

HABITAT COMMITTEE COMMENTS ON
MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

The Habitat Committee (HC) supports trying to find a way to accomplish sanctuary objectives under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). We reiterate the importance of the water column as essential fish habitat (EFH), but understand the difficulties that NOAA outlined regarding accomplishing this through an EFH approach. Since an EFH-focused approach is problematic, the HC suggests that another potential mechanism could be an ecosystem-based approach. This could involve a programmatic ecosystem management plan analogous to the one the North Pacific Fishery Management Council has prepared for the Aleutian Islands area, or some other mechanism.

It may also be worth further exploring the establishment of research reserves under the MSA as another avenue for accomplishing sanctuary objectives.

If the Council does want to explore other avenues for accomplishing sanctuary objectives under the MSA, the HC is willing to provide assistance related to habitat implications.

PFMC
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