

Evolution to an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management

Many fish stocks are overexploited or are in the process of becoming overexploited. Some believe that using a single-species approach, where only the catch of target species is considered, is to blame. Some therefore argue for the use of Ecosystem Management. But given that we do not understand the processes and interactions of the ecosystem, how can we purport to manage it. Perhaps it is more realistic to strive for an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management. Sissenwine and Murawski state “EAF is one that is geographically specified, adaptive, takes account of ecosystem knowledge and uncertainties, considers multiple external influences and strives to balance diverse societal objectives. Implementation will need to be incremental and collaborative.” Fishing can have many effects on the ecosystem beyond the catch of the target species which need to be addressed. In order for EAFM to be successful, it will be necessary to construct operational reference points than can capture the multi-dimensionality of the management problem.