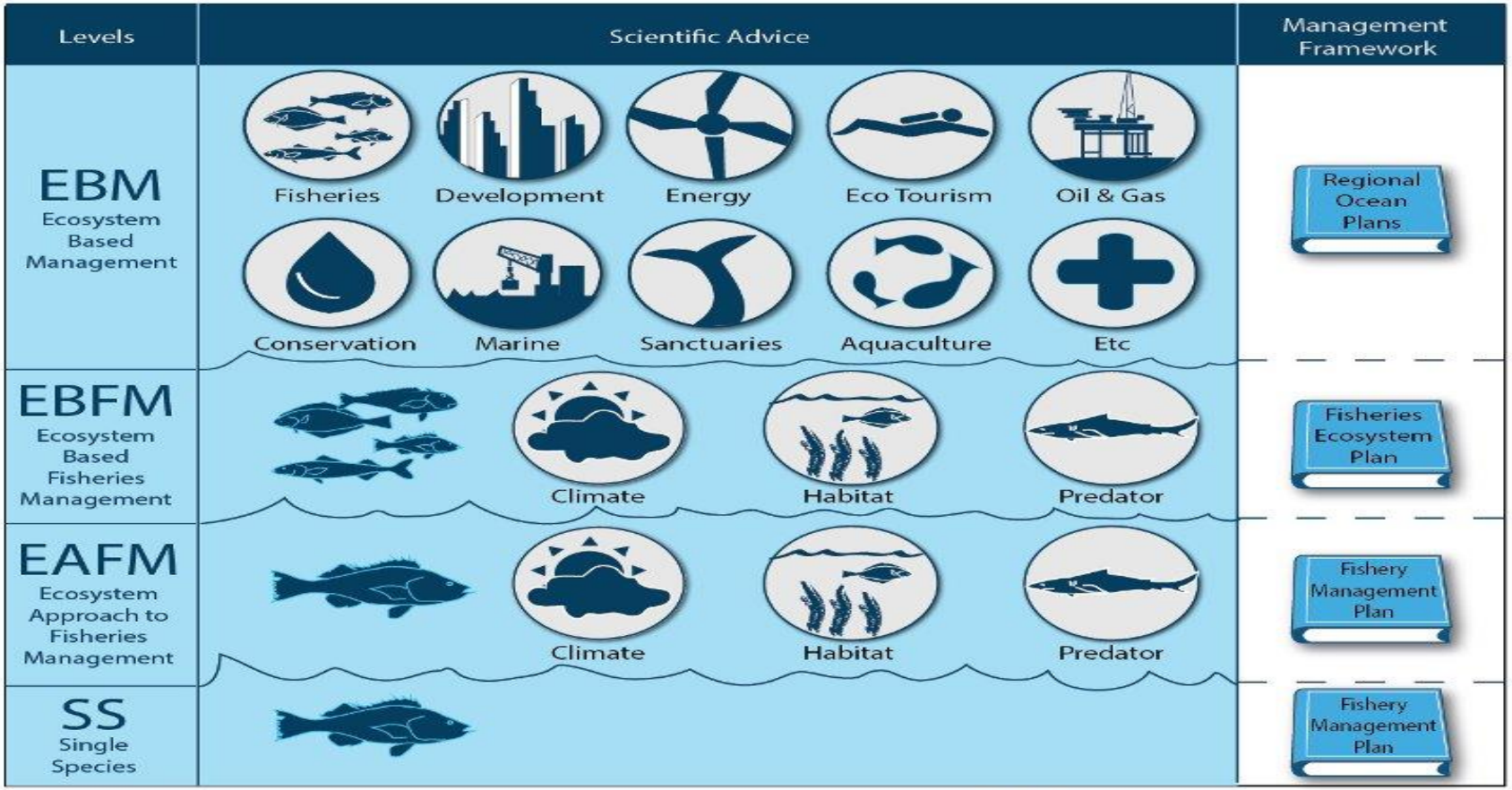
Tab Q, No. 4(a)

Ecosystem Document

Background



NOAA FISHERIES

https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/ecosystems/ebfm/ebfm-myths

Why are we here?

- Several Ecosystem Type Initiatives
  - Ecosystem Status Report
  - Ecosystem Regional Roadmap
  - National Ecosystem Policy
- January 2018
  - Staff outlined other Councils' ecosystem documents
  - Staff outlined Gulf Council actions that could be considered ecosystem type management
  - Council motion: ***To direct staff to develop a document that outlines the component parts of an ecosystem plan***

Chapter 1

- Overview describing purpose, need, and scope of a document
- Will evolve with the completion of each new chapter
  - Decision points:
    - What is the purpose and need?
    - Example from PFMC

      The purpose of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) is to enhance the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) species-specific management programs with more ecosystem science, broader ecosystem considerations, and management policies that coordinate Council management across its Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) and the California Current Ecosystem (CCE). An FEP should provide a framework for considering policy choices and trade-offs as they affect FMP species and the broader CCE
    - Geographic scale?
    - Which species does the Council want to include for discussion?
    - Does the Council want to move forward with some type of formal timeline for receiving ecosystem information?

Chapter 2

- Provides FEP's objectives and how these objectives meet the purpose and need
  - Could be a list
  - Staff suggests beginning with this chapter after the decision points in Chapter 1 and Purpose and Need are established

Chapter 3

- Overview of all environments. This is the ‘meat’ of the document
  - Physical
  - Biological
  - Social
  - Economic
  - History of the Fishery
  - Heavily reliant on decision points in Chapter 1
  - Could be updated as necessary and used in all future amendments

Chapter 4

- Cumulative effects
  - Highlights changes in the ecosystem
  - Discusses effects of fishing on system
  - Discusses effects of non-fishing activities on the system
    - Diversions, coastal population increases, mining, marine traffic, etc.

Chapter 5

- Ecosystem policy priorities
  - 5 year research priorities could be a jumping off point
    - Updated with each 5 year research plan?
  - Could be used for researchers to develop projects most important to the Council
  - Formalize certain areas of concern
  - Not-binding

Chapter 6

- Describe how ecosystem science should be used in the Council process
  - Could outline that the Council would like specific ecosystem objectives included in stock assessments
  - Provides the mechanism for ecosystem level science updates (does the Council want to devote time each meeting, year, twice a year, etc. for updates on ecosystem level information?)

Appendix of Ecosystem Initiatives

- Adds an Appendix to outline ecosystem initiatives
  - Mid Atlantic has had several working groups to address ecosystem initiatives such as climate change, forage fish, etc.
- These could result in white papers produced by staff that are a review of specific items of interest
- These could also be specific items that the Council would like to have presentations on
- Or, the Council can choose to address ecosystem initiatives in another way

Thoughts to Consider

- An Ecosystem Plan or Ecosystem Policy would not require action or regulation
  - It outlines the history, is a comprehensive review of the ecosystem, and highlights specific relationships or areas needing further research
  - Is a one stop shop for information about GOM fisheries
  - Could be enormous
  - Should have a timeline for updates to remain current

Additional Questions

- Would the Council like to proceed with producing an FEP?
- If not, what would the Council like to do?
- Are there any specific items that the Council would like to see in an FEP?