

DRAFT -- August 10, 2012

It is the policy of the Fish and Game Commission that:

- I. For purposes of California fisheries management, forage species are defined as species that contribute significantly to the diets of larger organisms during some part of their life history, thereby transferring energy and nutrients to higher trophic levels in the ecosystem.
- II. The Commission recognizes the importance of forage species to the marine ecosystem off California's coast and envisions management of forage species that: optimizes their ecological, economic and social values; accounts for the benefits rendered by forage species to other species, fisheries, wildlife, and the overall ecosystem; and considers recreational and commercial fishing interests and other economic sectors.
- III. The Commission intends to provide adequate protection for forage species through management goals that:
 - Are precautionary and utilize the best available science in management decisions using clear and transparent methods;
 - Identify and progressively incorporate Essential Fishery Information (EFI) needed for ecosystem-based management of forage species, including physical factors, oceanographic conditions, the effects of fishing on forage species' dependent predators, the availability of alternative prey, spatio-temporal foraging hotspots for predators, and existing management, including marine protected areas;
 - Prevent the development of new or expanded forage fisheries until EFI is available and applied to ensure the sustainability of target forage species and protection of its benefits as prey; and
 - Facilitate consistency in the management of forage species, integrate with existing Fishery Management Plans, and encourage cooperation and collaboration across jurisdictions and international boundaries in managing forage species.

END POLICY